



European Commission

# Leader+ Magazine



**SPECIAL FOCUS**  
**Innovation in Leader+**

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# Leader+ Magazine



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This European Commission magazine 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 magazine, 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.





# Innovation in Leader+

**By Mr Jean-Luc Demarty, Director-General  
Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development,  
European Commission**

**T**oday all EU policies aim at stimulating innovation as being the best way to expand growth and jobs in Europe. Leader has a long experience in this task: when it was launched in 1991 its focus was on finding innovative responses to rural problems. We have now a good record of the activities of local action groups, accumulated over time, that prove the effectiveness of the Leader approach in addressing rural innovation and which may serve as a reference for others. Innovation is not easy and is not just a question of funding. In rural areas it often requires the combination of local know-how with external, well-codified forms of knowledge, of 'soft' and 'hard' resources, and the adaptation of technologies and services to the specific needs of rural populations. Rural innovation is about finding and exploiting better the competitive advantages that rural areas may have for modern economies and societies, including the demand for environmental goods.

In economic terms, innovation can contribute to the successful and commercial exploitation of new ideas, thus contributing to the creation of sustainable growth and prosperity. What we consider innovative for a specific rural area may not be so for another rural area. For this reason it is important to establish links and interactions with other policy areas of a more sectoral nature, such as agriculture, information and communication technologies, the environment, transport and energy, small and medium-sized enterprises, and services, in order to adapt them to local, territorial needs.

The Leader approach has proved to be a very useful tool to promote rural innovation, by integrating and adding value to different types of sector know-how. This is not surprising since this is a crucial aspect of its experimental approach to rural development. Leader+ projects can display innovation in any one or combination of the following: in relation to a previous approach; new products or services; new ways of working together, either within a management structure, such as a LAG, or as a means of cooperating on a project level; bringing diverse sectors and groups together; combining different activities; exploring new markets and processes, etc. Here, innovation underpins other elements of the Leader+ development strategy by encouraging rural actors to think about the longer-term potential of their area, implementing integrated strategies, reinforcing the economic environment to secure jobs, improving their organisational abilities, and generally working together in new ways. All these actions can result in new rural development models which can be used to overcome many of the problems which face Europe's rural areas.

It is perhaps customary to think that only projects related to 'new know-how and new technologies' and that only high-tech companies and new inventions are innovative. In this edition of the Leader+ Magazine, innovation is illustrated in all of the Leader+ themes and across a wide spectrum of different projects. For example, it can apply to the choice of 'target group', project theme, approach, and mode of information dissemination. From the Netherlands, we see how a different approach to understanding the region's needs enables the region to see itself in a different way. In Luxembourg, inclusion of a new target group in the project's development results in a better quality of life for its ultimate beneficiaries. Austria provides an excellent example of how risk-taking in the choice of subject and the means of communicating can bring benefits, while from France, we see innovation in the combination of different ideas from within the same project theme.

Innovation is also relative to the existing conditions of a particular area. A novel project or idea in one region is certainly not the same elsewhere. This is why the networking aspect of Leader, which allows Leader+ to share and transfer knowledge, and to inspire other groups to be innovative, is also embodied in the programme. The Leader+ Magazine is one aspect of networking and I encourage you to take full advantage of it.

## Connecting with our peatland heritage

**Member States:** United Kingdom, Ireland, Finland, France

**Regions:** Scotland, Offaly, Perapohjolan Kehitys, Brittany

**Lead LAG:** Lomond & Rural Stirling Leader+

**Project total cost:** EUR 494 214

**EU:** EUR 203 378

**Other public funds:** EUR 197 531

**Private funds:** EUR 93 305



'Connecting with our peatland heritage' is a project organised by a partnership of LAGs and national agencies from four Member States, comprising Lomond and Rural Stirling Leader+ (Scotland, the lead LAG), Offaly Leader+ Company (Ireland), Perapohjolan Kehitys ry (Finland) and Pays du Centre Ouest Bretagne (France). The agency partners are Scottish Natural Heritage, National Geological Survey (Finland), Metsähallitus (Finland),

AMV Natural Areas (France), and Cincidele (France).

Across Europe, peatlands are managed in different ways and are viewed differently by those living and working around them. The differences are reflected in varying levels of visitor access to peatland sites. The project sought to bring the partners together to share knowledge and experience in how visitor experience can be maximised without detracting from the peatland itself. In their respective areas, each partner piloted innovative approaches to the management of peatland sites with specific reference to access to and interpretation of these fragile sites.

The international team has provided a range of expertise in the following areas: increasing community involvement, interpreting peatlands through art and culture, encouraging youth interest and involvement in peatlands, and using interpretative signs to improve understanding and the overall experience of visiting peatlands. Funding for this project will allow the following schemes to take place.

- Training workshops will be run by each partner on the topic in which they have the most experience.
- Each partner will pilot a practical project in order to put into practice the experiences and learning from the exchanges.
- A best-practice guide on managing access and interpretation in peatlands will be produced for all peatland managers across Europe. It will encompass the findings and recommendations of the project.
- A final information/dissemination event will be organised.

