



European Commission



A SELECTION OF

Leader+ best practices

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A selection of Leader+ best practices

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This European Commission publication seeks to promote access to information about the Leader+ Community initiative. Our goal is to provide accurate and up-to-date information. If errors are brought to our attention, we will try to correct them. However, the Commission accepts no responsibility for the information contained in this publication, especially regarding financial data on the projects described, and, in particular, on the eligibility of expenditure. Readers should therefore take all necessary precautions before using this data, which they do entirely at their own risk.

Introduction

What is Leader+?

Leader+ is a European Community initiative for assisting rural communities in improving the quality of life and economic prosperity of their local area, and is co-financed by the Guidance Section of the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF). Leader+ was preceded by Leader I and II.

The Leader+ programme runs within the Structural Funds period from 2000 to 2006 (but allows for projects to be carried out until the end of 2008), and its aim is to encourage and support rural actors to think about the longer-term potential of their areas. It seeks to encourage the implementation of integrated, high-quality, original strategies for sustainable development designed to encourage experimentation with new ways of:

- enhancing the natural and cultural heritage;
- reinforcing and diversifying the economic environment, in order to contribute to job creation;
- improving the organisation abilities of the community.

There were 893 Leader+ local action groups (LAGs) in Europe prior to the enlargement of 2004. In some of the Member States which joined the European Union (EU) in 2004, LAGs are already working under a Leader-type measure.

Leader+ was designed around four predominant themes:

1. making the best use of natural and cultural resources, including enhancing the value of sites;
2. improving the quality of life in rural areas;
3. adding value to local products, in particular by facilitating access to markets for small production units via collective actions;
4. the use of new know-how and new technologies to make products and services in rural areas more competitive.

See: <http://ec.europa.eu/leaderplus> for more information regarding the legal basis and the budget allocated to Leader+.

Why best practices?

This publication complements the Leader+ magazine as a means of highlighting the most successful implementation of Leader+ funded local development strategies.

Best practice in Leader+ has logically to be measured by the successful implementation of the 'Leader approach'.

Seven criteria make up the Leader approach:

■ 1. Area-based approach

This entails defining a development policy on the basis of an area's own particular situation, strengths and weaknesses. In Leader, this area is a fairly homogeneous local rural unit, characterised by internal social cohesion, shared history and traditions, a sense of common identity, etc. Awareness of the area-based approach has been growing, with 'prime movers' in the local area recognising the important role of endogenous resources in achieving sustainable development. At LAG level, the area-based approach has contributed to a better identification of rural actors within the territory.

■ 2. Bottom-up approach

This aims to encourage participatory decision-making at local level for all development policy aspects. Its objective is the involvement of local players, including the community as a whole, economic and social interest groups, and representatives of public and private institutions. The bottom-up approach relies on two major activities — 'animation' (facilitation of activities) and training of local communities — and comes into play at different stages of the programme. At project level, it is important that the project is initiated by local actors and that the public concerned with the action has been consulted.

■ 3. Partnership approach and the local action group (LAG)

The LAG is a body of public and private actors, united in a partnership that identifies a joint strategy and a local action plan for developing a Leader+ area. The LAG is one of the most original and strategic features of the Leader approach. Endowed with a team of practitioners, decision-making powers and a fairly large budget, the LAG represents a new model of organisation that can considerably influence the institutional and political balance of the area concerned.

The LAGs have provided appropriate mechanisms for participation, awareness raising and organisation of local actors in favour of rural development. The allocation of tasks and responsibilities between the partners (programme authorities, LAGs, members of the LAGs) should be clear and transparent.

■ 4. Innovation

In addition to the Leader concept and its implementation in the field which in itself is innovative, the initiative also demands that the actions are innovative. They may be: actions to promote local resources in new ways; actions that are of interest to local development but not covered by other development policies; actions providing new answers to the weaknesses and problems of rural areas; or actions which create a new product, new process, new forms of organisation, or a new market.

Innovation is also embodied in the programme's pedagogical and networking components: disseminating information to other groups of players wishing to gain inspiration from achievements elsewhere or to carry out joint projects.

■ 5. Integrated approach

The actions and projects contained in the local action plan are linked and coordinated as a coherent whole. Integration may concern actions conducted within a single sector, all programme actions or specific groups of actions, or, most importantly, links between the different economic, social, cultural, environmental actors and sectors involved in the area.

■ 6. Networking and cooperation between areas

By facilitating the exchange and circulation of information on rural development policies and the dissemination and transfer of good practice and innovative strategies and actions, the Leader network aims to limit the isolation of LAGs and to create a source of information and analysis of the actions. To complement existing European and national networking, some LAGs have spontaneously organised themselves into informal networks.

Another core part of Leader is the cooperation between rural areas. Cooperation between areas can be transnational but may equally take place between areas within the same Member State (interterritorial). In Leader+, a specific budget is allocated for cooperation projects (Action 2).

■ 7. Local financing and management

Delegating a large proportion of the decision-making responsibilities for funding and management to the LAG is another key element of the Leader approach. However, the LAGs' degree of autonomy varies considerably depending on the Member State's specific mode of organisation and institutional context.

Consequently, this criterion is considered on a case-by-case basis, in the various administrative contexts.



Methodology of collection and selection of good and best practices

In an annual exercise, and with the help of the national network units (NNU), the Leader+ Contact Point assisted by experts, collects good practices among the Leader projects in the EU, and selects some of them to be included in the good practices database on the Leader+ website: <http://ec.europa.eu/leaderplus>

In order to reinforce the visibility of the work done in Leader+, the Leader+ Observatory decided to complement the information given in this database by editing a specific publication entitled *A selection of Leader+ best practices*.

The following method was used: firstly, the Contact Point carried out a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, obstacles and threats) in the Member States on the situation

of good practice. The main partners in the Member States for this exercise were the national network units. The result of this analysis was that the criteria for finding good practices were everywhere closely linked to the seven Leader+ criteria. The Leader+ Observatory added two further European criteria which underline the European aspect of Leader+: transferability and sustainability.

The Leader+ Contact Point then began to collect examples from the Member States. In order to achieve a 'fair result', an approach was taken which would respect the thematic diversity, type of project and geographical balance, in addition to the content-related criteria linked to the Leader approach. The selection of the present 21 best practices from the 56 selected 2006 good practices also took into account a conceptual, thematic and geographical balance.

Of course, this first selection is not intended to be exhaustive, since it is an annual exercise and consequently further examples will be published in the future.





AUSTRIA

The Almo culinary region: Almenland restaurants and regional (beef) marketing

Project context

Almenland is an idyllic region in central Austria, standing at an altitude of 1 200 to 1 700 metres above sea level. It is a region which has some of the most traditional Alpine pasture, namely 'Teichalm' and 'Sommeralm', and it is this cultural landscape that attracts a steady influx of tourists during holiday periods. Farming is the region's primary source of income.

The area frequently attracts holidaymakers from the nearby Austrian town of Graz; however, much of the accommodation in the region needs upgrading. The area provides limited higher-educational opportunities and has a low number of high-tech businesses.

Farmers are often isolated, and have to work their farms single-handedly as well as producing and selling their meat; other businesses also struggle to market their own products. It was recognised that the local economy could be improved and developed if businesses started to work together. This project provides such an example — by local farmers and businesses cooperating to produce, process, and market 'Almo' the mountain oxen meat.



Facts about the territory

- 👤 **Population: 1 248 inhabitants**
- 🌍 **Surface area: 342 km²**
- 👤 **Population density: 4 inhabitants/km²**
- 🏘️ **Number of municipalities: 12**



Why is this project good practice?

This project presents an example of good practice as it has linked into the **area-based approach** with a clear connection between farming and the landscape. The high-quality Almo meat has evolved from the unique mountain environment in the Almenland region. The project has specifically made use of the area's local resources.

The project has been implemented in true **bottom-up** style with farmers, tourist operators and regional providers engaging with the local people in planning, decision-making and implementing the development of the area. The LAG consists of 12 municipalities in the region, agricultural and tourist bodies, the Almenland marketing company, the Almo farmers' association and members of the region's cultural association. The LAG has successfully linked key actors to plan jointly, share resources, address problems and help the development and promotion of the area.

The project has created local partnerships and the cooperation between Almenland farmers and the regional producer Schirnhofner has been a particular asset in the project. It has generated a regional economic cycle as farmers are benefiting from the professional marketing of Schirnhofner.

The project has formed an integrated and multisectoral development network. The promotion of the region through the Almenland marketing company and the

success of Almo meat have led to a knock-on effect and improvement for other business in the area such as tourism, golf, fishing, cycling and woodland products.

The project will be **transferable** in the future as Almenland branding is now recognised among the Austrian population as being a unique high-quality product; other customers are now buying into the label. Consumers have become more aware of where their food is coming from, and there has been greater interest in 'buying local'; Almo meat has certainly benefited from this change in attitude and the market suggests that the trend in buying local will continue to rise.

There is optimism about the project's **sustainability** since the Almenland marketing company has created a long-term organisational structure for the region. A number of full-time and part-time jobs have been created along with high revenue generation which has brought added value to the region. The project has already looked at ways to expand business, such as by developing a dairy business and producing quality cheeses from the region, thus sustaining the economy in the future.





Project description

■ 1. Brief history of the project

The Almenland mountainous region has an environment rich in nutrients offering favourable grazing conditions for sheep, cattle and horses. This, in turn, produces high-quality meat over the spring to autumn months when the animals are free to roam the countryside. A typical farmer in this area owns approximately 5 000 oxen which graze over an area of 3 600 hectares.

Farmers, local food producers and tourism organisations in Almenland have been working closely together since 1995 under Leader II where they founded the regional 'Almenland initiative'. The main idea of this was to develop the market position of the region by promoting it as the 'Genussregion' or the 'region of pleasure' for tourists and to be the origin of a series of high-quality products.

More recently, through the Leader+ programme, the Almenland initiative has developed its strategy of determining how to produce and sell good-quality 'meat' products. As a result, the Leader+ project 'Die Almo Genussregion' meaning 'The Almo culinary region' was developed where local farmers and Schirnhofner, a food producer offering fine meat delicacies, cooperate with the aim of producing and selling high-quality oxen meat derived from the mountain pastures.

■ 2. Main activities

There have been two main parts to this project. Firstly, Schirnhofner has successfully established links to sell and promote its meat to a cluster of good-quality local restaurants called the 'Almenlandwirt'. The Almenlandwirt consists of a network of 25 regional restaurants, inns and hotels that have joint branding and offer a range of services to tourists; in addition, they have a reputation for offering first-class food. Schirnhofner also successfully sells local meat to the supermarket chain Zielpunkt which has 250 stores throughout Austria. This has raised the profile of the Almenland region and its products at a national level.

Secondly, Almenland beef has been branded as a registered trade mark which has led to the formation of Almenland Marketing, an organisation founded in close cooperation with Schirnhofner. This is a limited company which is now in charge of all professional marketing in the Almenland region. It has played a large part in the production and marketing chain of Almo meat.

■ 3. Concrete outputs and results

During the early stages of the project, training was offered to farmers to provide guidance in rearing quality cattle. Further support from tourist operators helped to implement the official certification of Almenland beef. This led to a key step in the development and success of the project: cooperation with the producer Schirnhofner.

Now approximately 550 Almenland farmers are in partnership with Schirnhofner which has created an ideal



combination — farmers guarantee a steady flow of good-quality meat and then Schirnhofner feeds it into two main marketing channels: the Almenlandwirt, and display stands at the supermarket. Almenlandwirt members have also agreed on standards, with restaurant staff receiving training in terms of basic understanding of the product cycle, the synergies between traditional forms of cattle raising and preservation of the landscape.

The Almenland marketing company constitutes a major milestone and output of the project. It has three stakeholders: the LAG, Schirnhofner and the tourism association. All decisions must be taken by a majority of two thirds of the stakeholders and the company provides an annual budget of around EUR 360 000 for marketing in the region (such as flyers about Almenland in supermarkets and press releases to the media). The stakeholders in the company have become famous for their dedication to the



region's development, and their continuous commitment to the project has played a crucial role in the project's success.

The project has generated regional income and provided additional added value to its local products. Since the Almenland initiative was founded under Leader II in 1995, 55 projects have been implemented contributing to an investment of EUR 19.5 million. The 12 municipalities have part-funded the 'Almenland institution', which has amounted to EUR 40 000 per year, and have shown interest in investment for the future. This has exceeded the LAG's expectations and has been paramount to the project's success.

In all, 80 full-time jobs and 180 part-time jobs have been created with 600 farmers safeguarding their incomes through cattle breeding. A staggering 900 economic entities have benefited from the income generated in the area and, during 2005, there was a 10 % increase in tourists.

■ 4. Problems encountered/ lessons learnt

Throughout the development stages of the project, some key challenges were faced. As this was a new initiative in the Almenland region, there was widespread scepticism in the region and promoters quickly learnt that by informing local people of the development process, holding awareness-raising events, festivals and discussions, it led to the project's acceptance amongst local people.

Another potential hurdle was to persuade municipalities that investment in a joint cooperation project would be beneficial to the area and lead to increased economic benefits. Municipalities were convinced of this partnership by the perfect combination of farmers and the large regional producer Schirnhofer which safeguards the farmers' supplies of beef.

■ 5. The 'Leader+ added value' of the project

The project highlights the importance of networking and joint cooperation between the LAG and other businesses. It is not common practice for businesses to cooperate as they do in this project; therefore, Leader+ has allowed for collective actions to bring qualitative change to the area's economy of scale, since small producers are now successfully working together for shared benefits.

Leader+ has not only been involved in building networks, but also in the promotional activity of the local Almo product. Almenland Marketing has successfully advertised and differentiated its Almo meat as a unique product at a national level (through vending and marketing in supermarkets and through the Almenlandwirt). This has subsequently led to other beneficial factors such as publicising the important message of 'buying local', putting the Almenland region on the map, and creating a link between the markets for local food and tourism.

■ 6. Duration

The project was implemented in September 2002 and continued until the end of December 2006.


■ 7. Budget

The total cost of the project was EUR 1 900 000, of which EUR 591 000 was from the EAGGF, EUR 252 000 from national public funding and EUR 1 057 000 from private funding.

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Illustrations provided by the LAG Regionale
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AUSTRIA

Young people create their own free spaces

Project context

The LAG is situated in a region that is part of the Alpine foothills bordering (in the south-east) the industrial centre Linz-Wels and (in the north) the region of Bohemia. The Danube area is considered a popular regional recreation area. The small town of Eferding is mentioned in the *Nibelungenlied* and has several old churches, including the late Gothic parish church, and the Starhembergs castle.

The main focus of the territorial development programme is to improve the quality of life by giving young people the chance to contribute greatly to village or local development by using their creative ideas. The project has helped to integrate them into the decision-making and policy-making processes at local level. It has also helped to achieve the proactive involvement of young people in policymaking and local development, and to overcome the lack of focus on the needs of teenagers. A better quality of life ranks among the key assets to prevent young people from migrating to other areas or to encourage them to return at later stages of their lives.



Facts about the territory

- 👤 **Population: 32 227 inhabitants**
- 🌍 **Surface area: 268 km²**
- 👤 **Population density: 120 inhabitants/km²**
- 👤 **Number of municipalities: 12**





Why is this project good practice?

The project has had a **bottom-up approach**, since the key promoters, as well as the institutions responsible for the implementation of the concrete revitalisation and upgrading of the sites, were the municipalities which are also the key stakeholders of the LAG Eferding. The local teenagers were encouraged to develop plans for their friends and contemporaries, and as the crucial reward for their active involvement they could see their ideas being turned into reality. The teenagers had the positive experience that participation makes sense and, moreover, that it may even bring about changes in the local environment.

The project has followed a strong **partnership approach**. In the inception phase of the project, a broader partnership with the schools and youth associations in the region was set up. This was the main forum to reach the target group, explain the purpose and method of the approach and encourage the teenagers to participate. At the final stage (i.e. when it came to concrete construction and works), the local and regional construction firms were very cooperative in terms of sponsoring the refurbishment of the sites and playgrounds. At the same time, discussions between the different partners meant that ideas remained realistic and met the basic goals, not only in terms of use, but also in terms of cost.

The project has had two particularly **innovative elements**. Firstly, the participatory approach targeting teenagers was unprecedented in this region and is in fact rarely done in rural municipalities. Previously, this method had only been applied in urban municipalities, and its transfer to smaller rural municipalities has been a new approach. Secondly, it established a bridge between two groups, which often face serious difficulties in entering into a structured dialogue: teenagers and local politicians. Teenagers are often labelled as being 'difficult to reach' or even as being not at all interested. Thus, the whole process was also an important experience for the local decision-makers.

The action's general approach, i.e. the 'teens' open-space method', is **transferable** and has been implemented in several urban municipalities in Austria, and also in other countries, such as Slovakia. Thus a proven method as well as the reasonable additional budgets required from the local level indicate that this type of action could be easily transferred to other areas. The major precondition for a successful transfer is an atmosphere of mutual trust between all parties involved, since the initial scepticism



among local decision-makers might be a widespread phenomenon across Europe. In addition, the overall coordination and management necessitate a very sensitive and socially attentive attitude.

Project description

■ 1. Brief history of the project

Four municipalities of the LAG had expressed the need to define and design attractive meeting points and open spaces for teenagers. The final impetus for this project came from a workshop on youth and rural development run by the Austrian Leader national network unit. In the course of the workshop, two landscape designers, Karin Standler and Eva Schwab, presented a report on a scheme entitled 'Teens' open space'. The scheme, which can be considered as a method for participatory planning, demonstrated how young people could be involved in the planning of open spaces in municipalities. The chairman of the LAG Eferding, Franz Tauber, and its manager, Gerlinde Grubauer, were so impressed with the presentation that they invited the two landscape designers to take part in a workshop organised in the region. As a result, the executive committee of the LAG and 10 municipalities decided to lend support to the project, and to involve teenagers in project implementation through an experimental and participatory approach.

■ 2. Main activities

The project entitled 'Young people create their own free spaces' began in April 2005 with an information campaign in order to generate enthusiasm for the project among young people. This involved an information event, where youth management officers of regional



associations, youth advisers from the municipalities, teachers, and representatives of youth organisations were invited. The project has been presented through a series of presentations to approximately 500 teenagers. The teenagers had the opportunity to make direct contact with the project managers and get an understanding of the project's working methods. In addition, reports on the planned youth project were published in the regional media and the municipal newsletters. The result of this information campaign was that, in the 10 municipalities involved, around 150 young people between the ages of 13 and 19 decided to take part in the project.

■ 3. Concrete outputs and results

The following are some of the outputs of the project.

- Young people in each of the 10 municipalities agreed with the planners upon suitable locations for meeting places and evaluated their 'chosen spots' with the support of the landscape designers. The evaluation was carried out on the basis of a set of criteria such as the place's atmosphere, possible utilisation, positive (pleasant) and negative features, ideas that can improve the use of the space, etc.
- These ideas were further discussed during a series of (two-day) planning workshops.
- The young people developed drafts and construction models for their chosen places in collaboration with three architects and five landscape designers.
- A public debate called 'City-line' was organised where young people presented their 'models' for discussion with local government officials, teachers, parents, friends and other interested parties. The meeting resulted in permission being granted by the municipal representatives.
- In the last planning stage, the planners drew up detailed technical plans, including planned costs and required materials, in order to have everything ready for the refurbishment work.
- By autumn 2005, with the support of the landscape designers, architects, the respective municipality and local companies, Eferding's teenagers had managed to put their models into practice. In 9 of the 10 municipalities, local government has financed the refurbishment of the chosen site.
- Adjustable benches, chairs and tables in a modern design have been installed and roof constructions offering protection against the rain and sun, viewing platforms and sun decks, a barbeque area and an open-air film theatre on a football field have been built.
- The municipalities received additional advice on how

to improve the use of public space according to the needs of their young people.