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**Photo provided by the Lomond & Rural Stirling Leader+ LAG**



## Local guides at work

**Member State:** Belgium

**Region:** Wallonia

**Name of the LAG:** Pays d'Anlier, de la Sûre et de l'Attert

**Project total cost:** EUR 55 000

**EU:** EUR 22 500

**Other public funds:** EUR 22 500

**Private funds:** EUR 10 000

The Belgian Pays d'Anlier, de la Sûre et de l'Attert LAG is keen to develop initiatives that could improve the welcome given to its region's tourists. Leader+ provided an opportunity for local tour operators to come together and design six training periods for local guides.

These future guides receive 50 hours of theoretical training, which include communication, ecology and ecosystems that are in turn linked to key elements specific to the region: local heritage and history, gastronomy, folklore, the local tourist potential, and architecture. With field visits over a seven-day period, the training also includes a visit to each of the region's seven boroughs.

The project aims to train 90 guides: each able to escort a group of tourists for a specific visit over a period of one or several days. During the first two training sessions, 20 guides obtained a certificate. Many people have registered to train as guides: most are unemployed women (80 %) who are looking for seasonal employment. The project has also attracted the attention of organisations providing accommodation and tourist attractions.

Together with the local guides, the LAG has established a 'guide's charter for quality', which fits in well with the quality approach developed for some of its other projects: improvement of regional signposting, creation of themed excursions, and adding value to local products. Thanks to Leader+, several tour operators are now working together, and in a second phase have become part of a transnational cooperation project which aims to develop the concept of 'family tourism'. The project has already yielded results, with three of the trained guides now working in local tourist offices.

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**Photo provided by the LAG Pays d'Anlier, de la Sûre et de l'Attert**



## A stable environment for horses

**Member State:** Sweden

**Region:** Sörmland

**Name of the LAG:** Våg 21

**Project total cost:** EUR 752 093

**EU:** EUR 97 860

**Other public funds:** EUR 146 802

**Private funds:** EUR 507 431

Some of Sweden's small farmers have areas of land with low productivity which provide a perfect natural habitat for horses. It is also a good opportunity for farm diversification.

With horse racing and showjumping a growing business, and since many of the horses' owners live in big cities, the owners have to lodge and board their horses with breeders and trainers. The lack of space forces the breeders to keep the horses on small plots of land, and indoors during the winter months. The idea of a natural way of raising horses by letting the foals stay with the mare for a longer period of time, and with access to more land, has long been a goal of Ingvar Fredricson, a retired professor of horse breeding who believes that the mare is the natural trainer of the foal.

The project idea is therefore to use to advantage the low-productivity land of these small farmers in order to provide a home where the horses will follow a certified breeding scheme which has been supported by Leader+ and which gives the owners the best environment for their horses. This certified scheme gives the horse several advantages. Firstly they have the chance to move around freely within large enclosed areas of grazing or to stay indoors and, as part of their training, they follow fenced tracks with natural obstacles. In this way, the young horses can more or less train themselves simply by following the mare. The use of transponders which are linked to special receivers at the food and water automat, and which are connected to the Internet, allows horse owners to follow their foal's activities from a distance.

The project is managed by the Jump Horse Association and has been developed as a joint cooperation between the association, several farmers and professor Ingvar Fredricson. The Våg 21 Leader+ LAG has funded a part of the project, and has played a key role in building the partnership between the different partners.

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**Photo provided by the Swedish national network unit**



## Rediscovering quality wine with biodiversity

**Member State:** France

**Region:** Pays de La Loire

**Name of the LAG:** Layon Saumurois

**Project total cost (phase 2):** EUR 31 600

**EU:** EUR 14 220

**Other public funds:** EUR 14 324

**Private funds:** EUR 3 056

This project, which is now in its second phase under Leader+, is providing a boost for an established wine-growing region through a local private and public partnership working with the Layon Saumurois LAG. Indeed the project combines local partners from different backgrounds who, while sharing a common objective, would nevertheless normally not be working together. They include a wine grower, the local branch of the League for the Protection of Birds, public authorities and various tourist development agencies.

The activity takes place at a site where wine production had ceased some time ago. A decision by an independent wine producer to reintroduce wine-growing and improve the biodiversity of the site involved a study financed by Leader+ during the project's first phase. The development work continues in a second phase, with the objective of safeguarding the quality of the environment. The site has also been landscaped and, following authorisation by L'Onivin (the responsible public body), has been replanted with new vines. At the same time, the site's tourist potential is also being realised with funds from Leader+. This includes the production of information panels showing the biodiversity and geology, a teaching folder presenting the site's different characteristics (which can also be used in local schools), and animation of the vineyard (in cooperation with the local wine museum).

The project achieves several socioeconomic and environmental objectives simultaneously: improving the overall image of the local area and vineyard, creating a new 'tourist' product, protecting certain species of fauna and flora, and improving the quality of the local wine.