A longer-term result of the project has been that communication between young people and the representatives of the municipality has clearly improved, and that a much better understanding of their needs and requirements has been created. The teenagers themselves have learnt how to influence the development of their own community, and also contribute to the improvement of their own quality of life. The project has contributed to the strengthening of regional identity. Teenagers coming from different backgrounds have learnt how to work together during workshops and during the realisation of the works. Thus, communication and contacts among teenagers in the region have improved.

■ 4. Problems encountered/ lessons learnt

Initially, many municipal representatives and officials representing the region's youth were sceptical about the participation of young people in the project and had doubts about their motivation and competence. Nor were the young people considered capable of implementing projects or indeed of dealing with the selected meeting places responsibly. However, only 1 in 10 municipalities failed to find a sufficiently strong core group of teenagers.

Some municipalities did not get sufficiently involved in the project implementation. In several cases, the mayor had nominated a responsible person at local level who did not actually cooperate in the preparation of the process and the implementation (in these cases, it was the mayor who had a stronger commitment towards the project). For teenagers, it was important to establish direct contact with persons from the municipality who were neither representatives of political parties nor of religious communities.

The timing of the project was an additional challenge. According to the initial plan, the work should have taken place in the last week of the summer holidays but due to delays this did not materialise. This was an additional risk since the process lost its momentum and had to be 'revived' in several cases.

■ 5. The 'Leader+ added value' of the project

Without the LAG as an institution at regional level which provides professional management support, as well as neutral, politically independent mediation, this





experimental youth project could never have been realised in several smaller rural municipalities. The open character of Leader+ enabled the promoters to gain professional support in terms of process management, facilitation and results which would otherwise not have been feasible.

The support from Leader+ made it possible to launch a broad initiative with highly professional support. This type of participatory approach has to be considered as an experiment. Such an initiative can only be launched in an atmosphere of mutual trust between the key actors involved. This is one of the clear benefits of the joint discussions and partnership development processes which had taken place in previous years. In addition, the process is part of a longer-term perspective within the framework of the LAG development strategy.

Also, the explicit focus on youth in rural areas, which is stated in the guidelines for Leader+, encouraged the local Leader+ community to develop and adapt innovative approaches targeting teenagers.

■ 6. Duration

The project's duration was 13 months. It started on 1 March 2005 and ran until 31 March 2006.

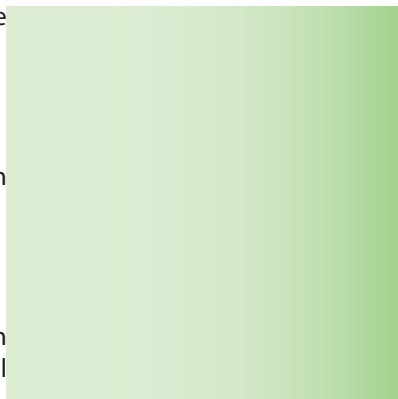
■ 7. Budget

The total budget for the project was EUR 64 800, of which EUR 32 400 was from the EAGGF, EUR 18 792 from national public funding and EUR 13 608 from private funding.

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Illustrations provided by the LAG Eferding





BELGIUM

Socio-economic development of the stone sector in rural areas

Project context

The four municipalities covered by the LAG Au Fil de la Pierre are Bertrix, Herbeumont, Libin and Saint-Hubert, which are all rural areas characterised by extensive woodlands, and are located in the middle of the Ardennes. This area is very much favoured by tourists because of its natural sites and walks in the valleys of the Rivers Semois, Lesse and Lhomme. Together, the four municipalities have rich natural resources that are very important for the region's development.

Now, as in the past, the mineral resources are utilised in a wide range of ways by local communities. The use of stone has always had an important impact on the socio-economic and cultural development of the region. Cultural and artistic activities have been developed on the basis of the stone industry and have largely contributed to employment creation and the enhancement of the attractiveness of the region. Stone resources include schist in Bertrix and Herbeumont, kaolin (Cornish stone) in Libin, and sandstone and limestone in Saint-Hubert.

The local strategy builds on the collective historical traditions centred on the stone industry. The strategy includes promotional and pedagogical activities on the basis of the geological heritage, the history of stone, its exploitation and transformation, the development of the utilisation of stone for urban and architectural purposes, and the promotion of the use of stone in the construction and tourism industries.

Facts about the territory

- 👤 **Population: 19 545 inhabitants**
- 🌍 **Surface area: 448 km²**
- 👤 **Population density: 42 inhabitants/km²**
- 👤 **Number of municipalities: 4**





Why is this project good practice?

The project has a strong **area-based approach**, since it builds on the stone industry that has a long tradition in the rural area. The mineral resources have been utilised in several ways in the four municipalities covered by this project (Bertrix, Herbeumont, Libin and Saint-Hubert) both in the past and also today. The types of minerals always depend on the changing conditions of the rich underground nature of the area. The extraction and use of the wide range of stones have always had a considerable impact on the four municipalities' socio-economic and cultural development. This project aims to create employment through promoting activities in the stone industry, which is an integral part of the rich cultural and historical heritage of the region.

The four pilot municipalities in close cooperation with private partners of the LAG are testing a new rural development concept that has been developed on the basis of natural, cultural and historical strengths and opportunities. The project follows an **integrated approach**, since it brings together various stakeholders, entrepreneurs and artists within the stone industry, involving several stakeholders in the promotion of the area. As a result, it stimulates the creation of new activities in the region and creates new job opportunities.

The strategy followed by the LAG Au Fil de la Pierre has **several transferable elements**. The four participating municipalities are representatives of a wider group of Wallonian municipalities that are working with stone materials. The activities developed by the project are transferable not only at an interterritorial level, but also transnationally. The methodology of the project is flexible and builds on synergies between local actors acting in different fields. The methodology is based on the specific needs of the sector and strongly relies on the natural and

cultural resources of the rural area. The transferability of the project approach is demonstrated through the links that are currently being developed with the LAGs Botte du Hainaut and Sources et Vallées (Picardy, France). A cooperation project entitled 'Éclats de pierre et de marbre' ('The sparkle of stone and marble') is currently being developed by the partner LAGs with the aim of exchanging experience and knowledge about practices in the sector, and of adding value to the occupations and organisations working in the stone industry.

The stone (i.e. the main natural resource) has great potential to **contribute to the sustainable and integrated development** of the rural area. The project carried out by Valbois RN and the LAG Au Fil de la Pierre has two major strengths:

- on the one hand, it creates synergies of competences between the internal and external human and financial resources of the rural area;
- on the other hand, through the development and promotion of stone, the project improves knowledge of the material and its use, and improves creativity resulting in the development of new ways of using stone and the creation of new stone products.

Project description

■ 1. Brief history of the project

The main purpose of this project is to generate new job opportunities in the local area, through the creation of arts and crafts activities and the improvement of local services. In addition to the local crafts industry, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play an important role in local economic development. SMEs in the area are mostly one-person enterprises or self-employed people



who are managing individual projects independently of one another, resulting in a lack of links and synergies between their activities. SMEs generally do not have access to specialised information or professional training, do not communicate with one another and do not carry out joint promotional activities. At the same time, these dynamic SMEs have the potential to create employment opportunities in the local area.

Therefore, this project aims to develop the local socio-economic situation, through:

- the creation of synergies, links and exchange of information and experience among the professionals of the stone industry and other socio-economic actors in the region;
- the development of entrepreneurship in the stone industry, which is of importance in the local area;
- the setting-up of an 'integration network' in the stone industry (through provision of training, improvement of existing activities, socio-professional reintegration, etc.).

■ 2. Main activities

The main activities of the project include:

- providing entrepreneurial tools and knowledge, assisting existing and new enterprises in improving/developing their production through access to specialised information; diversification; developing new skills in order to create new projects and products, and creating a favourable environment for the promotion of new job opportunities for local people (including women and young people):
 - for this purpose, a range of conferences and thematic debates are organised, and personalised services are provided to enterprises, and specific training modules are developed with the participation of IPES (Institut Provincial d'Enseignement Secondaire),

employer organisations, the unemployed, workers and employees of SMEs;

- promotional activities about the stone (highlighting its utilisation, knowledge and skills of enterprises and local artists of the industry), the development of a directory, which presents the products of local enterprises, various stone products and materials and their variable use; participation at fairs and exhibitions;
- organisation of training visits and information meetings for builders, architects, etc. on the materials and their main characteristics, their assets, and their technical and architectural features;
- setting up a stone industry network in order to identify complementarities among the various local activities;
- offering specialised training responding to the specific training needs of the enterprises, in line with the special characteristics of the local market and area.

■ 3. Concrete outputs and results

As a result of the project, local enterprises will be provided with tools to improve their competitiveness. The project is expected:

- to create a favourable environment for maintaining and creating new job opportunities in the region, consolidating existing employment opportunities, and creating new opportunities for the target groups, in particular for women and young people;
- to increase the turnover of local enterprises by developing new activities and products;
- to increase the number of enterprises.

■ 4. Problems encountered/ lessons learnt

The project has not encountered any major difficulties. The activities are in line with the needs and expectations of the industry and the various socio-economic actors in the area.





However, there have been some difficulties in mobilising the relevant stakeholders, and their participation at the various events, despite the relevance of the topics selected for the needs expressed, has not been sufficient. Individual coaching seems to respond better to the needs of the sector, because it addresses the specific needs of the SMEs in the sector. Therefore, in the future, more focus will be on the coaching method, and the event topics will be rationalised and directed more towards promotion of technical and qualitative use of the stone material.

■ 5. The 'Leader+ added value' of the project

The main objective of this project is to improve the local economic situation through the implementation of a highly integrated concept (i.e. development of new opportunities in the stone industry) in the four pilot municipalities. The main added value of Leader+ is in the methods proposed for achieving this objective. These methods combine the use of local human, natural and financial resources with the use of external expertise in order to improve skills and knowledge of the local communities. These methods contribute to the improvement of local entrepreneurship through the development of socio-economic enterprises in the stone industry, which is the most important sector in the rural area.








■ 6. Duration

The project started on 1 January 2004 and will end on 31 December 2007.

■ 7. Budget

The total budget for the project is EUR 495 600, of which EUR 223 200 is from the EAGGF, EUR 223 200 from public resources and EUR 49 560 from private resources.

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Illustrations provided by Valbois RN



DENMARK

Local community planning

Project context

The LAG area is characterised by varied landscapes and rich natural resources, such as dunes, moorland, hills, river valleys, forests, coastal areas to the North Sea and the 'Limfjord'. Some 60 % of the land is used for agriculture and 12 % is covered by forests. Agriculture and fishing dominate the local industry; however, trade and related services remain below the average for Denmark. The main industries are wood, metal and crafts, such as SMEs working in carpentry.

The educational and income levels are also below the national average. The area is facing demographic problems, in particular as a result of the outflow of local people.

Local communities and networks are supported within the framework of local development strategies. The main focus is on improvement of the quality of life and job creation, in particular in the fields of agricultural innovation and tourism.



Facts about the territory

- 👤 **Population: 79 004 inhabitants**
- 🌍 **Surface area: 1 881 km²**
- 👤 **Population density: 42 inhabitants/km²**
- 👤 **Number of municipalities: 8**





Why is this project good practice?

The project has demonstrated a strong **partnership approach**. The project content has been developed through the partnership of local governments and other key local stakeholders, such as associations and businesses. The project has involved a wide range of local stakeholders in the shaping of the future of their own local areas through discussions, joint strategic planning and implementation of action plans.

The project has been implemented through cooperation of the Danish LAG Limfjordsgruppen with the Swedish LAG Smålandsgruppen. One of the main purposes of the project has been to promote exchange of ideas and experience, not only among the participant LAGs themselves, but also among the key stakeholders of the two LAG areas. So far, three transnational meetings have been organised in order to outline cooperation structures and processes, exchange experience about key challenges and problems, and design and implement strategic local action plans in response to local needs.

The project has followed an **integrated approach** through the involvement of local stakeholders from various sectors, such as tourism, business and education. The project participants have worked with decision-makers from local government and community levels.

Innovative aspects of the project are particularly relevant in the local context. New methods have been established that give local governments and LAGs a stronger focus on development and realisation of integrated local strategies. Key factors of local development have been identified, such as the role of citizens in shaping local development in Denmark, as compared with the role of local governments in Sweden. Innovation is created through the mutual learning process between the Swedish and the Danish partners.

Project description

■ 1. Brief history of the project

The main purpose of this project was to develop a suitable 'portfolio of rural development activities' in the local area. In addition, the project aimed to identify and develop cooperation with a suitable transnational partner that has similar development objectives in order to exchange ideas

and experiences. Through transnational cooperation, the LAGs from Denmark and Sweden will also develop regional rural action plans for the programming period 2007–13.

The local development strategy is implemented with the active participation of local stakeholders, including local governments, local businesses and tourism associations. The project has strengthened local development by identifying new challenges and opportunities and improving local working tools and processes with the active participation of local people and interest groups. Direct contacts have been developed between the relevant stakeholders of the two partner LAGs, which further strengthen the project implementation process and results.

■ 2. Main activities

The project was implemented in three main phases.

- During the first phase, the key elements and implementation structure of the project were outlined. The most suitable cooperation actions and models were selected (from a wide range of proposals) that created a common reference framework for partners.
- During the second phase, action plans were developed for local governments. At the various meetings and discussions, Danish and Swedish local governments identified the main elements of cooperation, the allocation of resources, the priorities, and intervention areas. As a result of the transnational exchange of experience, a model was developed for the identification of local problems and possible solutions.
- During the third phase, the action plans were implemented and reports were prepared. The review and discussion of the action plan results have inspired local actors and created new ideas for further development.

Three transnational project meetings were also organised as follows.

- The first meeting presented research findings, discussed main problems and challenges in the two Leader+ areas and identified ways to influence local governments and other main local actors.
- The second meeting discussed how challenges can be met by local governments, what the main intervention areas and actions are, and how the activities can be organised.
- The third meeting presented local action plans developed by local governments.



■ 3. Concrete outputs and results

As a result of the project, new strategies and tools have been developed that have contributed to integrated local development in rural areas. These new strategies cover business development and related policy issues at local government level. Strategies were implemented through action plans, which covered activities and initiatives in smaller rural districts. At the same time, the project encouraged the active involvement and cooperation of local governments and other local stakeholders from a wide range of sectors. The project also positively influenced the co-financing level of local development projects. Local associations and businesses are now taking a more active part in forming local development, and provide more financial and human resources for local projects.

■ 4. Problems encountered/ lessons learnt

The project has addressed key problems of the local area, such as depopulation and the closing-down of local businesses. It has contributed to local development through the realisation of strategic local planning. It has also managed to address successfully the difficulty of mobilising local resources for the implementation of local projects.

■ 5. The 'Leader+ added value' of the project

The project has largely contributed to strategic and integrated local planning and the coordinated actions of local stakeholders, which would not have been possible without Leader+ funding. The project has also achieved the realisation of concrete local actions (such as the implementation of the micro-project entitled 'Possibilities with hardwood').

One of the major added values of the Leader+ programme is that it has created a strong networking and cooperation structure and ensured the exchange of experience among local governments and key stakeholders from a wide range of local sectors.

■ 6. Duration

The project's duration was almost two-and-a-half years. It started on 24 June 2003 and was completed on 17 November 2005.

■ 7. Budget

The total cost of the project was EUR 56 000, of which EUR 28 000 was from the EAGGF and EUR 28 000 from national public funding.

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Illustrations provided by the LAG Limfjordsgruppen





FINLAND

Pro Oulujärvi/Pro Lake Oulu

Project context

The Oulujärvi Leader Ry LAG has been working in the rural development sector in Finland since 1996. The LAG is situated in an idyllic and remote region, which contains the fourth largest lake in Finland, Lake Oulu. The four seasons bring large differences in temperature ranging from warm summers up to 25 °C to – 30 °C in the winter.

The LAG implements the Leader+ Community initiative in the area of Lake Oulu in Kainuu. The main theme of the LAG is to add value to local resources and to facilitate access to markets for small production units via collective actions. One of the main priorities for the LAG is to develop and promote local tourism. The LAG also has an objective to cooperate and raise competence between entrepreneurs in the programme.

Why is this project good practice?

The Lake Oulu project has successfully rebranded the region and has addressed the **area-based approach**. By creating a common brand and marketing strategy for the region, and by getting local entrepreneurs to learn about one another's products, the whole concept of Lake Oulu has been recreated.

Entrepreneurs have been involved in the planning and decision-making processes from the start of the project. Local tourism entrepreneurs together with the LAG initiated the project, which has clearly demonstrated a **bottom-up approach**. All tourism enterprises in the region (about 30) took part in the project and their needs for cooperation and development were clarified; planning was carried out in accordance with the needs of the local entrepreneurs.

Facts about the territory

- 👤 **Population: 97 000 inhabitants**
- 👤 **Surface area: 7 700 km²**
- 👤 **Number of municipalities: 5**

Promoting local tourism is one of the three priorities of the development programme of the LAG. The **partnership approach** has been one of the main triumphs of the project as it has involved all local tourism enterprises in working together to develop common actions for the region; this was not noticeable before the project. This has also been closely linked to the **integrated approach** as entrepreneurs have jointly developed visual brands and marketing activities to effectively promote the region at a larger national scale.





The project has shown clear signs of **transferability**, since, during the project, 11 spin-off projects were developed. The experiences of the project can easily be used in areas with similar characteristics, i.e. where small entrepreneurs want to join forces to create overall common economic benefits.

Aspects of **sustainability** were already visible before the project finished. A Leader project began in November 2005 in the municipality of Paltamo to further improve tourism networks. The networking organisation for tourism enterprises (Giants of Lake Oulu) continues to cooperate within the region and it is intended that these enterprises will take more and more responsibility for future marketing actions.

Project description

■ 1. Brief history of the project

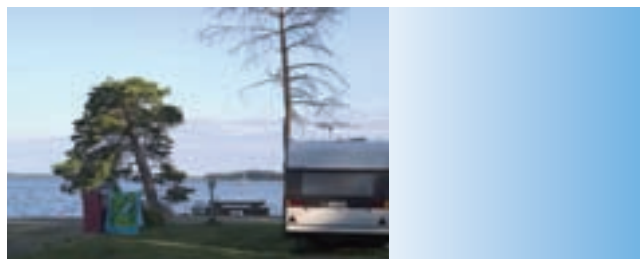
Lake Oulu is the fourth largest lake in Finland and tourism in the region has not reached its potential. This project aimed to improve cooperation and networking within small tourism-related enterprises across four municipalities (Kajaani, Paltamo, Vaala and Vuolijoki) all surrounding Lake Oulu.

Between November and December 2003, Kajaani University and the University of Oulu were involved in the project with a preliminary survey 'uusia mahdollisuuksia' (meaning 'new opportunities'), which aimed to study the needs of local tourism enterprises in order to increase their cooperation and networking abilities. As a result of the study, the development project Pro Oulujärvi (Pro Lake Oulu) was created in order to address the needs of local tourism enterprises. The objective of the project was to lay the groundwork for increasing the business volume of tourism enterprises in Oulujärvi via education, training and cooperation.

The project covered a number of measures, including design and education in relation to the brand 'Lake Oulu', marketing development of the Lake Oulu region, and development of cooperation, competence and foundations of operations.

■ 2. Main activities

In order to make the region of Lake Oulu more attractive to tourists and to raise awareness of the region, enterprises



created a common marketing brand for the Lake Oulu area for use in their marketing activities. By using this universal brand, it was easier to raise awareness of the region.

Throughout the project, contacts were established with international tourist agencies. Articles on Lake Oulu highlighting the region as a place to visit and enjoy were published at national and local levels in newspapers and promotional magazines. All enterprises were willing to raise their business skills, therefore training in tourism and marketing issues was organised for entrepreneurs according to their needs.

In order to improve travel links and develop local business travel in the area, the project organised joint meetings and training opportunities for travel entrepreneurs, initiated projects based on entrepreneurs' ideas (e.g. local area guides, business-specific investment projects), formed cooperation groups, and created a universal Oulujärvi website (www.oulujarvi.fi).

■ 3. Concrete outputs and results

There have been a number of outputs from the project, including the following.

- A joint organisation for tourism enterprises (Giants of Lake Oulu) was developed. This was organised in such a way as to facilitate common activities after the completion of the project.
- A total of 11 spin-off projects were created during the timescale of the project according to the needs of the entrepreneurs (e.g. guidebooks, information points, etc.).
- The tourist region of Oulujärvi became better known in the main marketing arenas.
- The number of overnight stays and level of tourism enterprises in the region increased by 10 % between 2004 and 2005.





- Over 120 professionals in the field of tourism in the Lake Oulu area as well as representatives of tourism agencies visited the area throughout the lifetime of the project.
- In all, 10 tourism articles on Lake Oulu were published in national newsletters and magazines.
- A website and online booking system were launched in 2006.

Another Leader+ project 'Pro Sea of Kainuu' was implemented in the region of Paltamo and builds on the foundations laid by 'Pro Lake Oulu'. The aim of the project is to strengthen the facilities for common marketing in the region of Lake Oulu and to support the development of enterprises that have limited facilities and experience.

■ 4. Problems encountered/ lessons learnt

The importance of engaging entrepreneurs to participate from the very early stages of the project was apparent; this gave them a sense of ownership of the project.

As the project has followed a bottom-up approach, there are many different needs and requirements of entrepreneurs; more resources were needed to really benefit these entrepreneurs rather than just their involvement as project managers.

■ 5. The 'Leader+ added value' of the project

The idea to focus on common enterprises originated from the local action group. The project has really valued the participation of entrepreneurs from the outset and thus was able to address their particular needs and engaged their willingness to contribute.

The preliminary study that the universities carried out ('New possibilities') was particularly helpful as it gave a clear picture of the needs and aspirations of the entrepreneurs. The idea of having a university partner was raised by the entrepreneurs themselves and therefore a good working relationship was formed.

One of the main achievements of the project was that it succeeded in involving all tourism enterprises to work and network together rather than being isolated and working on their own. This project has greatly improved local tourism, one of the main strategies of the LAG, and the future looks bright for tourism in the area as well as the continued cooperation among local enterprises.

■ 6. Duration

The project started in April 2004 and ended in September 2005.

■ 7. Budget

The total budget for the project was EUR 110 667, of which EUR 38 733 was from the EAGGF, EUR 38 734 from national public funding and EUR 33 200 from private funding.

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Illustrations provided by the LAG Oulujärvi Leader Ry



Business creation and business takeover competition

Project context

The natural park of the Brenne region is situated in an area consisting of two major geographical features: the Grand Brenne, which is a first-class continental wetland consisting of a myriad of lakes (over 1 200 in total); and the valley of the Creuse in the south, which is far more undulating and characterised by dense forest landscapes.

Agriculture is the main economic sector in the region, consisting mainly of sheep and goat farming (Brenne lamb and Pouligny Saint Pierre — originally registered as a name for goat's cheese) and fish farming in the lakes.

The main aim of the LAG's strategy is to engage with young people in the region. In particular, the LAG encourages young homeowners and workers to come and live in the district.

Why is this project good practice?

The **area-based approach** has been successfully adopted as the project has addressed key issues and problems in a thinly populated region with an ageing population, as well as sought to prevent young people from leaving the region. As the project has promoted business creation through the involvement of young people, it has provided an ideal solution to these problems.

The project **partnership** was structured around common practices and backed/run by the park's association of regional development. The project has made it possible to reinforce an already existing partnership giving support and advice to project promoters. A great number of organisations have been involved in the competitions, in particular at the evaluation stages.

Facts about the territory

- 👤 **Population: 31 075 inhabitants**
- 🌍 **Surface area: 1 660 km²**
- 👤 **Population density: 19 inhabitants/km²**
- 👤 **Number of municipalities: 47**



The project has been **innovative** in most aspects. The whole competition idea has generated new ideas for creating business opportunities in the area; it has integrated an educational dimension through awareness raising and training young people in using methods to construct economic projects.





It is possible to **transfer** this project and its partnership working methodology to any organised territory that operates an economic development strategy. By using specific tools, it has brought together many different elements (the competition, financial backing instruments, and advisory services) between the partners.

The project has presented strong **sustainability** features. It has had an entrepreneurial approach which has created an impact on the dynamics of business creation in the area and has therefore provided long-term job opportunities for young people.

Project description

1. Brief history of the project

In the natural park of the Brenne region, companies are made up almost exclusively of crafts and/or commercial SMEs. The average age of directors reflects the general ageing population of the territory; few companies have been able to find new owners and many shops struggle to find staff.

The LAG in Brenne natural park (parc naturel régional de la Brenne — PNR) recognised this problem and wanted to send out a message to let people know that there is room for possible business creation in the PNR district, especially for younger workers. This led to the setting-up of the Leader+ 'Business creation and business takeover competition' project.

The LAG learnt and obtained technical information from past projects (competitions, studies involving young people, etc.). The Leader+ project was set up on the basis of these previous experiences at various stages.

- In 2001, the idea was developed, and started by drafting the application document for the Leader+ programme.
- Between 2001 and 2003, the main design of the project was undertaken (financial methods, technical partners, competition ideas).
- In 2003, there was an active search for financial partners and the project was launched.
- In 2004, the competition took place with prizes awarded to the winners.

2. Main activities

The competition was aimed at two groups: young people under the age of 36 (who were asked to implement

projects within the regional park); and students (who were asked to develop creative business ideas). The first group of young people was requested to run a project by creating or developing further a business on the regional park's territory, while the younger students undertook weekly exercises to develop their business ideas through defining business activities and developing feasibility studies.

Projects from the young people and schoolchildren were then put before a selection committee. Selection criteria included coherence between the candidates' profiles and the projects, originality and innovative ideas, contribution to local dynamism, and respect for the environment. Various prizes were awarded in both categories.

3. Concrete outputs and results

Key project results included:

- 30 candidates for the first section;
- 20 high-school students for the second section;
- 21 companies taken over or created;
- 38 jobs created or maintained.

The project that won the overall competition was a well-developed, original, and particularly well-thought-out application dossier aiming to create a company to design and manufacture pieces of furniture from recycled cardboard. In this project, all elements required for a good project were considered; for example, a study of materials resistance, technical feasibility, etc. This is why the project was awarded first prize.

4. Problems encountered/ lessons learnt

The project experienced some problems. For example, difficulties occurred when finalising the plan to finance the operation of the project, which led to a delay in the project launch. Motivating and committing companies in the Brenne PNR region required much effort by the project promoters.

The involvement of local companies, in particular, required the project to be presented several times before they agreed to participate in it.

5. The 'Leader+ added value' of the project

The Leader added value of this approach lay in adapting an existing system for a new specific target group: young people. The partnership between the natural





park of Brenne and ADEP (Association for the Economic Development of the Park) has largely contributed to the economic development of the area. Sharing of experience within the framework of the federation of regional natural parks also contributed to the success of the project. In particular, the expertise in organising contests brought in by the Livradois-Forez natural park was invaluable to this project.

■ 6. Duration

The project was implemented from September 2003 to July 2004.

■ 7. Budget

The total budget for the project was EUR 92 181, of which EUR 46 090 was from the EAGGF, EUR 29 533 from national public funding and EUR 16 558 from private funding.

Contact details of the LAG

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Illustrations provided by the LAG Parc Naturel Régional de la Brenne





The colours of the north

Project context





The Nord Martinique Leader+ group is based on the island of Martinique, which is located between the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Sea. The island's economy relies on traditional agricultural production with fishing, fruit (such as bananas and pineapples) and vegetables flourishing in its tropical climate.

Local people are very proud of the island's beauty, charm and historic sites, which attract visitors from around the world. In 1902, Mount Pelée erupted destroying the once thriving capital city of Saint-Pierre, as well as many other towns and villages and killing many inhabitants. Since then, the island has relied heavily on tourism, although further restructuring is still required.

Northern Martinique has a weak economic structure and its economy is based on monoculture. There is an unequal development between northern Martinique and the rest of the island, and an imbalance between the Atlantic and Caribbean coastal areas. The island's limited transport links render the mobility of its residents as well as the transportation of goods difficult. The social system on the island is also underdeveloped and causes problems.

The Leader+ strategy is to reinforce tourism by emphasising structured packages and offers to visitors. Other aims include improving the island's quality of life and reintroducing business into the city to give new life to arts and crafts. The LAG aspires to attract new people to the area.

Facts about the territory

-  **Population: 108 470 inhabitants**
-  **Surface area: 548 km²**
-  **Population density: 198 inhabitants/km²**
-  **Number of municipalities: 18**



Martinique



Why is this project good practice?

The project has addressed the Leader approach in many ways.

The **area-based approach** has been an extremely strong element of the project. It has been addressed through encouraging the younger generation to understand and participate in the development of their Leader territory, whether this addressed environmental, historical, cultural or economic issues. The area is particularly well defined as it corresponds to the northern half of the island which is characterised by its volcano, its historical past and its rural farming.

The **bottom-up approach** has been clearly demonstrated as local actors and schoolchildren have been at the heart of decision-making processes and played an active role throughout the project.

The project has addressed the **partnership approach** as the Nord Martinique LAG has been supported by various organisations. These include the Association of Municipalities of North Martinique, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Martinique, the Tourist Office of North Martinique and a private operator APART SARL that works to develop economic and tourism networks in rural areas.

The project partners have been involved in the project at various levels: in developing scenarios for film making (involving town halls, businesses, families and community groups); with regard to financing; and assisting with broadcasting and disseminating project results. In addition, the commitment and involvement of teachers in the project have played a significant role.

The project has been **innovative** through the participation of pupils from different territories. The way that children from various municipalities were mobilised in order to achieve a global approach and reinforce their vision highlights the innovative aspect of the project.

The **integrated approach** has been addressed as the project has linked a diverse range of actors and communities across northern Martinique to plan and jointly share their local resources while also recognising problems of development in the area. This collective working and the film development was intended to attract more tourists to the area.

Networking has been a key element of the project; pupils have been involved in mobilising different actors in the territory, parents have taken an interest in the project work and their region. The children have learnt from collective exchanges and have created a dynamic network in the community where they aim to portray the image of the area.

The operation of the project is **transferable**; it would be possible to extend this approach to out-of-school activities and to gain support from other types of partners. The particular nature of this project has depended on the motivation and willingness of local actors and their involvement in the project. It would be necessary to create these partnerships between socio-economic and cultural circles in order to create similar successful schemes.

The project has the potential to become **sustainable** as it is thought that for several years the short films will be able to be used as promotional support for northern Martinique. Other lasting effects may become apparent through the local communities themselves (children, parents, etc.) as they truly feel part of their territory.

Project description

■ 1. Brief history of the project

'The colours of the north' was developed as part of an educational project aimed at schoolchildren in the 11 municipalities across northern Martinique. It was based on reinforcing educational identities as it was recognised that children had difficulties in relating to traditional educational tools and to the area in which they lived. Teachers were trained to use images and videos and to develop skills in writing scripts and stories by film makers.

The project team wanted to contribute to the territory and involve schoolchildren in a learning process by using their immediate environment. This was done through a wide range of sectors: geographical, historical, cultural and economic. Children were introduced to topics such as the tourism in their area, views on the environment, how municipalities are formed, and the history and heritage of their regions. The aim was to encourage and allow the children to describe their area and to understand their municipality in relation to its past, present and future. The general objective was to stimulate more tourists to visit northern Martinique by drawing on the younger generation's vision of their region.



The project management team have had experience of running projects after an event to mark the centenary of the eruption of Mount Pelée in 2002. During this event, resources such as short films were created to highlight the value of the area to participants and raise awareness amongst the communities and to prepare them for future activities.

Difficulties arose when combining these past project ideas with the Leader+ dynamic approach as the educational team had not undertaken any initiatives to promote tourism in or the economy of their area. The Leader+ staff undertook a considerable number of educational activities to ensure that the project was successful.

■ 2. Main activities

The main activities during the project included two phases.

Firstly, the children were asked to provide a description of their own local or regional area which included historical, architectural, economic and environmental aspects. The children were then asked to write scenarios, which were followed by class brainstorming sessions in order to generate a global image of their municipality. The children then created a summary, which was submitted to video professionals.

The video professionals analysed the pupils' manuscripts and explained how they were going to create the films shot by shot. The children also played an active role in the film making by carrying out further research, interviewing local people, etc. The work resulted in the creation of 11 short films, each being one to three minutes long.

Secondly, seven of the short films were reworked making use of professional film makers and educational support from the teachers. The films were broadcast to a wide audience in a programme intended for young people; there are also plans to televise the films on passenger planes into Martinique. A website is being constructed which will present the whole project.

■ 3. Concrete outputs and results

The children have benefited from the educational elements of the project. It has allowed pupils to have access to new technologies by seeing, using and understanding film-making equipment, computer technologies and the entire process of writing and completing a film. It was essential that the children understood and familiarised themselves

with using this high-tech equipment in order to progress with their training and education. The broadcasting of the films via the project website will be a particularly innovative aspect of the project. Teachers have identified progress not only in the pupils' self-awareness and relationship with the school, but also in their training.

Using film as the final outcome of the project has made it possible to turn an educational activity into something fun; the films have added meaning to education and have also provided a concrete record for future generations.

Other results include the promotion of the region through the successful broadcasting of the films on TV networks. The French RFO-télé network recognised the originality of the project and has broadcast the films at local level through its network of satellites in Antilles/Guyana. The films have been broadcast on several networks during school holidays and members of the municipalities (including economic, social and political actors) have mobilised themselves to offer resources to transmit the cultural and historical knowledge that was needed.

Other educational institutes in Martinique have approached the managers of the project to draw on their experiences in running it so they can start similar schemes in their regions.

■ 4. Problems encountered/ lessons learnt

The project did not encounter any major problems. The way in which local actors/municipalities and the children worked together in decision-making was a successful element of the project and this also led to reconciliation between the different generations and the local communities. All actors who were approached gave their full assistance to the project, which was invaluable for the project's success. This cooperation and support helped with the dissemination of knowledge and reinforced local pride in the area.



■ 5. The 'Leader+ added value' of the project

This project has successfully provided a boost to promoting the area. The added value of the Leader approach lies in the technical expertise of the coordinating project team which has successfully mobilised local actors in producing this community project. It has contributed to the creation of promotional structures and this has started at the grass roots through involving local communities and children in the area.

Leader+ has been the first real tool of economic development introduced in the area. It has clearly benefited the region on a wide scale and it is hoped that publicity from the films will lead to support and sustainability in the future.

■ 6. Duration

The project started in June 2004 and continued for 21 months finishing in March 2006.

■ 7. Budget

The total budget for the project was EUR 56 944, of which EUR 31 434 was from the EAGGF, EUR 17 580 from national public funding and EUR 7 930 from private funding.

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Illustrations provided by the LAG Nord Martinique



GERMANY

Transfer of know-how related to new media

Project context

The LAG is situated in the Alpine upper land (Voralpenland) and has a rich cultural and natural diversity. The area has a strong crafts sector, hardly any industry and a weak service sector. There are insufficient employment opportunities for young and elderly people.

The LAG's development strategy is to strengthen the region by making better use of endogenous resources and to provide better opportunities for the population. The main focus of the territorial and transnational cooperation project has been to improve the skills and know-how of the population and to encourage the use of technology.

Why is this project good practice?

Networking and cooperation have been important elements of this project. Eleven municipalities initiated the setting-up of a joint Internet information platform. The project strengthened cohesion within the previously fragmented local tourism sector and in the public administrative services. Children cooperated both interregionally and internationally. Children's awareness has been raised about the strengths and weaknesses of the 11 municipalities.

The project has had an **area-based approach**. It has aimed to solve a local problem (lack of a joint website and promotional activity of the area) using modern information technology (open-source software). The use of modern information technology (IT) has particularly attracted schoolchildren to the project. The project has improved the skills and know-how of local people, and the quality of life in the region through training resident

Facts about the territory

👤 **Population: 19 400 inhabitants**

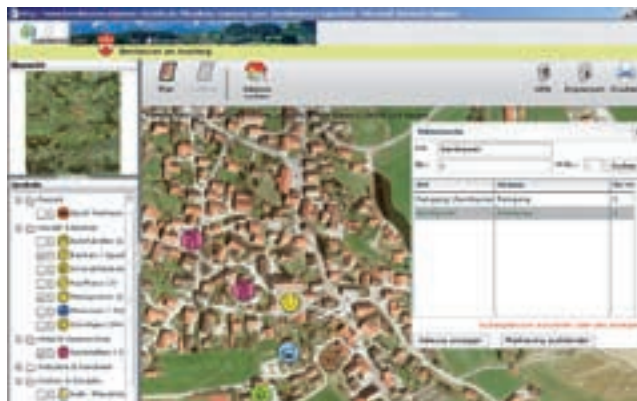
👤 **Surface area: 250 km²**

👤 **Population density: 77 inhabitants/km²**

👤 **Number of municipalities: 11**



adults in using and managing the content of the shared webspace (residents were trained to edit the content of the shared webspace, schoolchildren to edit the content of the 'School-net', and women to use the Internet as a source of information).



The project has also followed a **partnership approach**. The LAG supported the implementation of the project and coordinated cooperation with public administrations. It also actively communicated the goals and achievements of the project to regional media. Teachers engaged in the project were publicly thanked and remunerated.

The project has also followed an **integrated approach** by connecting various sectors of the regional economic and social sectors which were previously unconnected:

- education at public schools;
- Internet service providers;
- new media applications (open-source software);
- municipalities' marketing efforts;
- natural/historical endogenous resources.