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**Photo provided by the French national network unit**



# Special focus: Innovation

## Enhancing innovation in Leader+: a Finnish perspective



*By Tytti Siltanen, Thematic Expert of Leader+, Develooppi Ltd, Finland. Ms Siltanen previously worked in Leader II as a project leader and LAG evaluator, and in Leader+ as head of the national network unit, and currently works as an independent consultant.*

### Introduction

Under the Leader+ programme there is a wide range of projects, some of which are clearly very innovative. For example, where else would you find garden therapy for the elderly, clothes made from sealskin, rural opera performed by professional and local people, and much more. These are all examples of different kinds of innovation which relate to the approach, implementation, and the technology used, and which can be found in projects funded under the Finnish Leader+ programme.

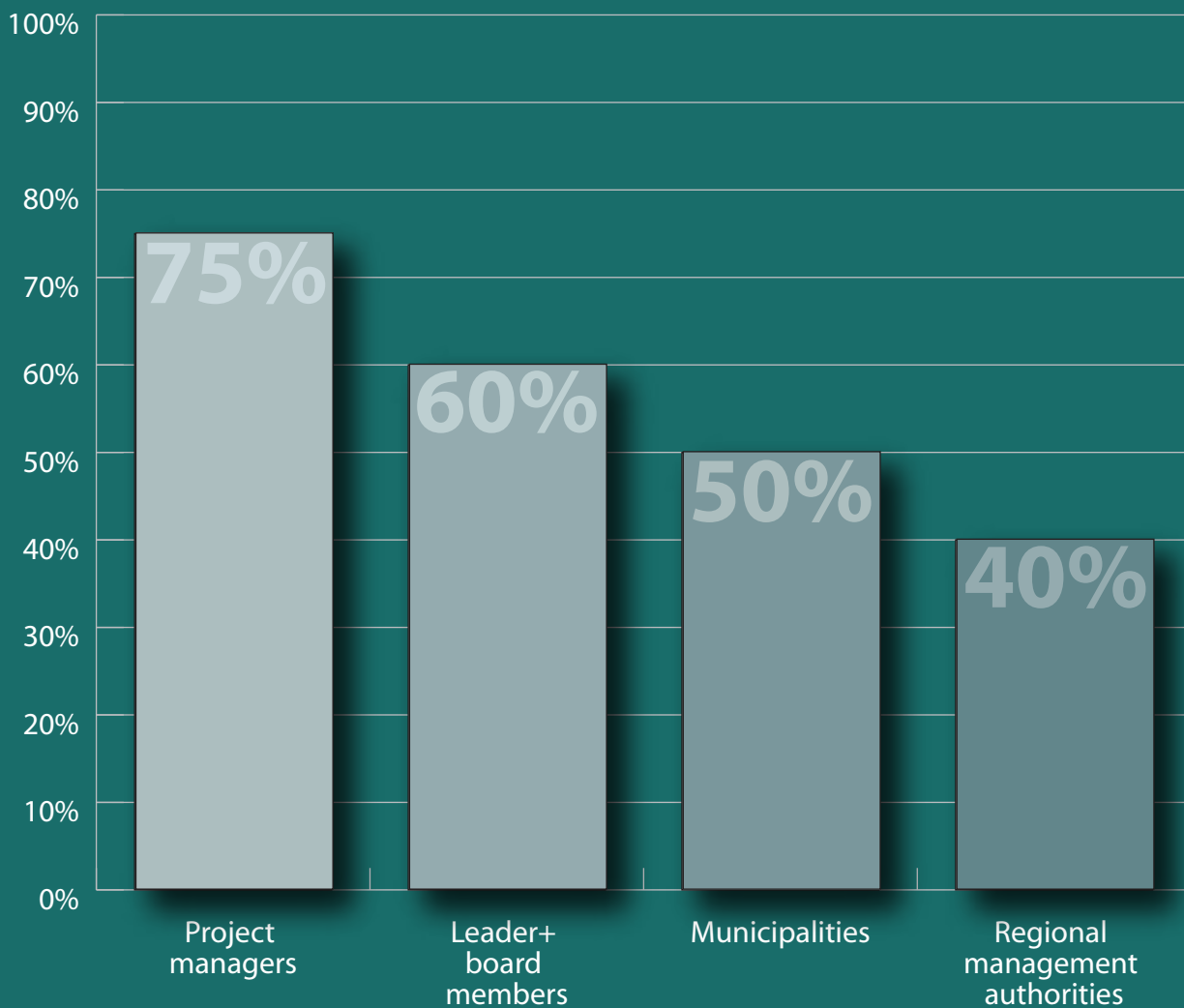
### What is innovation?

Innovation is a key principle of Leader methodology, and it is Leader's nature as a pilot scheme which requires innovative approaches to local development in rural areas. Local programmes should include action that embraces something new that has not been tried before in the region and

that could be mainstreamed to other Leader regions and/or areas of activity. Leader should be 'a laboratory of new ideas'. We also need to appreciate a new understanding of innovation within research, since this can be seen as a result of interaction between different actors, which can be rooted in a specific social, political and economic environment. The dynamics of innovation are not only determined by the existing knowledge base, but to a large extent by the effectiveness and the efficiency of learning processes within the systems of innovation.