Project description

■ 1. Brief history of the project

The purpose of the project was to create a common Internet-based website with the same system of content management and joint promotion approach for the 11 municipalities in Auerbergland. Prior to this project, each Auerbergland municipality had a different approach towards providing information about itself on the Internet. If they did have a website, they all had a different focus and provided varying services to different target groups. The southern municipalities provided mostly tourist information, the central municipalities provided information to both tourists and residents, and the northern municipalities did not have a website at all. An external service company has been employed to provide technical help for the setting-up of the website, and the local community has provided information to develop its

content. Open-source software has been used in order to create a shared Internet platform where local communities are presented in a standardised way.

The project also aimed to promote young people in the region and for this purpose a transnational school project has been initiated. Since 2003, informal contacts have been in place between the German LAG Auerbergland and the Swiss REGIO+ group Persönlichkeit Werdenberg. The two regions had similar development goals, including the improvement of quality of life and support for natural and cultural development. During the first meeting in Switzerland, the idea of involving schoolchildren in rural development was discussed intensively, which marked the first milestone of the project. Strengths and weaknesses of the two regions were elaborated, and the idea of involving children in horizontal issues of regional development (including cultural, historical and socio-economic development) were explored.

■ 2. Main activities

The main activities of the project included:

- creating a shared database for Auerbergland using open-source software;
- creating a shared database called 'School-net Auerbergland';
- involving local children in using 'School-net Auerbergland';
- training in ICT.

■ 3. Concrete outputs and results

The following are some of the outputs of the project.

- A shared Internet platform (based on open-source software) has been installed by 11 municipalities providing administrative information to residents





and tourist information for visitors (one or two administrators are responsible for updating the content of the sub-community pages, and there have been contributions from some further 150 people to various sections of the website).

- Eleven schools have been connected in cyberspace under the supervision of a media instructor. Each school has presented itself to the others via the shared webspace.
- Cooperation between the Swiss REGIO+ group and the LAG has led to the establishment of the Internet-based 'School-net' (module 1) and an exchange visit of schoolchildren (Schüleraustausch, module 2). Module 3 is expected to extend the activities of modules 1 and 2 beyond the borders of the two cooperation partners.
- Training in the use of open-source software for schoolchildren aged 6 to 11, as well as for volunteer editors and other stakeholders.
- Training in the use of ICT (including IT-based marketing, IT-based selling/distribution of goods) for a wide range of target groups including women in SMEs.

The following are some of the results of the project.

- The shared database of Auerbergland incorporates all the information that is on the 11 individual websites.
- Schoolchildren (mostly from socially disadvantaged backgrounds) get to explore international cooperation at a very early stage, via the Internet as well as by travelling to a different country. This improves the self-esteem of the children and strengthens the overall regional identity.
- A new network between residents and established training facilities was created.

■ 4. Problems encountered/ lessons learnt

Cross-linking and ensuring the identities of both partners:

- to motivate teachers to use new technologies;
- to integrate the project into school curricula (with regard to the learning methodology applied and the content to be taught).

■ 5. The 'Leader+ added value' of the project

The main added value of Leader+ is that it creates a common strategy. In this project, 11 municipalities developed a strategy of how to use modern IT software in order to solve problems of access to information and access to new information technology.

■ 6. Duration

The project's duration was approximately one year and 10 months. It started on 15 February 2005 and was completed on 31 December 2006.

■ 7. Budget

The total cost of the project was EUR 115 114, of which EUR 57 557 was from the EAGGF and EUR 57 557 from national public funding.

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Illustrations provided by the LAG Auerbergland





GERMANY

Pedagogical cooperation and extension of a variety of leisure activities

as a means of preventive action and quality management with the aim of building up and sustaining a regional consciousness in rural areas

Project context

The LAG Fehngebiet is located in north-western Niedersachsen, a relatively isolated part of Germany. Its defining physical characteristics are large plains and moorland, with many rivers. As a result, it is very popular with cyclists, and has developed niche tourism for cycling, walking and water tours. Industrially, the region has a strong potential, with low-priced land for construction and a young labour force. However, unemployment is high despite recent progress, and the region's geographical location means poor accessibility, especially by public transport, thus limiting mobility of the population and visitor access.

The LAG's development strategy aims to link tradition with modernity and innovation. Its focus is on cooperation between traditional knowledge and new know-how, between young and old, between men and women, and between its past and possible future. Its objectives until the end of 2006 were to preserve and promote moorland identity and culture, preserve and further develop typical moorland settlements and landscape, promote the moorland area for tourism and leisure, create new jobs, and encourage training and lifelong learning.

Why is this project good practice?

This project has closely followed the **area-based approach**, since its underlying aim has been to encourage the identification of young people with the area they come from.

Facts about the territory

- 👤 **Population: 113 826 inhabitants**
- 🌍 **Surface area: 905 km²**
- 👤 **Population density: 125 inhabitants/km²**
- 👤 **Number of municipalities: 10**



The ultimate objective has been to create a stronger and more stable regional identity among the youth of the area, based on ties with Ostrhauderfehn as a unique place: culturally, naturally, and historically. Regular working groups aim to bring alive the historical





and natural resources of the Ostrhauderfehn region, and activity days are to be organised where young people experience sports-oriented adventure trips into nearby natural and cultural heritage sites (e.g. 'moor kids' and 'fairy wood' days).

The idea of joining the isolated pedagogical initiatives to form a common educational strategy for the region came from within the community, and thus can quite legitimately be described as **bottom-up**. Furthermore, it was through local capacity in the form of voluntary work by which the common strategy was developed.

This project has relied on a diverse and close **partnership** and has been supported strongly by the local action group, which has acted as the external contact point. The partners of the project were: a theatre school; two religious communities; three sports clubs; seven schools; one adult education institute; and four kindergartens. A steering group also existed, made up of: the police of the city of Leer; a school psychologist; the University of Oldenburg; drug counselling institutions; education consultants; and the municipal social and health services department. Moreover, the time resources of these partnership and steering group members were not financed from the project budget.

The **innovative aspect** of the project has been the focused joint dialogue of hitherto scattered institutions targeting the same young people in the area, thus bringing new working methods to education for a common purpose. It is also an integrated activity, since different actors from schools to religious communities and the police have cooperated, especially on the 'Cooperation for prevention' initiative.

Although no formal cooperation project was deemed to be appropriate to this initiative, there was **informal cooperation** with a Brazilian community development organisation, including a visit of Brazilian trainers in the project's 'world week'.

An **intelligent management structure** was established, whereby the administration of the project has been carried out by the municipality, freeing-up volunteers to fully concentrate on coordination. The budget has financed the costs of 'animators'/trainers/facilitators and other external experts, money which would usually not have been available from the municipality, thus highlighting the key role of Leader in the area.

A major strength of this project has been its **transferability**, since any community can try to bring together those

responsible for the education of the area's youth and frame a common strategy. Many of the activities are, however, unsustainable since the local community cannot afford to fund the outside expertise after funds run out, though some activities and the network itself could continue.

Project description

■ 1. Brief history of the project

A concern in the community arose by statistics showing that 20 % of children are 'at risk' during their development as young people, leading to possible social problems, including crime. The main educational institutions in the region decided to jointly analyse the situation for young people in the area. As a result, they launched a plan of cooperation, across institutional boundaries, to improve pedagogical support for young people, and nurture social bonding with their home region, which should reduce the number 'at risk'. The ultimate aim was to create more stability for young people and a stronger regional identity based on ties with the Ostrhauderfehn region, which is a culturally, physically and historically unique place. This would be done through developing a regionally grounded self-esteem, making young people think of Ostrhauderfehn as a 'place worth living in', and giving them trust in the future. This 'Cooperation for prevention' initiative was proposed by the educational institutions of the region, which together applied for Leader+ funding.

■ 2. Main activities

There have been four main interrelated activities connected to this Leader+ project:

- creation of an innovative network of cross-sector educational facilities in the region that target young people (including schools, religious communities, kindergartens, sports clubs and the police);
- leisure activities for different target groups at various ages (e.g. thematic action days, working groups);
- a support structure (counselling) for young people at risk from social problems;
- up-to-date pedagogical training for adults with educational tasks.

■ 3. Concrete outputs and results

The project has created the following concrete outputs:

- improved communication among all educational facilities of Ostrhauderfehn;

- youth training to develop strengths and skills outside the usual educational curricula, such as exploring arts and sports;
- targeted training for those responsible for youth education;
- activity days.

The results to date have been:

- a support structure of 40 to 50 working groups for young people and adults with educational responsibilities;
- pedagogical training for employees of educational institutions;
- a website for young people;
- a counselling service for children at risk.

After two years of active cooperation of local educational institutions, the police noted that young people (10 to 16 years old) were committing less crime than before the start of the Leader+ project. While it is difficult to measure the contribution of the project exactly to this reduction in crime, it seems highly likely that the efforts of the educational network had a role to play, since the young people too have entered into a network of cooperation and become less isolated.

■ 4. Problems encountered/ lessons learnt

The limited budget only stretched to the costs of trainers/animators/tutors, and professionals could not be employed to coordinate the project. What seemed to be an obstacle to begin with was, however, resolved through voluntary work, which also made the project more participatory and bottom-up. However, there is now a problem of non-sustainability for some of the activities, which rely on outside funding.

■ 5. The 'Leader+ added value' of the project

This Leader+ project allowed the community to sit down and think about youth policies in their geographical territory. It was a learning process, whereby entertainment activities for young people turned into effective counselling for those at risk, which contributed to a reduction in social problems, including crime. Targeting both young people and those responsible for their education through pedagogical support proved to be an effective formula and truly added value to the community.



■ 6. Duration

The project started at the beginning of 2003 and finished after four years in December 2006.

■ 7. Budget

The total budget for the project amounted to EUR 188 040, of which EUR 91 047 was from the EAGGF and EUR 96 993 from national public funding.

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Illustrations provided by the LAG Fehngebiet





GREECE

Honey processing and standardisation unit

Project context

The island of Leros is part of the 12 major Dodecanese islands along the coast of Turkey, south-east of the Greek mainland. It is located in the north-western part of the archipelago, between the islands of Patmos and Kalymnos. The island has many hills and low mountains and has one of Europe's richest varieties of flowers. The island has a mild and pleasant climate without great fluctuations and has a varied landscape, clean waters, stunning beaches, large bays and a very attractive capital.

Although the fishing sector is relatively developed, the geology of the island and absence of significant water resources limit agricultural development, particularly in the summer months. The hospital for mental illness is an

Facts about the territory

- 👤 **Population: 97 520 inhabitants**
- 👤 **Surface area: 2 511 km²**
- 👤 **Population density: 39 inhabitants/km²**
- 👤 **Number of municipalities: 23**



important employer in the area; however, recently, the number of patients has decreased. Since Leros is host to a mental hospital for the most intractable psychiatric cases, an asylum for mentally handicapped children and a military base, it is not the archetypal Greek island, although it has recently become a base for sailing trips to the coast of Turkey and the other Dodecanese islands.

The main focus of the territorial cooperation project has been to add value to the local products (i.e. honey), and make best use of the endogenous resources of the island. The project has tried to provide employment and income to an excluded group of local people, it has built on equal opportunities and has enhanced social cohesion by creating links between the local population (many of whom are working in the hospital) and the psychiatric patients.

Why is this project good practice?

The project has had an **area-based approach**, since the initiative has built on endogenous resources. The area's profile has been enhanced by supporting local producers, improving the quality and marketing of their products and developing local human resources. The initiative has created jobs for people with psychosocial difficulties.

This **bottom-up** project was initiated by the honey farmers of Leros. They needed to add value to their raw product through processing, quality control and marketing, but had neither the time nor facilities. They approached the Koi.S.P.E. cooperative, which buys their honey and undertakes the processing and certification.

The project has also followed a strong **partnership approach**. The Ando LAG had an essential role in the development of the project. It assisted Koi.S.P.E. (the project sponsor) in the development of ideas, identified a company to assess the characteristics of the honey produced and determined how producers could access certification. Koi.S.P.E. members knew little about product quality or marketing opportunities outside the island.

The initiative has managed to improve the operation of the local mental hospital in an **innovative way**. The project has successfully combined the development of local products with support provided for psychiatric patients, which has been a unique approach.

Furthermore, the project has demonstrated a strong **networking and cooperation approach**, as it has brought



together a wide range of actors (i.e. local honey producers, the state mental hospital and psychiatric patients) for the benefit of all. This has strengthened networking activity on the island of Leros, particularly amongst honey farmers. At the same time, efforts have been made to link the relevant stakeholders from outside the island in order to establish quality certification and improve market access.

Project description

■ 1. Brief history of the project

The project has represented a new pathway to social inclusion for people with psychosocial disabilities and has served both therapeutic and business purposes.

In 1958, the Greek Government established the Leros state mental hospital. The hospital had been lagging behind compared with other European hospitals until its reform in 1990, which aimed at improving services in psychiatry. The reform, however, led to the reduction in the number of psychiatric patients.

In 1999, the Greek Government established a legal framework in support of social cooperatives as part of the general mental health reform programme.

The decline in employment on Leros, following the reduction in numbers of psychiatric patients at the Leros state mental hospital, and the desire to find ways of sustaining the recovery of the psychiatric patients led to



the formation of the cooperative Koi.S.P.E. in 2002. Some of the founding members were employees (occupational therapists) of the hospital who wished to extend the scope of therapy by responding to the needs of the patients as they recovered. Koi.S.P.E. began therapeutic activities in agriculture and catering and established contacts with the honey producers' association of Leros. The island has an abundant amount of premium quality thyme honey, but local producers were unable to organise and afford standardisation, packaging and distribution of the product. The social cooperative together with the honey producers' association set up the honey processing unit. The honey producers supply the cooperative with honey for a certain price and Koi.S.P.E. processes it according to European hygiene standards (HACCP) and brings it to the market.

Members can be persons with psychosocial disabilities, employees in the mental health sector and other natural persons or organisations. A balance must be established between the business strategy and social targets in order to ensure the future growth and the viability of the new venture. With a membership of 450 and with 40 employees, the cooperative has a firm base with which to extend its activities.

■ 2. Main activities

A honey processing and standardisation unit has been created by the Koi.S.P.E. social cooperative for people with psychosocial disabilities on the island of Leros. The project's main activities were:

- job creation and the social and working rehabilitation of people with psychosocial disabilities;
- promotion of Koi.S.P.E. and its objectives;
- addressing the economic viability of the organisation's range of activities;
- helping to reinforce the local economy;
- promotion of social activities in the Dodecanese;
- promotion of Leros's local products.

The main purpose of the unit is to create quality standards for the honey that is supplied by producers of the island of Leros, and to distribute it to local and other markets.

■ 3. Concrete outputs and results

Outputs of the project include:

- creation of five jobs: since 2004, two people with psychosocial disabilities and three employees in the mental health sector have been employed for approximately four to six months per year;

- promotion of Koi.S.P.E. and other social partnerships;
- local honey producers and the whole local economy being supported and introduced into new activities: two new young farmers have already started honey producing activity;
- a new occupation being created for people with psychosocial disabilities;
- increase in and guarantee of quality of the honey (HACCP certification);
- the project being put forward for a national award;
- the competitiveness of the local economy being improved;
- inequalities being reduced by providing quality employment for a disadvantaged group.

■ 4. Problems encountered/ lessons learnt

Problems encountered

Initially, there were difficulties in gaining local support for the cooperative as it was seen as a 'socialist' initiative by the conservatives who controlled local politics at the time. They acted only within their legal responsibilities, and did not provide all the support needed.

In addition, the founders of the cooperative were occupational therapists and not business people. They first had to develop new business skills and needed support to learn about rules, priorities and quality standards. It also proved challenging to coordinate the demands for therapy and business. At the same time, exploring markets outside Leros also proved to be a challenge, partly because of the island's geographical isolation, and partly because of a lack of knowledge of marketing.

Lessons learnt

It is important to seek expert help when embarking on unfamiliar territory, for example specialised help from the LAG regarding quality standards and marketing advice.

■ 5. The 'Leader+ added value' of the project

Leader+ provided a framework for development and support that was in line with the social and business aims of the Koi.S.P.E. cooperative, at a time when it was difficult to find the same support from other local institutions. The LAG helped with establishing contacts and provided the necessary expertise without which the project would not have been realised. The use of Leader+ funding to raise



the level of Koi.S.P.E.'s activities in honey processing and related activities has strengthened the local organisation and developed its expertise in management and its ability to concentrate and develop local indigenous resources.

■ 6. Duration

The project's duration was one year and eight months. It started in May 2004 and ran until December 2005.

■ 7. Budget

The total budget for the project was EUR 45 730, of which EUR 22 850 was from the EAGGF, EUR 6 885 from national public funding and EUR 15 995 from private resources.

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Illustrations provided by the Ando LAG and Koi.S.P.E.



IRELAND

Schola transnational project

Project context





Deriving its name from the ancient Barony of Duhallow, this rural region spans north-west Cork and east Kerry. Its people are renowned for their resourcefulness. Traditionally an area of small dairy farms, Leader has been a driving force in diversification into micro-enterprise, and celebration of local culture and heritage.

Why is this project good practice?

The project follows an **area-based approach**. The five schools participating in the project are located in remote rural areas, with similar socio-economic and demographic profiles. They have similar needs, and have common perceptions on the types of responses that are appropriate in their communities. The catchment areas of the schools are almost co-terminus. In addition, the schools are all in the more marginalised parts of the LAG catchment territories. Located in interior and upland parts of Spain, CIDER Prepirineo and Integral have had to contend with rural depopulation and service cutbacks in their territories. This common experience, together with similarities in terms of a Leader-led development of local resources and social capital, as well as learning from the pilot Schola project, gave the LAGs a joint base from which to further the Schola project and cooperate in other areas.

The project activities are very much governed by a community development **bottom-up approach**. This means that genuine participation is encouraged. Each LAG has committed to helping students, parents, teachers and community representatives to participate, so as to maximise the

Facts about the territory

-  **Population: 30 000 inhabitants**
-  **Surface area: 1 800 km²**
-  **Population density: 17 inhabitants/km²**
-  **Number of municipalities: 4**





project impact. Parents and the wider rural community are involved in all aspects of the project, including attending workshops, participating in training, devising school policies, interterritorial and transnational exchanges, planning and evaluation. Volunteers also play an important role in the project (involvement of 93 volunteers so far).



and studied in each other's country. Furthermore, they are exchanging information on policy approaches, with a view to sustaining mainstream support for and participation in a holistic approach to education in rural settings.

The LAGs and the project participants have undertaken a number of actions aimed at **transferring** knowledge from Schola. An annual 'feedback session' targets all schools in the region, and updates them on progress and lessons learnt. This session also provides a forum for discussion with other schools. The schools use forums such as teachers' unions to disseminate specific knowledge.

The project is carried out through the **partnership** of a wide range of local actors: schools, teachers, volunteers, students and parents. Interterritorial cooperation facilitated by the LAGs has enabled the five schools to establish their own network or cluster. This arrangement allows headteachers to exchange information, swap ideas and consult with one another on teaching and management issues. Moreover, clustering activities bring parents together. They strengthen the role of parents' associations in contributing to school and community development and intensify citizen participation.

The project has several **innovative** aspects. By engaging schools in rural development, it involves a wide range of actors, who are often overlooked in more traditional approaches. The project has introduced new concepts in primary school education, and has enhanced the delivery of the curriculum in rural schools, through the piloting of aspects of the Spanish education system, and the promotion of knowledge transfers between schools.

In advance of engaging in specific transnational projects with Spanish LAGs and schools, the LAG IRD Duhallow and the schools in its catchment area recognised the merits of **cooperating with neighbouring LAGs**. The partner LAGs in Ireland, (West Cork Leader and Tuatha Chiarraí) have an equal role in decision-making and strategic management to that of IRD Duhallow. As a result of Schola interterritorial actions, the three Irish LAGs are collaborating in an increasing number of areas, such as heritage, cultural development and environmental conservation.

Transnational networking between Ireland and Spain is the factor that has generated the most added value to the project. As a result of transnational contacts and a study visit, the project participants are piloting and implementing aspects of practice that they have observed

Several aspects of the Schola project are **transferable** to other LAG areas. The concept of clustering offers rural schools and communities a means of overcoming isolation and disadvantage. Indeed, this concept can be applied in other sectors, such as farming, in SMEs and among community groups. Community development approaches to ensuring parental participation in education are very transferable, and can be applied at primary and secondary levels.

Project description

■ 1. Brief history of the project

The current Schola project builds on a pilot action undertaken by IRD Duhallow and two Spanish LAGs, CIDER Prepirineo and Integral, at the end of Leader II. This pilot action confirmed the merits of promoting linkages between small rural schools both interterritorially and transnationally. The project also builds on a series of local development actions undertaken by IRD Duhallow, including the establishment of a network of primary school principals, preventive education projects in primary schools, training for parents' associations, information workshops and the development of youth organisations.

Parallel actions promoted by IRD Duhallow's Community Development Working Group addressed the issues of rural depopulation and the subsequent withdrawal of vital public services in marginal rural areas. The working group recognised the rural school as the most essential of all services, and the one on which the sustainability of others was often based. In order to promote sustainable community development, and to halt rural depopulation, the LAG actively promotes projects that enhance quality of life, and make rural areas attractive places in which to live.



■ 2. Main activities

All actions are overseen by a project steering group, which brings together representatives of the three Irish LAGs and the five schools. The steering group has devised a detailed two-year work programme (2004–06) including information seminars/workshops, Spanish language classes, resourcing of locally based projects, development of transnational linkages, participation in transnational study visits, clarification of policy objectives, facilitation of contacts, collaboration on studies and research, and information dissemination.

Teachers work with their counterparts in Spain exchanging information about the respective curricula and teaching methods. In 2004, the teachers met to design training material with the aim of enhancing the children’s appreciation of their local environment and community (with special focus on local interest, community resources, and historical and cultural features). A web page was developed by the Spanish partners to maintain ongoing contact between project participants.

Children, teachers and parents in Ireland learnt Spanish and studied the history and culture of Spain in preparation for a study visit in March 2005 when a group of children, their teachers and parent representatives travelled to CIDER Prepirineo (Aragon in northern Spain) to meet their counterparts from two- and three-teacher schools and to present the results of their work.

During 2005, workshops were held throughout the year, which were attended by parents and teachers. Speakers were invited to make presentations on various topics of relevance to the clustering and Schola themes (including presentations on the Spanish education system, the role of the small rural school, the cultural and historical links between Cork, Kerry and Spain, and child development).



The seminar on the Spanish education system introduced the Irish LAGs and schools to the system of *colegios rurales agrupados* (CRA — clusters of rural schools), which operates in Spain under the aegis of the Ministry of Education and

Culture. Under this system, the ministry employs qualified teachers, who are experts in a particular field, for example music, drama, art, ICT, English/French/Arabic, etc., and who travel between rural schools.

Since the start of the academic year in September 2005, the Irish schools have been piloting the CRA system, using resources from the Leader programme, in conjunction with a bursary, which they received from the IPPN (Irish Primary Principals’ Network). Experts have been recruited in the areas of drama, art and physical education (for the summer) and they have visited schools and implemented workshops for teachers and children.

The schools held joint in-service days and seminars facilitated by experts for students, their parents and school staff and management. They have pooled resources to address issues such as healthy eating. They have promoted parental involvement by convening community-based workshops on relevant social topics, including RSE (relationships and sexuality education) and substance abuse. The workshops provide a forum for information dissemination and consultation, and they enable schools to develop and enhance new and existing policies.

■ 3. Concrete outputs and results

Overall the project has achieved the following main results.

- It has supported linkages among various schools (at interterritorial and transnational levels).
- It has been implemented through a strong participatory approach, encouraging the active involvement of students, teachers and parents.
- It has delivered a wide range of services (language courses, workshops, study visits, etc.) to a wide range of local stakeholders.

Five Irish schools (with 12 teachers) are participating in the project (Cloghoula, Cullen, Kilcorney, Kilmurry, Carraig-an-lme), which have been selected from 36 schools in the catchment area. These schools are working with three partner schools in Spain. Overall, 94 children have participated in the programme and 93 volunteers have been involved in the project.

By bringing together schools (their students, teachers, parents and community) in Irish and Spanish regions, which have similar structural characteristics, Schola has already:

- enhanced the role of the primary school as an agent for community/rural development;



- identified and built on the similarities between the participating schools and communities, so as to promote greater European rural awareness and identity;
- enabled mainstream agencies to value and contribute to rural schools;
- supported networking, so that schools have a stronger collective voice;
- reduced the sense of isolation in rural schools and communities;
- enhanced awareness of local areas and resources, thereby promoting a better understanding of the rural environment;
- enriched the educational experience of the children through contacts with other schools, communities and cultures;
- provided teaching staff with a transnational forum for the exchange of ideas and the transfer of best practices;
- facilitated the exchange of experiences for students, teachers, parents and community representatives, so as to contribute to the formulation of a more holistic approach to education and community development.

■ 4. Problems encountered/ lessons learnt

There have been relatively few problems in developing the project. Initial investment in facilitation and capacity building were essential. The inputs and facilitation provided by IRD Duhallow staff and volunteers have ensured the focus of the project and the efficient delivery of project actions. The gap between Leader II and Leader+ was unhelpful in ensuring continuity in project actions during the initial pilot phase, while initial limitations on facilitation and capacity building under Leader+ (i.e. maximum of 20 % of the budget before 2002) reduced the level of added value that could be realised from the project.

The challenges encountered in pursuing the issues raised or decisions made by the Schola cluster relate to the piloting of the system of *colegios rurales agrupados* in Ireland. It has taken time to get consensus on identifying experts and in devising outline work programmes for them. This is partly due to the variations in the requirements of the schools and the skills of their respective staff teams. There may also be a degree of unfamiliarity with the idea of an 'outsider' coming into the classroom who has not been 'tested' in advance. Ireland lacks a system for recruiting/monitoring such experts. Moreover, the skills pool is small and it is not always easy to identify somebody whom everybody knows.

■ 5. The 'Leader+ added value' of the project

It is evident that unless Leader/local development groups intervene to support small rural schools, their public service ethos and openness to all will continue to be diluted as they struggle to compete with private and semi-private institutions favoured by some of the middle classes in suburban towns, and those who simply reside in the rural countryside, but who do not feel part of the community there.

Schola involves enhancing the educational experience of those who are participating in it. Yet, it would be an understatement to consider Schola as an educational project. Schola is a broadly based community development project that seeks to develop the rural school as an agent of personal development, training, community participation, social interaction, cultural resource development, and intergenerational learning.

■ 6. Duration

The project started in May 2004 and is ongoing.

■ 7. Budget

The overall budget for the project is EUR 134 000, of which EUR 80 000 is from the EAGGF and EUR 54 000 from national public funding.

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Illustrations provided by the LAG IRD Duhallow





ITALY

Social and environmental responsibility

Project context

The LAG Cosvel Srl is located in the area of Metapontino in the Basilicata region of southern Italy, which spreads from the Ionian Sea to inland hills and plains. The area is known as a profitable agro-industrial centre, specialising in citrus fruit, olive and vine production. There is a strong tradition of common regional marketing, enabling producers to reach large external markets. The agro-food sector is supported by several specialised leading research and development institutes with national and international reputations. An attempt to establish a chemical industry in the 1970s and 1980s was not entirely successful. However, the tourism sector has shown strong developments, due to one of the cleanest marine environments in Italy and other natural resources, as well as the famous ancient Greek ruins. Nevertheless, there is scope for further development, especially in the crafts sector.

The LAG's development strategy is based around the following main themes:

- rediscovery and adding value to local natural resources;
- preservation and use of traditional cultural assets;
- widening the appeal of the region's identity through diversified tourist attractions linked to local culture;
- integration of coastal and rural tourism;
- focus on quality of life through supporting entrepreneurship and training young people to avoid depopulation and maintain public services.

Facts about the territory

👤 **Population: 57 604 inhabitants**

👤 **Surface area: 768 km²**

👤 **Population density: 75 inhabitants/km²**

👤 **Number of municipalities: 10**





Why is this project good practice?

The project demonstrates a strong **area-based approach**. The local territory is dominated by agro-alimentary companies and farms that often participate in producer networks. The project targets these local producers through awareness-raising activities on ethical, social and environmental issues. These activities have increased the quality of the local production system, and stimulated the market for local produce that demonstrates strong environmental qualities. The activities have covered the whole production chain.

The LAG operates through a strong **partnership** of local actors (involving 10 public and 20 private members, as well as a social cooperative), and has previous partnership experience through Leader II. The extensive partnership (which also involves local authorities) strengthens the LAG's ability to encourage socially responsible behaviour and to motivate local authorities to be involved in local activities.

The project has an **innovative nature**, as the concept of ethical, social and environmental responsibility in local development is entirely new in the Italian production system. Only in recent years have larger companies started to adopt similar certifications to the one that the project has developed. The introduction of these issues into the primary sector and the adoption of quality standards by SMEs which often do not have previous cooperation and networking experience, constitute strong innovative elements. The introduction of the certification and quality standards improves the competitiveness of SMEs.

The project constitutes an experimental pilot action of adopting certifications of social and environmental

responsibility for SMEs in the rural context. This concept is **transferable** to other rural areas.

■ 1. Brief history of the project

The organisation of fruit and vegetable producers (Assofruit) is a member of the LAG Cosvel Srl. The main role of the organisation is to promote vegetable and fruit production and ensure quality control of these products. The actions taken by Assofruit focus on environmental protection and have strong social and ecological benefits. These actions have resulted in an increased awareness of environmental, consumer health and security issues, and motivated the LAG to integrate this project into its local development plan.

■ 2. Main activities

The first part of the project was targeted at local farmers. During the initial phase, farmers of the LAG were interviewed in order to gain a better understanding of needs and key issues. Following the initial assessment, a consultation process was carried out with selected farmers in order to prepare them for obtaining a 'social and environmental responsibility' certification. In order to qualify for this certification, rural enterprises had to be able to respond to the needs of the local community and develop environmental and ethical awareness.

The second part of the project was targeted at local authorities and aims to raise awareness about local issues and encourage local authorities to promote social cohesion in the area.

■ 3. Concrete outputs and results

Since the project is ongoing, the final results are not yet visible. The initial results of the project are reflected in the improved quality of work and the environment at territorial level. Generally, local enterprises have become more aware of the social and environmental issues of the region (some of them also previously took part in the Eurogap and ISO 14001 certification processes).

Information has been gathered in order to introduce evaluation tools to promote environmental awareness. Calls have been launched to select beneficiary companies and local authorities.





■ 4. Problems encountered/ lessons learnt

No major problems were reported during the implementation phase. Generally, the participating companies have been enthusiastic about participating in the project. SMEs which have not been part of larger networks of producers sometimes found the procedure to qualify for the 'social and environmental responsibility' certification difficult. Therefore, the project has tried to encourage networking, exchange of experience and transfer of know-how among local producers.

■ 5. The 'Leader+ added value' of the project

The main added value of Leader+ is that it supports the social, ethical and environmental responsibility of producers in the area by introducing a voluntary qualification system. The project provides local enterprises with guidelines and has created a quality brand for their local products. Specific plans for setting up a territorial marketing strategy are envisaged.








■ 6. Duration

The project started in June 2004 and is ongoing.

■ 7. Budget

The overall budget for the project is EUR 144 978, of which EUR 48 930 is from the EAGGF, EUR 16 310 from national public funding and EUR 79 738 from private funding.

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Illustrations provided by the LAG Cosvel Srl



Valorisation of typical products in local restaurants

Project context

The LAG Mare & Monti is located in the north of Sardinia, an area stretching from the east to west coasts of the island mostly in the hills of the province of Nuoro. In the area's recent history, there have been increasing socio-economic problems due in large part to continuing depopulation of rural areas in favour of coastal and urban zones. There is a bias towards the agriculture sector, in particular dairy production and cattle breeding. Whereas sheep numbers have grown, goats have decreased, despite the strong tradition on the island, due to the reduction in prices of goat's milk. Apart from agriculture, the only other sectors present in the region are crafts, construction and commerce. There has been a growth in the hospitality sector, even though this is based largely on micro-enterprise. Tourism has been increasingly linked to the distinctiveness of the territory, and there has thus been an emphasis on natural resources, local folklore and crafts in rural areas. However, the province of Nuoro has seen an overall reduction in the number of tourists compared with other areas of Sardinia, due to a lack of large-scale facilities.

The local development strategy has concentrated on adding value to the territory's natural and cultural heritage, improving the economic environment to generate employment, and increasing the organisational capacity of the local communities.

Why is this project good practice?

The LAG has taken an **area-based approach**, as it focuses on local products, and the project has involved a wide range of local stakeholders (producers, restaurants, schools, etc.). The school visits to local production companies have

Facts about the territory

- 👤 **Population: 30 727 inhabitants**
- 🌍 **Surface area: 1 263 km²**
- 👤 **Population density: 24 inhabitants/km²**
- 👤 **Number of municipalities: 24**



helped young people to identify themselves better with the values of their regions.

The LAG has a well-balanced structure consisting of both public and private actors. The **partnership** includes municipalities and other public authorities, cooperatives and producer associations representing private actors and representatives of different sectors. The project has reflected a strong **bottom-up approach**, as it has been implemented by a wide range of local stakeholders, representing both the supply and the demand sides of local food production (i.e. producers and restaurants), as well as addressing the wider public (i.e. schools, civil servants, etc.) through awareness-raising actions. A particularly interesting element has been the successful involvement of the local health insurance company.

The project has involved restaurants from non-Leader areas thus ensuring successful territorial **networking**. This approach has also highlighted the **transferability** of the project concept to other areas.

Through the inclusion of awareness-raising elements, the project has taken a long-term approach. The initial market study emphasised the need to focus both on the supply and the demand sides in order to efficiently develop the market for local products. The project is therefore expected to have a longer-term **sustainable impact** on the regional food industry and market, as well as on the attitude of local people towards healthy eating. Targeting young people (through schools) is a particularly long-term strategy.

Project description

■ 1. Brief history of the project

The project aimed to extend the market for local products in order to improve the quality of local restaurants and to promote nutritional education. Initial market research assessed both the supply (of local produce) and demand (of mostly restaurants, but also of school canteens) sides of the local market. Among other things, the research looked into the possibilities of establishing delivery agreements between local restaurants and producers.

On the supply side, the research assessed the quality and the typical range of local products. It indicated a limited production base (i.e. low diversity of products), and a concentration on agriculture and cattle breeding in particular.

On the demand side, the research focused on local restaurants, including their products and services. Furthermore, it analysed the provision of meals in school canteens, including their food procurement procedures and processes of food preparation. The possibilities for the introduction of special diets using local ecological products with high nutritional values were examined.

On the basis of the market assessment, and the links between regional producers and purchasers in particular, two main areas of intervention were defined for the project:

- the creation of a local producer–restaurant network;
- the development of a communication system in order to improve the quality of food education (with particular focus on local products).

■ 2. Main activities

Key activities of the project include the following.

(a) The creation of a local producer–restaurant network

This process started in September 2005 with an analysis of the conditions/factors needed to set up, coordinate, promote and operate a local restaurant network. The network now includes a range of restaurants that have committed themselves to signing a partnership agreement that focuses on providing quality services using local agro-food products. Some 15 restaurants outside the Leader+ area are also part of the network. In addition, 32 producers (including bakery, pastry, cheese and wine producers) have also signed up to the network to supply local quality products.

The establishment of agreements between restaurants and producers is ongoing. The LAG provides promotional and dissemination support for the network (e.g. through the organisation of educational tours).

(b) The setting-up of a communication system in order to improve alimentary education (with special focus on the use of local products)

In the framework of this activity, a range of seminars have been organised for school canteens (with the participation of civil servants and staff responsible for the procurement in canteens) and for families with the help of nutrition experts in order to raise awareness of the value of local products and their contribution to a healthier diet.

In addition to the seminars, further awareness-raising activities have been carried out, including:



- writing a theatre play for schoolchildren on the life cycle of local products;
- producing information material for teachers, parents and pupils on the value of local products;
- preparing special exercise books for schoolchildren, with animated illustrations/cartoons on local products;
- organising school visits to companies producing local products.

Furthermore, a memorandum of understanding has been signed with the local health insurance company, which provided information and guidance for the activities of the project (e.g. information on healthy diet for the exercise book, guidance for the preparation and execution of seminars, etc.).

■ 3. Concrete outputs and results

As a result of the above activities, the following outputs have been produced by the project:

- agreements in support of the local producer–restaurant network;
- information seminars for civil servants and families;
- a theatre play for schoolchildren on the life cycle of local products;
- information material for teachers, parents and pupils;
- an exercise book with cartoons for children;
- school visits to local companies;
- a memorandum of understanding with the local health insurance company.

■ 4. Problems encountered/ lessons learnt

The low number of restaurants in the Leader area created a difficulty for the implementation of the project. Territorial cooperation, i.e. the involvement of restaurants from non- LAG regions, helped to overcome this difficulty.

The importance of local ecological products was highlighted in 2003 by local authorities through the definition of specific criteria and priorities for procurement procedures in school canteens. One of the main lessons of this project was that these actions should be developed further, and that an adequate information policy targeted at a wide range of stakeholders (including administrations, families, students and teachers) has to be developed in order to achieve a long-term change in attitudes and behaviour towards local production.

■ 5. The ‘Leader+ added value’ of the project

The strategy of the LAG is reflecting a long-term approach towards local production. Its main added value is that it addresses both the supply (strengthening local producers) and the demand (main users of local produce) sides.

■ 6. Duration

The project started on 15 March 2004 and was completed in December 2006.

■ 7. Budget

The overall budget for the project was EUR 255 306, of which EUR 156 310 was from the EAGGF and EUR 98 996 from public funding.

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Illustrations provided by the LAG Mare & Monti



LUXEMBOURG

‘Wonderful hiking in Müllerthal’ and ‘Mills inventory, excursion and regional route’

Project context

The area around Müllerthal is known mainly for its unique nature and landscape and its impressive cultural monuments originating from different historical ages. Therefore, the key values of the region lie in its unspoiled nature and cultural heritage.

The main objective of the Leader+ strategy of the LAG Müllerthal is to make best use of its natural and cultural heritage, primarily by supporting the agriculture and tourism sector in the region. In order to promote sustainable regional development, it is necessary to give appropriate consideration to both ecological and socio-cultural dimensions. In order to implement the regional development strategy, the projects are supported in three main fields: (i) nature and landscape; (ii) leisure, culture and tourism; and (iii) education and communication.

Why are these projects good practices?