### Is there innovation within Leader?

The Leader I initiative (1991–94) focused on networking skills as a tool for the development of an area and the Leader network was considered as a source of know-how and valuable information. The survey from 1994, which is referred to in 'Transnational cooperation under Leader II',



## Proportion of different groups that think Leader+ in Finland is innovative

a document of the Leader II Observatory, showed that at least one Leader I LAG in four was involved in some form of cooperation: exchange of experience, innovation transfer, joint business venture, participation in a thematic network, etc. As mentioned in the same document, the primary impact of transnational cooperation under Leader II was innovation.

New approaches were found in the tourism sector under Leader II, particularly in the concept of area-based tourism, as were organisational methods and new types of tradition-based activities. In food and agricultural production, innovation was not limited to approaches, techniques, products and outlets; innovation was essential in tackling the issue of 'risk' associated with new products. Around the theme of 'environment and heritage', the impact in adopting common approaches was less evident for environmental groups than for traditional organisations 'breaking into'

areas concerned with environmental issues. Information technology was in itself mostly innovative, involving various practices, know-how, approaches and techniques. The manner in which technology was used in an area-based approach was also important.

The Finnish experience is from Leader II onwards, after joining the EU. In terms of the two programmes (Leader II and Leader+), innovation has changed, especially in obtaining more innovative results in the areas of social services, tourism, fish industries, and training/education. We have gained innovative results in Leader+ in different kinds of technical innovations, for example new technology for clearing snow from the streets, developing a web tool for getting information on the spot, and processing farm waste products. Innovative actions have also included



making art from nature, collecting plastic from farms for recycling and committing young people to an area using special sponsorship. Doing things in an innovative way is illustrated by new cooperation between enterprises and schools, marketing of services with new partners, and getting the elderly to be substitute grandparents to children other than just those of their relatives. Thus many innovations can also be considered social ones.

According to the mid-term evaluation of the Finnish Leader+ programme (2005), 75 % of Finnish project leaders said that Leader had developed new kinds of activities in their area. Among the Finnish Leader+ LAG board members, 60 % think that the projects develop something new.

Most of the Finnish Leader managers think that the pilot scheme of Leader is the hardest of the Leader principles to follow. Leader groups have interpreted innovation and piloting as a new method, product or service that has not been tried before by the project leader and that is new to the area or village. How is it with the project leaders? Can people realistically evaluate their innovation themselves?

### **Cooperation as an important channel of innovation**

Cooperation is a keyword in 'enhancing innovation and knowledge'. This means more cooperation: in the area of the LAG itself and between other areas, both national and transnational. This applies to the projects, the members of the boards, the LAGs, the authorities, and at national level. Neither should we forget that we are part of a big Leader family. There are 73 Leader+ programmes in the EU and 893 LAGs. In order to enhance innovation we need to create our own knowledge and absorb new knowledge from external sources. This means supporting each other more and exchanging new ideas. The dissemination of knowledge can be done in various ways and by various actors. We need to develop tools such as Internet, intranet and culture that support national and international communication. The recruitment of staff and board members from different fields of expertise, and the willingness to visit seminars and use specialists is also relevant. There are very good national and international tools, such as seminars, magazines and newsletters, that we could use more and be more disciplined in their use.

### **Problems in innovation and cooperation**

Since cooperation involves partners with different cultures and experience, cooperation is a process fraught with potential difficulties. Partners can at the outset have different expectations towards cooperation. LAGs face internal problems such as insufficient coordination or an unsuitable partnership, but sometimes there are also external obsta-

cles such as administrative delays or poor systems of support. The ways that projects are managed and the methods that are used can all help to overcome problems.

According to a report entitled 'Transnational cooperation under Leader II', published in 2001 by the Leader II Observatory, LAGs often focused on the most immediate and easily explained problem areas (for example blaming external factors) when very often the cause of the problem had more to do with attitudes or the methodology and management of the project itself.

Internal problems of Leader II transnational cooperation were at the level of the transnational partnership (language barriers, cultural differences, different expectations and degree of involvement, etc.), about project content (defining objectives, actions and activities, methodology and time), management problems (coordination, division of responsibilities, monitoring and evaluation, etc.), and bringing together the local and transnational levels. External obstacles were concerned with financial, legal and administrative problems, and with problems linked to an ineffective support system or unclear procedures.

Usually, the most important way of exchanging knowledge within the organisation and within the network is through occasional, informal talks and formal meetings. Communication problems can also occur due to time constraints, terminology and language, lack of willingness to share information, poor language skills or being in contact with the wrong persons.

### **Some ideas for good practice**

Firstly, it is important to get the partnership right. Finding the right partners and forging effective links creates a positive working atmosphere and facilitates a clear transfer and exchange of know-how. It is also possible to find the right project partner by using the valuable national and transnational tools that are available in Leader+, through contacts made, databases, the Internet, thematic seminars, etc. The first meeting with the partners is really important: meet potential partners as early as possible, be clear about the desire to work together, allow time during the initial meetings for getting to know one another, brainstorm possible project ideas and be creative about ways of establishing trust between the partners. Note that skilful facilitators can help to bring out the best in all the inputs.