Both projects focus on adding value to local natural and cultural resources, i.e. they follow an **area-based approach**. On the one hand, the first project builds on the main natural asset of the region: the beautiful landscape that is characterised by interesting formations of sandstone. On the other hand, the second project explores the value of local mills with strong historical value (since they were the driving forces of rural economic development in earlier times), and which give a unique ecological character to the region.

Both projects are characterised by **bottom-up** working methods. They have been developed and discussed

Facts about the territory

- 👤 **Population: 20 814 inhabitants**
- 👤 **Surface area: 311 km²**
- 👤 **Population density: 67 inhabitants/km²**
- 👤 **Number of municipalities: 15**



within the framework of working groups, which include representatives of the municipalities, tourism associations, service providers and other local stakeholders. The working groups serve as open discussion platforms and advisory bodies in the process of project implementation. The functions of these groups have been gradually extended to deal with other factors that contribute to the region's development (e.g. development of regional culinary traditions).

Working in **partnership** is a key characteristic of the projects. The LAG Müllerthal consists of 15 municipalities



and 20 organisations that represent various sectors and groups in the region (e.g. tourism, youth or cultural associations). The LAG is responsible for creating the 'Mills' inventory, excursion and regional route' ('Mills' inventory) project, whereas the regional tourism association took responsibility for the 'Wonderful hiking in Müllerthal' ('Wonderful Müllerthal') project. The two organisations cooperate closely and share tasks related to overall coordination. The elaboration of the projects was carried out within the framework of two working groups (on trekking and on industrial and cultural heritage) that represent a wide range of local stakeholders.

The projects have a strong value in integrating and motivating various sectors in the region. 'Wonderful Müllerthal' can be considered as an umbrella initiative, which has set the scene for a series of complementary projects. The 'Mills' inventory' project encouraged the networking of regional service providers, contributing to the development of an **integrated development strategy** (including the development of new products, regional culinary specialities and tourism packages).

Both projects are planning to develop transnational **cooperation** with similar initiatives. The 'Wonderful Müllerthal' project established links with the neighbouring Eifel region in Germany which is developing similar plans for trekking paths, and it was the 'Mills' inventory' project that built the first contacts with similar initiatives in Germany, France and the Netherlands.

The concepts of both projects are **transferable** to other regions (i.e. development of path networks and thematic routes taking advantage of local natural and cultural resources). This is also reflected in the fact that the initial analysis, training and guidance in relation to the path planning have been carried out by an international (external) expert.

Both projects are expected to have a **sustainable** impact on the region. The involvement of local stakeholders in the development of the projects strengthens their commitment to local regional development and helps to increase local identity. The establishment of communication platforms (e.g. working groups) is expected to have a lasting impact on the region's capacity for development. At the same time, the 'Mills' inventory' project contributes to the development of new products, events and culinary tourism.

Project description

■ 1. Brief history of the projects

Müllerthal ranks among the best-known tourist and leisure destinations in Luxembourg for trekking and walking. The main strength of the region is its beautiful scenery characterised by sandstone. The LAG aims to develop trekking and walking opportunities in the region. Therefore, comprehensive mapping, analysis and quality





assessment of existing paths were launched. These activities are embedded in continuous awareness-raising events, such as workshops and information meetings.

At the same time, the mills, which gave the region as well as the LAG its name, have been discovered as potential assets. A large number of mills are located in the area (also called 'mills valley') along the Rivers Sauer, Weisse and Schwarze Ern and their tributaries. However, for a long time this cultural heritage was not considered to be a potential cultural asset. The LAG decided to develop a series of complementary concepts, which aim at developing the mills. This is expected to strengthen the region's tourism potential and to raise awareness of this unique cultural heritage among the local and regional population.

Mills are landmark buildings in the area and often date back to the historical roots of settlements. In addition, watermills are linked to water channels that are important for local agriculture. However, in recent times, many mills have been transformed or destroyed. The inventory created by the project has led to a comprehensive overview of mills, which is based on historical information from maps, land registers, monographs, materials available from current owners and unwritten tradition.

■ 2. Main activities

The first project entitled 'Wonderful hiking in Müllerthal' is aiming to develop trekking and walking in the Müllerthal region. The project seeks:

- to analyse the region's tourism strengths and weaknesses (based on a consistent set of criteria);
- to train a group of trekking experts to carry out the assessment;
- to organise workshops and raise awareness for the initiative (in particular among tourism providers);
- to develop a marketing concept for the region as a destination for 'active' leisure (focusing on hiking, mountain biking and walking).

The second project entitled 'Mills' inventory, excursion and regional route' aims:

- to rediscover the mills as a cultural heritage of the region;
- to accumulate know-how with regard to the development of a thematic route;
- to support and preserve some of the mills, and make selected mills accessible to visitors (including residents, tourists and schoolchildren);
- to raise the awareness of residents about the cultural heritage of the region;

- to establish interregional and transnational cooperation with similar projects.

The objectives will be achieved through the setting-up of an inventory of the existing mills of the 15 partner communities of the LAG Müllerthal, which will serve as the basis for the 'mills thematic route'. Tourist events will be organised, and a network of local hotels and restaurants will be developed within the framework of tourism packages.

■ 3. Concrete outputs and results

At the beginning of the 'Wonderful Müllerthal' project, a study was commissioned in order to provide an initial SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis of regional tourism. The study showed severe deficiencies with regard to tourism information services for trekkers and visitors along the existing paths, and a lack of accommodation, restaurants, hostels and inns along major routes.

The 'Wonderful Müllerthal' project is expected to achieve the following results:

- mapping and analysis of trekking paths in the region;
- identification of the major flagship routes;
- production of a flyer and information for trekkers, mountain bikers and Nordic walkers on the Internet;
- the basis for a comprehensive tourism guide for trekkers and a uniform concept for visitor guidance;
- the cornerstones of a marketing concept about 'corporate regional design'.

The project will also prepare the digitalisation of path planning in order to define additional routes, to analyse routes and to produce maps. The process will also contribute to the establishment of schemes for the maintenance of the paths.

The 'Mills' inventory' project will result in the following main outcomes:

- an overview of all existing mills, including detailed information on the ownership structure, the current use of buildings, the state of buildings, and the remains of mills' equipment, etc.;
- a regional guide to the mills and a promotional flyer, as well as multilingual descriptions of the routes in a brochure;
- specific maps, and visitor guidance along selected 'theme paths';
- thematic events;
- a book on mills of the region with detailed historical



and technical information and a description of the cultural and natural heritage of the region.

■ 4. Problems encountered/ lessons learnt

One of the major challenges has been to involve local stakeholders in the project planning, strategy development and project implementation. Local stakeholders have to be informed about the advantages of participation. This has not always been an easy task, since many municipalities still prefer to carry out tourism activities in isolation.

In order to develop a comprehensive concept for tourism development in the region, the key target groups and specific project focus had to be identified. Trekkers have been identified as the key target group for the project, and less emphasis has been put on other activities (i.e. mountain biking, Nordic walking).

While developing the trekking routes, forest owners' interests had to be taken into account. Furthermore, issues regarding the maintenance of the paths needed to be clarified (i.e. division of responsibilities between the municipalities and the Ministry of Tourism in a joint management system).

During the development of the mills' inventory, it became evident that many sites of interest are currently being used for various purposes (e.g. as storage places), which makes it difficult to open these sites to the wider public. Therefore, a key challenge for this project has been to commit owners to the project and make them accept the overall project strategy. This process has been facilitated by open discussions and awareness raising.

■ 5. The 'Leader+ added value' of the projects

Leader+ has contributed greatly to local strategy development, in particular in the field of tourism. The programme has made it possible for isolated service providers to approximate their views. Cooperation in developing the region's market position is essential for gaining visibility on a wider (i.e. domestic or international) market. Through the emergence of stable cooperation patterns and the partnership approach, Leader+ encourages the development of local capacities.

■ 6. Duration

The projects started in December 2004 and will be completed in December 2007.

■ 7. Budget

The overall budget for the projects is EUR 125 900, of which EUR 25 180 is from the EAGGF and EUR 100 720 from public funding.

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Illustrations provided by the LAG Müllerthal



THE NETHERLANDS

Drenthe grass roots planning

Project context

The area of the Oost Drenthe Leader+ group consists of four parts, each of which has its own specific characteristics: the flood plain of the Drentsche Aa, the Hondsrug, the Hunze valley and the raised peat bog district.

There is extensive agriculture in the area which is heavily dependent on the cultivation of industrial potatoes. Tourism is popular in Drenthe and some areas have developed into the most popular holiday destinations in the Netherlands. At the coastal sandy regions, there has been excessive pressure from tourism, whereas in other regions, such as the peat bog district and the Hunze valley, tourism infrastructure is very sparse. Commercial activities are limited and a number of small villages are scattered over the entire area.

The Oost Drenthe LAG aims to improve the environment by enhancing nature, forestry and the landscape of its region. The LAG strives to develop rural tourism and boost entrepreneurship relating to small-scale commercial activities. As there is widespread agriculture in the region, the LAG focuses on enhancing agricultural diversification while at the same time looking at strengthening the socio-cultural quality of life. The main strategy of the LAG is valorisation of natural and cultural resources.

Why is this project good practice?

The project has demonstrated **innovation** as it has implemented a new kind of governance approach for ideas from local communities to municipal and provincial planning. Village planning is in itself **innovative** as it gives expression to local feelings and aspirations; it creates links so that information generated is directly put into the local

Facts about the territory

- 👤 **Population: 82 300 inhabitants**
- 🌍 **Surface area: 692 km²**
- 👤 **Population density: 118 inhabitants/km²**
- 👤 **Number of municipalities: 3**



planning process. The province of Drenthe and Leader+ have helped to spread these benefits throughout the area.

Although the model is top-down, the value of its processes in engaging, motivating and organising the local villagers is demonstrated by a clear **bottom-up approach**. The process facilitated by STAMM (consulting group) involves a handover method to villagers and this is crucial for the



success of project planning and in identifying local needs. It is a community development approach which seeks to build capacity before local people take control.

The overall idea came from a member of the **local action group** who was the representative of the project. This member was aware of the work of STAMM and BOKD (broad consultative group of small villages in Drenthe) in stimulating local village plans and he proposed the **partnership** to the LAG. The LAG members were instrumental in shaping and implementing the project alongside the major players in village planning and local government.

The project has supported **sustainability** of the villages by ensuring that strategic planning from local authorities is engaged with the concerns of the local people. The method has also generated greater engagement of local people and a larger investment of volunteer time in improving and enhancing the village. Other important benefits for the long-term **sustainability** of the area include the building of community capacity and the ongoing dialogue around 'common concerns'.

Project description

■ 1. Brief history of the project

For several years, citizens and government bodies have tried to find new ways to work together in Drenthe. For example, government bodies have tried to involve people in decision-making exercises and people themselves have sought new ways to have their say. This initiative set out to raise the level of involvement of local villagers in the development of their neighbourhoods.

The province of Drenthe is the promoter of the initiative; it is implemented by STAMM CMO and BOKD. STAMM CMO was established in the 1960s and is a provincial non-profit organisation for social affairs and community development. BOKD is a lobbying organisation for small villages. Both organisations have experience in grass roots planning in social and spatial perspectives.

For example, 'Rural development new style' is a project of the province of Drenthe. It was developed following a pilot project carried out by BOKD. It included three village development plans carried out by BOKD and two village agendas carried out by STAMM. It resulted in plans where villagers highlighted the qualities that are important

to them and raised an agenda for the future in terms of concrete ideas and projects.

STAMM and BOKD were approached by a representative of the province, who was also a member of the Ooste Drenthe LAG. They asked STAMM and BOKD to develop a new kind of plan that would be more practical and that could be used in conjunction with the spatial planning exercise. Ideas from LAG members were fed into the process which inspired BOKD and STAMM. Leader+ funding supported the process that villagers undertook to develop their ideas into a local agenda.

■ 2. Main activities

A local action agenda was drawn up in Drenthe to focus on the village landscape. Using a range of participatory methods, people were asked to express the identity of their villages by starting with existing advantages and shortcomings. At a regional level, an expert analysis was carried out of landscape features for municipal and provincial policies affecting the region. After completing both of these tasks, joint design workshops were held whereby villagers, assisted by administrative officials and experts, drew up their village action agenda.

The project was piloted in Zuidlaarderveen where villagers developed their own village plan, the Dorpsagenda, which highlighted the qualities that are important to villagers. A programme for the future was also developed. A brainstorming session generated 300 ideas. Smaller working groups then worked on the ideas from the brainstorming session and an agenda was developed which was presented to the village for approval. There were many ambitious project ideas such as the creation of a boating route/swimming pool down a restored canalised river, traffic regulations, housing a gym in the village hall, and embedding children/schools more in community life. Most of these ideas became LAG projects.

These ideas were presented to the village by means of an attractive four-page document. Volunteers were called for to undertake specific tasks. The process produced 60 volunteers all working in teams on various chosen tasks. The village association retained control to ensure practical matters were taken care of.

The process for developing this plan is the formation of an 'agenda commission' which acts as a steering group for the project. It comprises villagers from each group involved in village life, for example the elderly, young



people, newcomers, established residents, car and non-car owners and families.

■ 3. Concrete outputs and results

The project has been successful in stimulating people's sense of responsibility for their surroundings and creating greater care for and awareness of the village's history. There is also an increased sense of identity and social cohesion as local people are motivated.

High levels of participation have resulted from the use of this model (80 % returned a questionnaire) and a large increase in the number of volunteers has enhanced social contacts.

The project has been linked to local governments at the municipal level and has the advantage of being able to transform visions into plans. It has realised a better understanding between residents and planners, and has led to an increased synergy between local needs and a better integration with top-down policies and plans.

A book was produced which describes the method of producing such an agenda and 300 copies were distributed to municipalities and welfare organisations in the province. There are early signs that this method could be used as mainstream best practice.

■ 4. Problems encountered/ lessons learnt

It is important that the project process continues to sustain and engage actively with the local communities; any stagnation in activities could lead to loss of support and involvement from local people. Another concern is that the municipality may take over the agenda leaving the community process behind and excluding villages. Therefore, the method does need some degree of consensus in the village — if there are fundamental conflicts the method is less useful.

The LAG has learnt that complete clarity is needed when setting up the work plan. Some early successes in the project can also help the process which stimulates/prolongs further community involvement.

■ 5. The 'Leader+ added value' of the project

The project has been truly bottom-up and participative of local communities. Support from Leader+ has made the

project possible, since funding of this kind of process is only available through Leader+.

The LAG has supported the plan and was able to refine it by making it more concrete in the application process. The 'pilot nature' of Leader is clearly demonstrated as there are signs that the process may be mainstreamed by the province as part of its spatial planning.

■ 6. Duration

The project lifetime was two years starting in December 2004 and finishing in December 2006.

■ 7. Budget


The total budget for the project was EUR 155 073, of which EUR 51 190 was from the EAGGF, EUR 62 050 from national public funding and EUR 41 833 from private funding.


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Illustrations provided by the LAG Oost Drenthe

Photo 1: Paul Paris, Amsterdam

Photo 2: Cees Brauns, Zuidlaarderveen





PORTUGAL

Starting from the beginning: training in theatrical activities in rural areas



Project context

The territory of Adriminho is located in the north-eastern part of Portugal, bordered on the north by the autonomous region of Galicia (Spain), on the south by the Vale do Lima communes, and on the west by the Atlantic Ocean. The area (which lies along the River Minho) is the most populous border region of the country (with a 70-kilometre-long border area), and is characterised by strong cross-border relationships. The region is famous for its production of 'vinho verde' (especially Alvarinho wine), farm and village tourism, and cultural traditions. The principal sectors of the region are agriculture (wine), textiles and trading.

The priority theme for the local strategy is improving the quality of life of the local population. The strategy is developed on the basis of local resources, such as the area's cultural heritage. Key intervention areas include socio-economic development of Vale do Minho, attraction of investment, job creation and diversification of economic activities, promotion of local culture, and preservation of the environment and natural resources.

Facts about the territory

- 👤 Population: 79 480 inhabitants
- 🌍 Surface area: 951 km²
- 👤 Population density: 85 inhabitants/km²
- 👤 Number of municipalities: 5





Why is this project good practice?

The project has been characterised by an **area-based approach**. It has provided support to the local theatrical company (Comédias do Minho) in carrying out theatrical training activities in the local area. Access to information, training and culture is an important factor in the improvement in the quality of life in rural areas. The project has strengthened local cultural traditions and heritage through presenting plays on local subjects, such as the legends of the Minho valley. Culture is also important in attracting more visitors, tourists and residents to the region. It is widely recognised that culture contributes not only to local social development, but also to economic development through stimulating the growth of the entertainment sector and increasing the attractiveness of the local area.

The Adriminho LAG has been formed on the basis of a strong **partnership** of several local public and private stakeholders, including the five municipalities, tourism organisations, farmers and entrepreneurs, etc. The project has been developed through the cooperation of local stakeholders (particularly local municipalities, entrepreneurs and schools).

This project emerged from the need for more cultural interventions, which was identified by the local municipalities (Melgaço, Monção, Paredes de Coura, Valença and Vila Nova de Cerveira). These municipalities are taking an active part in driving the area's cultural development strategy. The assembly (Comunidade Intermunicipal do Vale do Minho) formed by these municipalities is involved in strategic meetings on cultural development of the region.

A cultural network in the Minho valley (Rede Intermunicipal do Vale do Minho) has been created with the participation of a local cultural development officer and technician, the Comunidade Intermunicipal do Vale do Minho and the Adriminho LAG. The **network** has developed a local cultural development strategy during working meetings, and has identified the main intervention areas and actions needed. As a result, the association Comédias do Minho has been created with the aim of supporting cultural promotion in the area.

This project **integrates** into the wider cultural development strategy the type of cultural activities which the municipalities have developed for the Minho valley. As part of this strategy, some important cultural investments have been carried out in recent years (including Centro Cultural and the Museu Regional of Paredes de Coura; the Casa da

Cultura and the Núcleo Museológico, in Melgaço; the Casa do Curro and the Cine-Teatro João Verde in Monção and the Biblioteca Municipal in Valença).

Project description

1. Brief history of the project

Cultural and theatrical activities are considered to be the main driving forces of social and personal development in the region. The project 'Theatrical company in the rural environment' initiated by the Minho valley town councils (Câmara Municipal de Melgaço, Câmara Municipal de Monção, Câmara Municipal de Valença, Câmara Municipal de Paredes de Coura and Câmara Municipal de Vila Nova de Cerveira) aims to contribute to local development in the Minho valley by strengthening local cultural activities. The local town councils have set up an association, the Comédias do Minho, as part of the local cultural strategy. The association has applied for Leader+ funding in order to carry out a range of theatrical training activities in the local area. The main purpose of this project is to improve local cultural knowledge and to make the local population more aware of culture through involving local people in theatrical activities.

2. Main activities

In the framework of the project, a wide range of training and cultural activities have been implemented, such as:

- an introductory theatrical language course, with the aim of introducing theatrical language to pupils in local schools and of ensuring the use of this language by setting up theatrical groups in schools;
- the 'theatre in the school' initiative, with the aim of training teachers in primary, secondary and technical schools in five municipalities on how to use theatrical language as a pedagogical tool;
- non-professional actor training, with the aim of developing non-professional theatre activities.

Other activities aim to raise awareness and spread theatrical culture in local areas through presenting theatre plays for children and adults and the staging of literary works.