Secondly, the project content needs to be right. Make a clear distinction between the core project and related activities, and match objectives to needs. The most effective and innovative projects are needs led. Clear operational goals must be defined, leading to visible and measurable outputs. Short- and long-term goals must be agreed. Defining a realistic action plan means: decide on the activities, make the actions as concrete as possible, allow horizontal



and vertical development of the project, decide who is responsible for each of these actions, and clarify how the actions should be evaluated and reported. You also need to choose an appropriate methodology. Setting up thematic working groups is another consideration.

A management process with clear project coordination is also crucial. You need to select the management and coordination model through detailed discussion, thereby arriving at a consensus on the management methods. This involves drawing up detailed documents and reviewing how the chosen management method is working. Share out the tasks at the start of the

project and during it. Monitor and evaluate quantitatively and qualitatively.

In rural development, it is essential to ensure that a project always has a local impact. Projects, and the LAG, should bring added value based on local needs. A good way of doing this is to promote results that have been achieved widely and clearly at local level.

External factors relate to getting the financial, legal and administrative structures right, as well as the support. Integration of other funding sources and coordination is an additional requirement. Dissemination of best practices and planning is essential for the continuity of projects initiated under Leader I and II and Leader+.

All problems can normally be managed. One of the most important elements is the attitude towards exchanging information and cooperation. If the value of information or cooperation is not clear, it will be difficult to motivate and engage others.

### **Innovation within the LAG and focusing on impact**

The board of the LAG is a huge asset to rural development in the area. Leadership in the LAG (setting strategy and goals, quality implementation, integrity, staff development, reviewing of the performance) in combination with the resources created (money, volunteers, awareness, capacity building) is key in determining whether the impacts of rural development are sustainable. The best boards focus on impact. The effectiveness of the board and the decisions they make can be crucial. The sustainable impact can be seen as real changes in rural areas: growth, financial security, enhanced reputation, and more people living and working happily in rural areas.

The board should be diverse: different kinds of people, different kinds of skills, demographics and areas. The board should also set itself standards. What should be required from a board member? How should the capacity of the board be developed? Much attention needs to be paid to the basic constituency representation, attendance, board size or personal contribution of the members. Participation, leadership, resource growth or willingness to sell ru-

ral development could also be looked at. Building board engagement is a prerequisite for success, which applies to both the board members and the LAG staff alike. Successful boards also evaluate themselves to ensure growth and renewal, that is, they self-innovate.

### **More creativity and risk-taking needed**

Creativity consists of many things: the capacity to present and sell ideas, intellectual courage, the ability to think differently and positively, respect for the ideas of others, and to actively look for new and important information. The greatest innovators have developed their life attitude from these things. Creative people are not just born, they are also made. It is possible for people to be more creative, and develop their capacity to be innovative. Give yourself time to make up your own mind, listen to others carefully and actively, help and encourage people in developing and brightening their ideas, use open questions and be interested in finding the best solution to the problem. One way is to participate in courses that help to boost creativity.

More courage is also required in the allocation of funding for projects specialised in pilot actions and new methods. Authorities should also be more flexible in their regulations, and Leader+ should be considered more as a risk funding tool. In this respect methods to measure the results of innovation should be developed.

### **Innovation is essential**

New ideas or ways of doing things can be discovered by accident or they can be part of a development process. New innovations are born from curiosity, creativity and cooperation. If the project partners do not have a clear idea about where they are going in a particular project, it becomes quite impossible to achieve project goals. It is also the case that if project leaders do not have enough resources allocated to their project, especially in terms of working hours and time, then it is almost impossible to be creative.

However, nobody is alone in dealing with the issue of innovation. Often, help is available from other project leaders, other LAGs, LAG board members, authorities, etc., who as partners can provide and create knowledge and innovation in a systematic way. There are those who may have gained their competence and experience from working on different kinds of projects and who can contribute to the innovation process.

In conclusion, innovation is necessary, since new methods, product and services are required for the future. Innovation has not only become a more important topic in the context of the market and the enterprise, but also in the context of regional growth and development. Leader is a perfect tool for trying something new. It should be seen as a tool of enhancing innovation and creating a better future. Innovation is important to everybody and it needs to be addressed more and more: in taking more risks, in trying something new, changing regulations if they inhibit innovation, and by cooperating more to enhance innovation — the only risk in Leader is that it succeeds!

# IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN RURAL AREAS





Publicising the importance of preventative healthcare



## ITALY

# The health caravan: meeting the needs of a region's healthcare

This project goes right to the heart of rural communities to maintain a healthy quality of life

by David Mastrecchia, INEA (Istituto Nazionale di Economia Agraria)

### Introduction

The Moli.G.A.L. LAG is made up of four public and three private bodies, and is situated in the Molise region in the south of Italy, where it works with many of the region's organisations, including administrative, economic and cultural ones.

The area is dominated by agriculture and service industries, with manufacturing, commerce and craft industry having less importance. Tourism is only significant in the coastal and mountain areas.

The ageing population has low income levels, is somewhat isolated, and has low levels of expenditure per capita on culture, sport, and leisure activities. This situation is exacerbated by poor infrastructures in terms of services and routes of communication with the latter made worse by the mountainous terrain. This combination of factors has led to a decline in the quality of life in large areas of the territory.

### Innovation in the local plan

Given this local backdrop, the Moli.G.A.L. LAG has dedicated the whole of the measure 'Improvement of the quality of life and of the organising ability of local communities' to its local development plan. The general objectives of this measure can be summarised as follows:

- improvement of the quality of life of the population resident in rural areas and reduction of their isolation;
- development and improvement of employment opportunities, including specific occupational areas for young people and women;
- improvement of the quality of the environment as perceived by the population.

A subdivision of the first of the above points is an action which comprises medical services, including check-ups and diagnostic services, in the territory, social assist-







### The landscape's beauty adds to the quality of life

ance and services, transport services, educational services, and the activation of information and telematics services.

The action is noteworthy, given its specific nature, originality and sensitivity towards a real problem in rural areas, since this is something which requires a greater commitment from everybody involved in rural development, not only in present but also any future Leader programmes.

In particular, the project under consideration is the first such intervention and is concerned with the provision of new medical services, check-ups and diagnosis in the territory covered by the LAG.

#### About the project

'MOLI-SAL', the Molise-Salute (Molise Health) project, is the result of collaboration between the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore (Catholic University of the Sacred Heart), Campobasso Research Centre, the IRCCS Neuromed Institute of Pozzilli and the Moli.G.A.L. local action group. It is based on the assumption that serious illnesses, such as cardiovascular disease, can be prevented by changing bad lifestyle habits or maintaining good ones, and so has enormous potential value for the community. Documented research shows that traditional Mediterranean lifestyles, as found in the region of Molise, are effective in preventing many of these serious illnesses. Therefore, the project has the potential to not only fight diseases but also to improve the quality of life in the wider sense.

As well as the pathological aspects, it is also important to address some of the problems facing patients and their families when continual tests need to be carried out at considerable distances from home: one way of addressing this issue is through telemedicine.

With these issues in mind, the project is divided into two sections:

- lifestyles, cardiovascular disease and tumours: analysis, prevention, and communication with the public;
- evaluation of the techniques of telemedicine applied in the territory.

#### Objectives of the project

The project has several objectives:

- to discover and evaluate the main lifestyle habits that could influence the risk of cardiovascular disease and cancer in the population of Molise covered by the LAG;
- to discover the extent of the population's knowledge about prevention;
- to evaluate individual risks of illness;
- to try and maintain the typical traditional diet.

The first part of the project began in June 2005 and was carried out using the 'health caravan'. This comprised a team of some 10 doctors, coordinated by Professor Giovanni de Gaetano of the Università del Sacro Cuore in Campobasso, who undertook a clinical investigation on the rural population of the Molise area.

This was then followed by a series of eight meetings called *Giornate della Salute* (health days) which were organised to take place in as many municipalities within the research programme as possible. The selection was made in agreement with the mayors, taking into account the area's specific demography, and the municipality's ability to act as a point of reference for other neighbouring communities.

These actions were made possible by the active collaboration of the provincial administration of Isernia, the

administrative services of the municipalities, and the family doctors. Suitable places for carrying out diagnostic tests, and also the means of transport to help people from the neighbouring communities to attend the medical centres, were made available.

These health days were preceded by an intense communication and information campaign about the project's activities in the local press, as well as with posters in the municipalities.

### Getting results

During the 'health days', the population received detailed information about preventing major diseases and on correct lifestyles, via leaflets and other materials. However, the most significant part of the project was that people were allowed direct contact with researchers and doctors from the laboratories of the Università del Sacro Cuore. This represented another high-quality aspect of the project, and certainly reduced the gap that often exists between patients and doctors.

Participants of the project also had the opportunity to have some of their biometric and clinical data, such as weight, height, waist size, blood pressure, glycaemia and cholesterol levels, measured free of charge. This was in addition to a short questionnaire about the present state of their health and lifestyles.

At the end of the examination, each citizen received, apart from the results of their tests, a *Carta del rischio cardiovascolare* (map of cardiovascular risks), which indicated their personal risk of disease over the coming years. In this way, the participants together with their own doctors and with the aid of the *Carta del rischio* will be able to discuss the best strategies to adopt for prevention.

The project, carried out under the direction of the LAG, concluded its eighth health day on 9 October 2005, achieving a total of 700 biometric and clinical analyses on the rural population, which marked the beginning of the scientific part of the project (this is another phase of the same project).

### The results of innovative healthcare

The close relationship between the promotion of preventive healthcare and scientific research demonstrates both the innovative nature and usefulness of the project.

The data collected by a computerised system created specifically for the project were immediately analysed to provide a picture of the actual health of the specific area in the Molise territory under investigation. The information gained about existing diseases, type of diet and lifestyle are all crucial factors in defining the risks of disease and their best means of prevention.

The results have been made available to all the authorities operating in the territory so that, together, they can define the initiatives and actions required to reduce the risk factors and address the health problems highlighted for the specific municipalities.