3. Concrete outputs and results

Through the activities of the newly created local theatre company, local cultural activities have been strengthened and stimulated. Several plays have been staged in the local parishes. The project has also resulted in the



implementation of local cultural activities and structures in the participating municipalities. These movements have particularly impacted on young people in the rural area. Culture has been brought closer to local people and their understanding of cultural issues has been improved.

Due to the positive results of the project, some educational bodies are now promoting theatrical activities, and theatre groups have been created by the local cultural and recreational associations in some of the parishes (multiplier effects of the project).

■ 4. Problems encountered/ lessons learnt

The association has been facing difficulties in reaching financial autonomy to carry out its activities. Although the association receives support from the local town councils, it has been operating as a non-profit organisation.

The project also faced difficulties due to a lack of public interest (particularly of older people) in theatrical plays. Local people traditionally do not go to the theatre and it has been difficult to change their attitude in this respect. This lack of interest has weakened the overall success of the project.

■ 5. The 'Leader+ added value' of the project

The main added value of the project is that it has introduced theatrical activities into the local area and brought culture closer to local people. It is difficult to ensure the financial sustainability of theatrical activities in rural areas where these activities have no strong traditions. The Leader+ funding has made it possible to carry out training activities and to stage various theatrical productions in the local area through support provided for the remuneration of the actors and for the equipment used. It has ensured the operation of the local theatrical association.

The Leader+ funding has helped to raise awareness of the importance and added value of culture in local social development and in the improvement of quality of life. As a result, the project has received financial support from the town councils of the Minho valley and the national Ministry of Culture.

■ 6. Duration

The project ran for a year. It started in June 2005 and finished in June 2006.

■ 7. Budget

The overall budget for the project was EUR 251 330, of which EUR 94 249 was from the EAGGF, EUR 31 416 from national public funding and EUR 125 665 from private funding.

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Illustrations provided by the LAG Adriminho





SPAIN

Regional quality brand

Project context

The LAG is located in the county of El Condado, in the north of the province of Jaén, which is characterised by a rich variety of flora and fauna, fertile lands and an attractive landscape with olive groves, mountain ranges, a natural park to the east and the River Guadalimar to the south. The local population of El Condado depends almost exclusively on agricultural activities (95 %), with the production of olive oil as well as cattle breeding being central to the local economy. There is a strong presence of micro-enterprises or self-employed people and rural cooperatives. Other basic trade or services are below the provincial average and for years the area has been the least visited province in Spain.

Levels of education and income are low and unemployment rates are much higher than the provincial and national averages. Only 17.4 % women of working age are active, and more than a third of the active population are unemployed. Fewer opportunities and lower salaries in the labour market lead to an outflow of local people, particularly women, which in the long run can cause demographic problems.

The LAG's strategy is to exploit all endogenous possibilities and resources of the territory by mobilising local agents and by uniting efforts to create new projects and ideas for truly integrated and sustainable rural development. The main focus is to add value to local products and to improve the image of different rural regions while balancing and integrating the activities between these regions.

Facts about the territory

- Population: 24 813 inhabitants**
- Surface area: 1 548 km²**
- Population density: 16 inhabitants/km²**
- Number of municipalities: 8**





It was seen as a necessity to involve and cooperate with actors from different sectors (agro-food, tourism, crafts, industry, environmental sector, etc.) and rural areas to set up jointly high-quality standards for all companies, products and services. The activities developed by the project are transferable at both interterritorial and transnational levels. Overall, all regions involved are searching for synergies and opportunities to diversify and to improve the competitiveness of their rural economies.

Project description

■ 1. Brief history of the project

The main purpose of the project in the first phase of Leader+ (2002–06) was to set up a regional quality brand in different rural economies in Spain (as well as separately in Italy and France). It is **an instrument to improve a region's image and competitiveness** by offering high-quality products and services. Initially, the Spanish LAG El Condado de Jaén, the territory of Cathare in France and a third partner from Italy (Valle Umbra) exchanged experience and mobilised local actors in their own countries/regions. The project has recently been boosted by further funding for a second phase (2006–08) aiming to introduce a European quality brand through transnational cooperation with other European countries (France, Greece and Italy).

In Spain, nine LAGs took part in the first phase, actively involving and cooperating with a number of public institutions, private companies and social groups to set up the regional quality brand and agreeing on shared principles and values. The regional quality brand differs between territories as each LAG adds a regional logo with the name of the area accompanied by the common brand, the logo used by all groups with the legend 'Calidad Rural'.

For the new phase (2006–08), the transnational network consists of 19 LAGs (10 Spanish, five Greek, three Italian, and one French). The groups are in the process of drafting a regulation for a competitive European quality brand and are debating a number of ways of how to introduce a common quality brand at European level (including the design, future management, control mechanism, joint actions, etc.).

■ 2. Main activities

During the first phase of the project, the county of El Condado in Jaén actively exchanged experience with a group in Cathare in France, which was already at an advanced stage of implementing regional quality brands

Why is this project good practice?

The project has followed a strong **area-based approach** and has built on the endogenous strengths of each region. It has valued local resources and the heritage of each area, aimed to protect the natural environment and worked towards sustainable local development.

The project has further demonstrated a **strong partnership approach** to achieve balanced and integrated rural development. It has involved a wide range of local stakeholders such as public and private representatives of city councils, trade unions, cultural organisations and social groups, private sector companies and universities.

There has also been a **strong cooperation and networking approach** within the initiative. In the first phase, El Condado worked in a network with nine other Spanish territories and in the second phase with 10 groups including cooperation with the LAG Sobrarbe y La Ribagorza. The network already had some exchanges with groups from other countries in the first phase although the focus was more interterritorial. This was expected to become intensified in the second phase. Training and professional workshops encourage exchanges and cooperation between different LAGs but also improve the skills and knowledge of local/regional agents in these areas. Cooperation is not limited to a simple exchange of experience but also to the common goal of implementing activities jointly, such as the creation of the regional quality brand. The LAGs not only use the latter as a marketing or commercial tool, but also as an instrument to stimulate debate around local development issues. They aim to encourage dialogue between the different rural regions and stakeholders, initially at local and national levels, and then at European and international levels.

'Marca de calidad territorial' has been an **integrated project** open to all deprived rural regions and their inhabitants.





and served as a good example. A study tour was organised and the LAG started to promote the initiative among other groups and regions in Spain. The groups then introduced quality brands in each of their areas and set up clear guidelines on how to use the common quality brand (design, colour) together with the regional quality brands. A draft regulation for all LAGs was drawn up outlining all rules and shared values and principles. The groups further participated in diverse intraregional marketing activities and national fairs.

■ 3. Concrete outputs and results

The outputs and results for the first phase were:

- procedures and responsibilities for each participating LAG were clarified;
- rules, conditions and minimum quality criteria for products and services were agreed on by all LAGs;
- a common quality brand (or logo) for the nine regional quality brands was created and designed;
- nine regional quality brands were introduced by the nine LAGs;
- shared values and principles were set out in the draft regulation, including:
 - general respect for the environment (i.e. saving water, energy and raw materials, no contamination),
 - social responsibility of firms (i.e. use of local resources, responsible marketing, innovation, responsible and social management),
 - development of equal opportunities;
- management and control mechanisms (quality assurance system) were set up for each region to guarantee that everyone complies with these standards when using the quality brands;
- promotional material and Internet displays were produced, and training seminars and workshops organised.

■ 4. Problems encountered/ lessons learnt

At interterritorial level, the network faced major problems with setting minimum standards for the common brand as each of the LAGs in the Spanish autonomous areas presented different eligibility criteria and conditions for the usage of their own regional quality brands, which slowed down the process. Different regulations and administrative processes made it impossible to set up a European quality brand at transnational level in the first phase. The project, however, successfully managed to mobilise local/regional agents in these rural areas and achieved good initial results.

■ 5. The ‘Leader+ added value’ of the project

The project has provided economies of scale for the different groups through joint actions and marketing efforts. It has encouraged joint promotion of high-quality products and services and fostered relationships between the different institutions involved. Improved commercial operations have enabled them to be more competitive and to better face a globalised market together. Through the Leader+ approach, shared values and principles have been created and the rural areas have made better use of their local resources while actions have been more balanced and weaker sub-areas have been integrated.

■ 6. Duration

The project’s duration was almost three years and five months. It started on 7 November 2002 and was completed on 30 March 2006.

■ 7. Budget

The total cost of the project was EUR 771 143, of which EUR 510 789 was from the EAGGF, EUR 227 634 from national public funding and EUR 32 720 from private funding.

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Illustrations provided by the LAG Asociación para el Desarrollo Rural de la Comarca de ‘El Condado — Jaén’



SPAIN

Nature reserve of Las Loras

Project context

The territory of the project is located at the eastern end of the Cantabrian mountain range, bordering the autonomous communities of Cantabria and Castile-Leon (the largest region of Spain), and the provinces of Palencia and Burgos. The area has always been relatively isolated being surrounded by mountain ranges and rivers, but offers a great natural heritage and extremely varied landscapes and climates. The nature reserve Las Loras is a 'green corridor' that is a remarkable natural tourism resource for the surrounding regions and provinces, which also offers a rich cultural heritage with the greatest density of Romanesque and medieval monuments in Spain and Europe.

The service sector is strongly represented in both regions (approximately 60%), followed by the industrial sector (approximately 20%), construction, agriculture and forestry. The agriculture sector has gradually changed from traditional farming to a system structured around the family smallholding, dairy cattle and milk production. The tourism industry has long been underdeveloped, but there is a steady rise in the number of tourists coming to the region. The unemployment rates and wages vary between the municipalities and provinces but are somewhat lower than the national average.

The main focus of the interterritorial rural development project was on improving the quality of life and creating jobs. The aim was to make local communities aware of the natural and cultural heritage of the area and their important role in contributing to its preservation and accessibility. The strategy of the LAG Asociación País Románico is to create new sources of employment and income in the area, based on the principles of endogenous and sustainable development, driven by the actions of local people.



Facts about the territory

- 👤 **Population: 25 594 inhabitants**
- 🌍 **Surface area: 1 133 km²**
- 👤 **Population density: 23 inhabitants/km²**
- 👤 **Number of municipalities: 16**





Why is this project good practice?

The project has had a **strong area-based approach**, since it has built on the local natural, cultural and human resources and greatly improved the income-generating ability of the rural area. It has contributed to the protection of the natural environment and worked towards sustainable local development. The initiative has raised the awareness of the local population and has used new scientific methods and approaches to preserve nature and the geological heritage in the region.

The original idea came from a group of geologists and a local university professor who suggested to local governments and conservation groups that a nature reserve in the Las Loras region be set up. This **bottom-up initiative** was taken on board by the LAG Asociación País Románico and other local administrations and organisations and is now also based on a strong partnership between the Junta Vecinal (neighbours' association) of Villaescusa de las Torres and two local associations from Rebolledo de la Torre and Revilla de Pomar. The promoters also created an association (Argeol) to lobby within the regional and governmental entities for funding and the future management of the nature reserve. There is also strong cooperation with local stakeholders such as conservation groups, the private sector, local agents and geology departments of various universities, which frequently undertake research in the reserve. Activities such as the 'Scenery workshop' (implemented with the participation of 18 artists in the region) create new opportunities for local people to interlink with one another.



The project has also followed an **integrated approach** by connecting different sectors (tourism, art, environment and education) and has been complementary to other projects in the area that are part of a wider strategy to improve tourism activities and promote the area as a Romanesque countryside and cultural European destination.



Project description

1. Brief history of the project

The original idea came from a group of geologists and a local university professor who suggested to local governments and conservation groups that a nature reserve in the Las Loras region be set up. The Junta Vecinal of Villaescusa de las Torres in collaboration with two local associations from two other cities in the region, the association Acetre (Rebolledo de la Torre) and the association Amigos (Revilla de Pomar), strongly supported the project idea, which was then taken on board by the LAG Asociación País Románico.

The area promoted is part of the Natura 2000 site and the project has operated within the framework of the wider natural geology reserve programme of the Las Loras region (also covering northern areas of Burgos and Palencia). The project was implemented as a pilot action covering Villaescusa de las Torres, Revilla de Pomar and Rebolledo de la Torre. Experiences and lessons gained through this project will be fundamental for the development of conservational and environmental policies of the area (including the natural monuments of Las Tuerces and of Covalagua). The project has contributed to the preservation of the environment and has helped to address threats faced by the region, such as the establishment of a new railway track or the construction of the head offices of a wind power company.

2. Main activities

The activities of the project were:

- providing study visits for professionals and officers of local governments to the geological park in Aliaga (Teruel) and the nature reserve of the Haute-Provence (France);
- undertaking a scientific study, including fieldwork and



- collection of relevant information (delineation and cartography, photographic material, map of resources and tourist services);
- putting in place signs that show the directions between the observation points of three different walking routes;
 - providing information on tours (explanatory tables) and thematic routes (geological, biological, architectural, etc.);
 - promoting the nature reserve among local stakeholders (design and distribution of a promotional leaflet, nature reserve guide, links and exchange of experience with promoters of other nature reserves);
 - undertaking a needs analysis for infrastructure investments (roads, parking space, interpretation centre, signalling, didactic and promotional material);
 - providing additional information on other local resources and services.

■ 3. Concrete outputs and results

Outputs of the project were:

- study visits;
- three different walking tours established and promotional material produced;
- conservation tools developed for the local countryside that will help to preserve the natural geological heritage of the Las Loras region;
- creation of a high-quality nature and cultural tourism product with additional services (e.g. exhibitions);
- increased environmental awareness of local people of local heritage and natural resources;
- improved promotion of natural resources.

■ 4. Problems encountered/ lessons learnt

The biggest difficulty has been the coordination and active involvement of project partners, which are local

administrations and associations with low financing and management capacities, and the complexity of regional administration.

■ 5. The 'Leader+ added value' of the project

The Leader programme has largely contributed to improved appreciation of the local natural heritage and highlighted the importance of its preservation. Through the development of area-based tourism activities and the preservation of the geological sites, the Leader+ funding has largely contributed to the efficient use of local resources, created new jobs and generated additional local income.

■ 6. Duration

The project's duration has been two-and-a-half years. It started on 31 January 2004 and was completed on 30 July 2006.

■ 7. Budget

The total cost of the project was EUR 137 912, of which EUR 110 330 was from the EAGGF and EUR 27 582 from private funding.

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Illustrations provided by the LAG Asociación País Románico





SWEDEN

Pre-study for the development of the Svartådalen rural area

Project context

The River Dalälven is the common feature of the LAG's territory in natural, cultural and historical terms. Salmon fishing has been of great importance to the community until modern times. Iron, silver and copper production has been the common historical tradition in the border area of the four counties. The main strength of the region is in the natural and cultural assets, and Leader+ Nedre Dalälven aims to build on these resources for the development of the region.

However, the industries in the region are facing some serious difficulties. Over a short period of time, the number of jobs has fallen drastically in basic industries (in particular, in the metal production and forest industries), and local companies can be characterised by lack of entrepreneurial culture.

The main objective of the local development strategy is to concentrate efforts on expanding, renewing and developing local businesses. Key areas where enterprises can be developed include financing, skills development and network building. Young people are expected to play a major role in this development (since they can be highly motivated and have creative new ideas), and therefore specific focus is given to projects that support young people or are run by young people. In the framework of the local development strategy, incentives will be created for people to move to the region and efforts will be made to stimulate new business start-ups. Priority is given to projects that can create new jobs at a low cost.

Why is this project good practice?

The pilot study and the projects supported on the basis of the study have been very much based on the development

Facts about the territory

- 👤 **Population: 65 000 inhabitants**
- 🌍 **Surface area: 6 700 km²**
- 👤 **Population density: 10 inhabitants/km²**
- 👤 **Number of municipalities: 10**



of the Svartådalen area; therefore, the whole concept has been characterised by a strong **area-based approach**. The project has strongly built on local natural and cultural resources and historical assets. It has created new forms of communication networks and contacts in the Svartådalen area.



The project was initiated by local people, i.e. followed a **bottom-up approach**. The members of the cooperative are local businesses and associations representing a wide range of stakeholders in the area. From the start of the project, there has been strong emphasis on anchoring the activities among local inhabitants through networking, information provision, meetings and awareness raising (e.g. newsletters). The degree of commitment of the local inhabitants is well illustrated by the extensive voluntary work (20 000 hours) invested in the project.

The cooperative operates through a similar **partnership** to that of the LAG, i.e. represents several local interest groupings and associations (with the exception of public organisations which do not directly participate in the cooperative). The cooperative has established good working relationships with local and regional authorities. The commitment and cooperation on behalf of the farmers' union have largely contributed to the success of the project.

The project has followed a strong **integrated approach**. It has identified the main fields of development for the area on the basis of cultural and natural resources and addressed various sectors within the framework of an integrated local strategy, covering fields such as infrastructure, tourism, fishing and farming, marketing and promotion. In this way, the project has addressed a broad spectrum of development issues.

Many areas in Sweden have showed interest in the project, and the project has developed **networking** activities with other areas which wanted to learn about working methods and exchange experience with Svartådalen. The methods used (i.e. analysis of conditions of the area, identification of areas of development, strategy implementation) can be successfully **transferred** to other regions. These methods, however, require commitment from the local people.

Project description

■ 1. Brief history of the project

The project was initiated by local people during a meeting held in a local school in March 1999. During the meeting, the local development group of Färnebo was set up with the aim of supporting the development of the area through the identification of good project ideas. The group received support from the county.

The Färnebo group was later developed into a local cooperative named 'Rural development cooperative in

support of the Svartån valley'. The cooperative operates in the area of Västerfärnebo and Fläckebo parishes that are both located along the River Svartån. Initially, the main focus of the cooperative was on discussing project ideas in support of local development. Later, attention focused on the assessment of the key needs of the region in terms of infrastructure, demography, employment and businesses, potential for job creation and social services. For this purpose, a pilot study was initiated, which became the first Leader+ project of the area.

■ 2. Main activities

The main aims of the pilot study were:

- to gather information about projects and conditions for their possible implementation;
- to map out the expected socio-economic effects of projects;
- to create networks and different methods of cooperation to help carry out projects.

The pilot study aimed to assess the state of local businesses and the socio-economic conditions of the area, and this formed the basis for the identification of new projects. As a result of the pilot study, a long-term strategy was established. The main development objective defined by the study was to exploit the natural and cultural resources in such a way as to contribute to long-term employment. Projects are implemented with the active participation of a wide range of local actors, including the farmers' union, the county administration, the local government of Sala and Mälardalen College.

Projects (that have been mainly supported by Leader+ and the Swedish rural development programme within the common agricultural policy) include:

- Svartådalen nature and culture tourism;
- Svartådalen crayfish;
- energy from barley;
- entrepreneurs for tourism in the countryside;
- local area network;
- music as a tool;
- young people in the cultural landscape.

■ 3. Concrete outputs and results

The pilot study resulted in:

- increased awareness of the natural and cultural values of the area;
- a well-anchored strategy for the continuing development of the area;
- activities initiated by inhabitants of the region, which





Pre-study for the development of the Svartådalens rural area



have contributed to a positive attitude towards local development;

- increased commitment of young people to work for the area;
- new networks;
- information and marketing material for the area, including a film produced by young people, and presented on Swedish television, entitled *The Färnbo Parade*.