Overall, this initiative has aroused much interest in the local population, which has been the target of an extensive information campaign aimed at creating awareness

about various health issues. The success of this initiative also owes much to the enthusiasm and professionalism of the local doctors involved. It is also a demonstration of Leader+ being involved in a field which is often ignored, but which generates important and positive effects, on both the rural population's perception about the usefulness of development policies, and in targeting such peripheral areas.



## Health caravan

**Member State:** Italy  
**Region:** Molise  
**Name of the LAG:** Moli.G.A.L.

**Population:** 48 695  
**Surface area:** 1 321 km<sup>2</sup>  
**Project total cost:** EUR 222 222  
**EU:** EUR 66 666  
**Other public funds:** EUR 66 666  
**Private funds:** EUR 88 890  
**Period of project eligibility:** 2000–06

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Photos provided by the Italian national network unit



With designs on the playground concept...



...and a final check on all the required elements

## LUXEMBOURG

# Learning by playing: preparation for the real world in the school playground

Creating a school playground takes account of ecological considerations to provide a 'classroom' for acquiring adult skills

### Introduction

A new central primary school is being built in Roodt-Syr in the municipality of Betzdorf, which is located in the Leader+ region of Lëtzebuurger Musel. There the municipal authorities have given responsibility for building the new school complex to the 'future school commission'. Since Betzdorf is a member of the climate alliance 'Klimabündnis' <sup>(1)</sup>, so it was clear that this new school would have to meet current ecological construction criteria, and that the new school playground was not going to be made of concrete.

To take account of the opinions of those involved with this new school, a school playground working group has been established. This group, which is composed of members of the 'future school commission', the parents' association, the teachers' body, the special education teachers' body, the forest warden, and the horticulturist of the municipality, met for the first time in October 2003. On the basis that not every child had the same recreational needs, they decided to divide the school playground into four different activity zones: a space for ball games, an area for peace and quiet to allow children to relax, a zone to develop creative skills, and an area of natural terrain, to include

trees and a variety of vegetation. This last point is important since it is the one thing that children often complain of not having in a playground.

### Defining the concept

The Ottawa Charter (WHO 1986) defines that a person's general health and well-being is formed by their environment and through past experiences where they live, work, learn and play. A good school playground with all its social interactions has a lasting impact on the lives of children. This being the case, the school playground working group was therefore eager to take into account health aspects and in particular drug awareness.

The concept for the new school playground, which was presented to the municipal authorities and the architect, was as follows:

- the playground should not to be a square slab of concrete;
- it should not be filled with expensive swings and slides;
- both those children with special educational needs and those from the primary school should be able to use the school playground;
- there should be different areas for the different needs of the children;

<sup>(1)</sup> Klimabündnis (<http://www.klimabuendnis.org/start.htm>) is an alliance which promotes renewable energy, rational use of energy, energy saving, clean transport, etc.



- the playground should be set under the drug-awareness label;
- children will be included in its planning and implementation;
- all the latest safety requirements should be met;
- vandalism and aggression should be minimised during school breaks.

### The importance of the playground in character development

There is a growing concern about smoking, alcohol and drug abuse in schools, and an understanding that children with low self-esteem and poor social skills are easily pressurised or simply influenced by their peer group to develop bad habits. In this respect, educators have an important role to help children develop good social skills in order to build their self-confidence. This can be achieved by providing the right setting, such as in a school playground, where children are free to play spontaneously in a safe environment and according to their own rules.

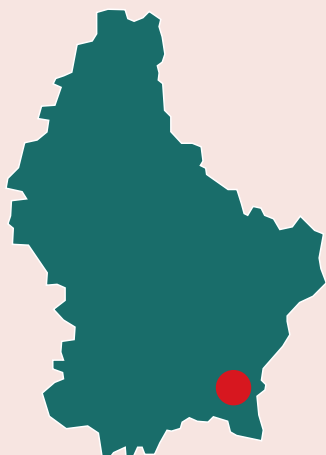
Children have to learn to deal with their emotions and, by playing, children are able to express both their negative and positive emotions. Relaxation is also a key element in a school playground. For most children, exercise and sport are activities to be enjoyed, and are good ways of getting rid of high levels of energy. Studies also show that physical exercise improves levels of concentration and lengthens the attention span in the classroom.

For this reason, in order to allow for the different needs of the children, the new school playground is divided into four zones (game-playing, relaxation, creative and nature zone), which enable the children to educate their body, mind and spirit while playing and interacting with their peers.

### Children's participation in implementing the project

Municipal authorities usually work together with architects to develop and build school playgrounds which meet the children's needs according to the latest safety requirements. As a result, children have a finished school playground, ready for them to use. But this means that they are faced with a finished product although they have not been involved in either its development or its implementation. An innovative aspect of this project was the recognition, from the very beginning, of the importance of the children's opinions and their involvement.

Involving children in this way is important for several reasons. It allows them to think in a critical and independent way, and a child's view is also quite different (freer and spontaneous) than that of an adult, meaning that they can provide fresh ideas by looking at problems in a different way.