Individual projects implemented within the framework of the local development strategy have produced a wide range of outcomes, including new jobs and tourism businesses, increased tourism accommodation capacity, increased sales of local farmers' products (e.g. grains to energy company, beef to ICA retail chain), and improved marketing of the area.

The project has also achieved a longer-term impact. Svartådalens is today a well-known 'brand' in Sweden and is gradually improving its reputation. As a result, good cooperation has been developed between local businesses and other organisations. Social services and infrastructure have been improved, and more people are moving into the area, which is resulting in an increased demand for housing. Women and young people have become more involved in local development (through job creation for women and projects led by young people).

■ 4. Problems encountered/ lessons learnt

During the project implementation, it became evident that the borders of the Leader+ area should have been better defined. The borders split regions that historically shared many traditions and had many contacts and cooperation structures with one another.

The project also faced some initial difficulties with bureaucracy and a lack of financial resources.

The mobilisation of local people to actively become engaged in the development work also proved to be a difficult task.

■ 5. The 'Leader+ added value' of the project

Through the Leader+ programme, local people have become more aware of, more committed to and more involved in local development. The Leader approach has strengthened the local community, contributed to the setting-up of strong partnerships, and improved cooperation at the local level (with local authorities in particular). Project activities have

also enhanced the entrepreneurial potential of the region and strengthened regional identity.

■ 6. Duration

The project started in April 2001 and finished in October 2003.

■ 7. Budget

The overall budget for the pilot study was EUR 173 512, of which EUR 30 485 was from the EAGGF, EUR 45 727 from national public funding and EUR 97 300 from private funding.

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Illustrations provided by the LAG Leader+ Nedre Dalälven



UNITED KINGDOM

Communities on the edge (COTE)

Project context

The South Lanarkshire LAG is located to the south of Glasgow and the area has historically been associated with heavy industry. However, 80 % of the land is rural and contains beautiful areas such as the scenic Clyde valley and remote uplands.

Much of the region has a low economic base due to the decline in traditional industries such as mining and agriculture. The region contains important rural areas and communities, some of which have the potential for economic and environmental development. In some cases, rural communities have lost their economic viability; for others, the quality of the local environment and proximity to major urban areas have led to increased pressure for new, commuter-based housing developments. There is a significant potential to develop tourism activities.

The two main Leader+ themes of the South Lanarkshire LAG are adding value to local products and the new use of know-how and new technologies. The key objectives of the LAG are to assist with the development of successful and inclusive communities, to provide access to working and learning opportunities for Leader+ target groups (women, young people, the underemployed and the employed), and to create safe and healthy rural communities based on community empowerment through the development of robust decision-making policies.

Facts about the territory

- 👤 **Population: 75 477 inhabitants**
- 🌍 **Surface area: 1 563 km²**
- 👤 **Population density: 48 inhabitants/km²**





Why is this project good practice?

The project is a good example of **interterritorial cooperation**, as it involves three Leader+ groups in southern Scotland (South Lanarkshire, Scottish Borders, and Dumfries and Galloway) together with the Southern Uplands Partnership (SUP). The project was identified as a result of issues raised through networking and partnership meetings.

The project addresses the **area-based approach** as it has identified land-based resources, underused across the three LAGs in the southern uplands of Scotland. The resources are privately owned, but the focus of the project is to build local partnerships between communities in the area that currently do not benefit from these resources, and to add value to local resources, which in turn provide benefits to the estate owners.

The project fully supports the **bottom-up approach**, as it has engaged people in the local community through consultations; this has resulted in the identification of what they consider to be the most important and key issues in their areas. The community has been directly involved in suggesting and implementing solutions to address these key issues. Four working groups have been established, each focusing on a development area — some of these groups have already secured further funding in their areas.

The project is highly **innovative** as it has facilitated a partnership between groups who do not normally cooperate, and who also might be seen as having opposing interests — this addresses an **integrated approach** of diverse social groups. The recognition of common interests between community groups and estate owners has been the foundation of the ongoing development of social and economic growth enterprises.

Transferability has been a key element of the project development as the model of estate–community and cross-sector partnership could be adopted on a wider basis. The project has undertaken a number of wider activities that will help promote it more effectively and provide a better understanding in Scotland of how it is operating.

The project looks set to become **sustainable**, as it receives support through the Carnegie UK Trust (CUKT) and also because South Lanarkshire has a rich natural and historical heritage. This has led to an improvement in the popularity of the area and strengthened the project’s links with nature-based tourism. Partnership is the key to the

sustainability of the project’s model and it is encouraging that the three Leader groups are heavily involved in the community planning process.

Project description

■ 1. Brief history of the project

The project aims to encourage the development and growth of new small-scale rural enterprises that build on resources available from major landowners and managers in southern Scotland. It is managed by the Southern Uplands Partnership and operates simultaneously in ‘communities on the edge’ (COTE) around large private landowning estates in South Lanarkshire, the Scottish Borders, and Dumfries and Galloway.

The traditional role of rural estates and their relationship with the community have changed as they have focused their efforts on core business activities. The project aims to engage with the local communities and encourages local partnerships between neighbouring rural estates, namely the Douglas & Angus, Roxburghe and Buccleuch estates. It is hoped that the involvement of these estates will serve to encourage other estate owners across the regions to adopt the COTE model nationally.

■ 2. Main activities

The project addresses economic growth as it is designed to stimulate the start-up of new businesses and to identify employment opportunities across rural communities. It also encourages social cohesion as it is based on community involvement, requiring action and decision-making by local people. Environmental sustainability is promoted through new and sustainable uses of underutilised resources and the project aims to raise the awareness of environmental sustainability, including enhancing biodiversity and improving heritage management.

The main activities of the project have included six initial stakeholder workshops and one community workshop held with local people. The objectives of the workshops were to assess the attitudes and the expectations amongst key stakeholder groups by using scenario exercises. This allowed potential barriers for involvement in sustainable local enterprises to be identified and to establish the groundwork for thinking as a community. The community workshop was designed for the wider community and



offered participants the chance to choose the extent of their future involvement.

These community-based capacity-building exercises led to the setting-up of four working groups consisting of community volunteers who participated in the workshops to undertake the following key actions.

- Group 1: To establish a robust, community managed, multifunctional community/sports facility group.
- Group 2: To set up a women's entrepreneurial activity support and assistance group.
- Group 3: To support diversification of land-based activities including the marketing of local produce.
- Group 4: To encourage local community involvement in sustainable waste management.

■ 3. Concrete outputs and results

The four working groups are progressing well and have established the following outputs.

- Group 1: The (volunteer) project leader is participating in training for 'getting into social business' the funding for which was secured through the Communities Scotland future builders' learning fund. Feasibility work on a local community sports facility has also commenced using Gaia architects. In addition, it is proposed that a community-owned property be sold to release funds for building the new facility.
- Group 2: Links have been made with the Lanarkshire childcare partnership regarding the potential to assist with any future childcare/crèche services being considered in the Douglas area. A programme of work is now in place.
- Group 3: Workshops have been held with tenant farmers/gamekeepers to advise on the opportunities and issues presented by both common agricultural policy reform and new access legislation. However, this component of the project is considered to be of a long-term nature, with no significant progress as yet. It is felt that the COTE activity in the three areas will begin to accumulate and gradually demonstrate community support which can create the kind of markets to which

local private businesses can respond.

- Group 4: The Douglas Waste Management Working Group is looking at combining and growing, composting, recycling and health activities on land within the Douglas & Angus estate.

The COTE project's successful bid for funding from the Carnegie UK Trust rural action research programme constitutes a significant step forward. The target outcomes of this exercise will be:

- to provide the resources needed by the COTE project to achieve the potential that it has demonstrated so far;
- to provide the mechanism needed by the CUKT for designing, conducting and disseminating well-rounded rural action research with partners in south Scotland to support the CUKT policy change agenda.

It is estimated that it could take 10 to 15 years for the full potential of investment in the COTE project to be realised, and expansion efforts are being planned over five-year periods.

■ 4. Problems encountered/ lessons learnt

The project poses a challenge of maintaining the momentum of activities across the three Leader areas. The project has learnt to deal with the lack of capacity by the facilitation of training events and project visits. However, it is clear that a longer-term approach to building community capabilities will need to be adopted.

The establishment of sustainable local trading requires a long-term approach by all parties. As the project is dependent on community support, it will take a certain length of time before this support is demonstrated to help tip the balance of feasibility towards the tangible confidence required to invest within the private sector. It is anticipated that the project's activity in the three Leader areas will gradually demonstrate that community support can create the kind of markets to which local private businesses can respond.





■ 5. The 'Leader+ added value' of the project

The Leader ethos has been clearly visible in the project as it has created a new kind of relationship between large landowning estates and local communities so that the resources locked up in the estates can be developed to benefit both partners.

The aspirations of the project are considerable, but the three LAGs are involving marginalised groups. This process of development that builds capacity in the community, in tandem with the development of the project, facilitates the input of the community and the achievement of the project's goals, and clearly demonstrates the bottom-up approach.

■ 6. Duration

The project commenced in September 2004 and will last for three years, finishing in September 2007.

■ 7. Budget

The total budget for the project is EUR 203 753, of which EUR 87 920 is from the EAGGF, EUR 93 333 from national public funding and EUR 22 500 from private funding.

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Illustrations provided by the LAG South Lanarkshire



UNITED KINGDOM

Cumbria's cooking

Project context

The two local action groups involved in this project, the Cumbria Fells and Dales LAG and the North Pennines LAG, are located adjacent to each other in the north of England. Their territories include some of the most extensive and remote areas of England. Much of the land is classified as an 'area of natural beauty' with protected sites including the Lake District national park, the Cumbrian part of the Yorkshire Dales national park, the Hadrian's Wall world heritage site and the Northumberland national park. It is almost entirely an upland area and receives some of the country's heaviest rainfall.

Most of the territory is classified as a 'severely disadvantaged less favoured area' and the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease was extremely severe in the area (over 1.25 million

Facts about the territory

- 👤 **Population: 99 647 inhabitants**
- 🌍 **Surface area: 3 712 km²**
- 👤 **Population density: 27 inhabitants/km²**





sheep and 0.25 million cattle culled) which seriously worsened the already adverse situation in farming. The local economy relies heavily on agriculture and tourism; there is also a moderate amount of manufacturing and a growing amount of small rural businesses in other sectors.

The Cumbria Fells and Dales Leader+ strategy is to create new sources of employment and income in the area through an effective and dynamic local produce economy, based on the principles of sustainable development and driven by the actions of local people. The North Pennines Leader+ strategy is to improve quality of life and to empower people to play a full active part in the development of their communities.

Why is this project good practice?

'Cumbria's cooking' has been a successful Action 2 interterritorial project where the two LAGs have productively worked together along with Voluntary Action Cumbria (VAC). The project's success has been largely due to the close partnership that the LAGs have formed with VAC which has had extensive contacts and networks in Cumbria involved with community development over the past 50 years.

The networking and cooperation between the two LAGs was created on the basis of a 'Cumbrian' project, each LAG having part of Cumbria in its territory. The project has been successfully implemented across the regions with food heritage, the promotion of local products and the development of skills and social capital being reinforced throughout the area.

The project has addressed the **area-based approach** by using fresh local produce from the two LAG areas. The project has been directly linked with the landscape and history of the area and the celebratory activities, where local foods are prepared, also help to develop a love for and pride in the locality.

The project has been based on a community development agenda highlighting the **bottom-up approach**. It has stimulated local people to learn skills and organise their own events and has given them the confidence to work as a team to carry out their ideas. The project has adapted its approach to the community's interests and the two LAGs have successfully combined to produce local development which is genuinely bottom-up while still contributing to wider strategic priorities.



The project could be **transferred** to any area which produces food. However, in practice, there was a long period of development during which the following successful elements were established: local food heritage was researched; the recruitment of a local celebrity chef who's high profile and good networks made publicity easy; VAC's extensive experience and networks played a pivotal role in reaching local communities across Cumbria; the area's worldwide reputation for a clean and beautiful environment was promoted; and previous project experience in Sweden and Cumbria provided valuable knowledge.

The project has been **sustainable** through its development of local products, by raising the awareness of local food heritage, by developing skills among local people and by building social capital through events/celebrations. The project has formed a special formula which everyone can relate to and learn from. The value of developing the theme of local food is that the related activities are a source of satisfaction to participants, who then buy more produce and a circle of positive feedback is created.

Project description

■ 1. Brief history of the project

The project stemmed from a meeting between the two LAG assistant managers where they came up with the idea of using the local product agenda as a tool for community

engagement to address the quality of life theme. The two LAGs agreed that the raising of awareness of local products was important to generate demand for these products especially from within the area, and to promote local procurement in both the public and private sectors.

Under Leader II, Cumbria was involved in a project entitled 'Feastcookers', the idea being based on a Swedish project in the late 1990s. The project targeted women as culinary entrepreneurs, provided feasts for local tourists, and involved training people to produce feasts and in the history of Cumbria's food.



The Leader+ 'Cumbria's cooking' project has aimed to raise awareness of local products in order to generate more demand for them, especially within the area, and to promote local procurement in both the public and private sectors. In addition, the North Pennines LAG wanted to work more intensively in developing healthy eating to support the quality of life agenda. 'Cumbria's cooking' uses a community development model to raise awareness of local products.

■ 2. Main activities

The project has supported joint community action as its team has worked with local groups to explore Cumbria's wealth of food heritage and helped groups to plan community celebrations with a distinctive flavour. The

project has promoted local and organic produce among local people through the medium of cookery, highlighting healthier lifestyles and local growing.

A series of learning and group development events have been organised and delivered to each of eight target communities of geographical interest. A local chef is now employed to educate, inform, entertain and enthuse, and visits to local producers also take place which reinforce the relationship between product and place. The ultimate goal of the learning groups is for participants to organise their own events or activities using their new-found culinary skills, confidence and knowledge of local food.

Alongside the message to local people about the origins and importance of local food, other issues such as healthy eating, organic production and fair trade have been addressed.

One such example of how the project has functioned is through its activities with a local school — children at Brampton school are learning to make lunchbox snacks, fruit juices and performance foods. The children learn about where their food comes from and about the importance of eating healthily, and they also start establishing basic cooking skills.

■ 3. Concrete outputs and results

A number of community groups are benefiting from the project such as rural isolated villages, disadvantaged and excluded communities, young people, older people, schools, small businesses, local communities, parents, producers, local shops, and local charities.

Other noticeable outputs from the project include increased awareness of local products and a change in attitude to buying local products and healthy eating. In addition, the area has benefited from:

- an increase in confidence in local producers;
- new life being given to the community agenda;
- support of the local economy through the buying of locally produced foods (such as Cumbrian lamb, bacon, sausages, other meats and preserves, etc.);
- local producers and farmers having increased awareness of the principles of environmental sustainability and stewardship.

■ 4. Problems encountered/ lessons learnt

The project team had to revise its process as it saw that a programmatic approach was limiting creativity especially



as the communities all had different needs and ideas. Although changes were made to the process of the project, the outputs and budget remained the same.

A successful aspect of the project has been the employment of a celebrity chef as he has led to a considerable amount of added value through publicity, encouragement and participation. The chef involved in the project has many networks which have all fed into it in different ways. The fun approach of the programme has led to incidental learning for adults, children and community groups. The value of working through existing networks has been of enormous benefit to the LAG's strategy: it reduces duplication; promotes the message of local development; and speeds up the rate at which work can progress.

■ 5. The 'Leader+ added value' of the project

The project has received funding and management from two LAGs and is an excellent example of joint working and interregional cooperation. It has drawn experience from best practice in other countries and also provides a good example of best practice to other projects as 'Cumbria's cooking' continues to develop.

The project has successfully developed a strong community approach and has found new ways to identify local distinctiveness. The project implementation has been creative as each group session has been moulded to suit individual needs and the process has been devised to be completely flexible.

The two main aims of the project, adding value to local products and improving quality of life, have been met uniquely by this innovative initiative. Multisectoral working is also proven and it has created a strong partnership whereby local economic priorities in the LAGs' strategies have been brought to life through community development work.

The target groups in the LAGs' strategy were also addressed by the community development approach and by using existing networks, for example, by working with the charity Age Concern to contact and engage older people.

■ 6. Duration

The project was implemented for just over two years. It started in September 2004 and continued until December 2006.

■ 7. Budget

The total budget for the project was EUR 19 299, of which EUR 9 650 was from the EAGGF and EUR 9 649 from national public funding.

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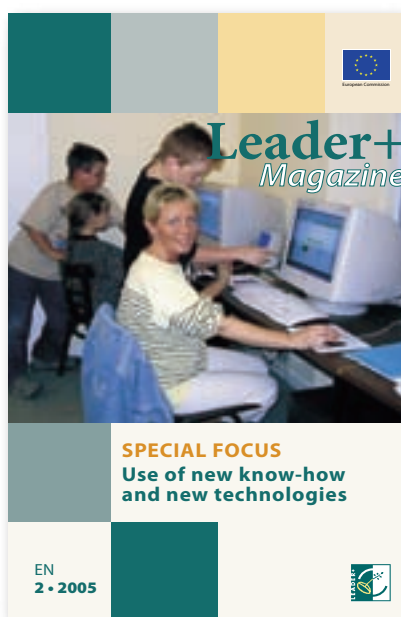
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Illustrations provided by the LAG Cumbria Fells and Dales

A great deal of additional information on Leader+ as well as a range of useful interactive tools can be found on the Leader+ website:

<http://ec.europa.eu/leaderplus>

Notable on this site is the good practices database from which the best practices presented in this publication have been selected. There is also the possibility of subscribing to the *Leader+ Magazine* and of receiving back issues.





Name:

Leader ('links between actions for the development of the rural economy')

Programme type:

Community initiative

Target areas:

Leader+ is structured around three actions.

- Action 1 — Support for integrated territorial development strategies of a pilot nature based on a bottom-up approach.
- Action 2 — Support for cooperation between rural territories.
- Action 3 — Networking.

Priority strategic themes:

The priority themes, for Leader+, laid down by the Commission are:

- making the best use of natural and cultural resources, including enhancing the value of sites;
- improving the quality of life in rural areas;
- adding value to local products, in particular by facilitating access to markets for small production units via collective actions;
- the use of new know-how and new technologies to make products and services in rural areas more competitive.

Recipients and eligible projects:

Financial assistance under Leader+ is granted to partnerships, local action groups (LAGs), drawn from the public, private and non-profit sectors to implement local development programmes in their territories. Leader+ is designed to help rural actors consider the long-term potential of their local region. It encourages the implementation of integrated, high-quality and original strategies for sustainable development as well as national and transnational cooperation. In order to concentrate Community resources on the most promising local strategies and to give them maximum leverage, funding is granted according to a selective approach to a limited number of rural territories only. The selection procedure is open and rigorous.

Under each local development programme, individual projects which fit within the local strategy can be funded. All projects eligible for funding under the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF) are eligible under Leader+.

At the decision-making level of the LAGs, the economic and social partners and associations must make up at least 50 % of the local partnership.

Duration of the programming period:

2000–06.

Community grant:

The total budget for programmes is EUR 5 046.5 million, of which EUR 2 106.3 million (2 143.5 million after mid-term indexation) funded by the EAGGF Guidance section and the remainder by public and private contribution.



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