Including children in a discussion and asking them their opinion also means that they are being taken seriously.

### The workshops with children's participation

After a first consensus had been reached with the municipal authorities of Betzdorf, the architect and the school playground working group decided to organise workshops with the children.

In a first phase, the teachers of Roodt-Syr worked with the children by going into the current school playground and asking their pupils two questions.

- What do you like about the school playground?
- What do you dislike about the school playground?

The results of the survey were posted on a bulletin board for everyone to see, and these were the bases for discussion in the workshops. The workshops were held on Saturday mornings in May, June and July 2004, and around 50 children were involved in each workshop. As a conclusion to the first workshop, the children were sent on an imaginary trip in which they pictured their favourite area in their school playground, and which they then drew in the playground itself.

In other workshops the children were asked to represent their ideal school playground on four three-dimensional models. The results of these workshops showed that the children knew exactly what their school playground should look like. Through their involvement in the project the children can identify themselves with their future school playground, which also means they are more likely to respect it when it is completed in 2007.

## The school playground

**Member State:** Luxembourg

**Region:** Moselle

**Name of the LAG:** Lëtzebuenger Musel

**Population:** 32 569

**Surface area:** 261 km<sup>2</sup>

**Project total cost:** EUR 17 817

**EU:** EUR 1 782

**Other public funds:** EUR 7 127

**Private funds:** EUR 8 908

**Period of project eligibility:** 2004–06

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**Photos provided by the Luxembourg national network unit**

# ADDING VALUE TO LOCAL PRODUCTS





GREECE

# Frixa: integrating quality local products

A mountain region develops a long-term plan based on local synergies to counter economic decline

## Introduction

Frixa is a typical mountain village which lies in the municipality of Skillountos, in the county of Ilia (north-west Peloponnese). Most of the village's 500 or so residents are engaged in agriculture, of which olive production has been the major crop. However, over the past 10 years, farm incomes have dropped significantly and, consequently, there has been a steady drift away from the area as residents have moved in search of other work.

Nevertheless, the region has significant advantages based on its rich natural and cultural environment. Its proximity (26 km) to the famous Ancient Olympia, site of the ancient Olympic Games, provides access to a variety of important archaeological sites and monuments. Also the Alfios river, which crosses the region, is suitable for various leisure activities such as kayaking, rafting, camping.

Within the framework of Leader II and subsequently with Leader+, several projects have been undertaken which exploit the region's local natural and cultural resources. These have led to an improvement in the quality of life in the area, and have enabled some of the local population to return. Under Leader+, developing the potential of Ancient Olympia has been the main focus in the development of these neighbouring mountain areas, and this has been achieved by mobilising one of the most important resources: the endogenous human one.

Both the municipality and the LAG Olympia Development SA have been active in trying to involve the local population who moved to urban areas in their proposals, which have created new employment and provided additional income.

## Bringing related projects together

Under Leader II, several investments in the region had already triggered the regeneration process, and three projects have received further funding in order to continue this process.

One such project is the children's camp 'Olympia' <sup>(1)</sup>, which was continued under Leader+ to increase its capacity and extend its range of activities to include both education and recreation.

<sup>(1)</sup> This project is already featured as a 'Leader+ in action', Leader+ Magazine, No 2.



Just one of the ranges of natural creams available to the consumer



The local aromatic oils are processed in a modern plant

A further two projects are based on an aromatic (ethereal) oil plant funded by Leader II. This plant distils the locally available aromatic plants to produce essential oils, namely orange ethereal oil, orange rosewater, lemon ethe-





real oil, lemon rosewater, sage ethereal oil, sage rosewater, camomile ethereal oil, and camomile rosewater.

A cosmetics laboratory, funded under Leader+, now uses these different oils as raw materials to produce a range of cosmetics and, consequently, it has been installed near to the source of production. The range of planned cosmetic products is antioxidant cream, Nightflower cream, Chrysalis cream, a dermatological cream and a 'gum toothpaste'. These products will be sold via a network of drugstores all over Greece.

The collection, selection and packaging of aromatic plants is another subsequent activity of the aromatic oil plant. The work is carried out by local residents and it provides them with an additional income. Apart from what is required for the oil plant, the enterprise processes and annually packs around 15 000 kg of oregano, 10 000 kg of tea, 2 000 kg of camomile, 4 000 kg of sage and 200 kg of spearmint. These products are distributed both to the domestic market and abroad.

### A continuing process

Apart from the obvious synergies between the above activities, the production units also provide a good opportunity to educate visitors from the nearby 'Olympia' children's camp about the environment. For example, the children can visit the units and watch the whole production process: collecting the aromatic plants, their selection and packaging, and production of the oils and cosmetics. In the different production units, there are small showrooms where the products are displayed and rooms for seminars and presentations.

All these different activities have created further synergies and prospects for increasing the sales of other local products. For example, a small olive press that already existed has now, without any financial support from Leader+, started to bottle the region's olive oil. Other local products on sale include honey, local pastries and sweets.

### An innovative boost for the regional economy

As a result of these relatively small investments, with funding from both Leader II and Leader+, there is a sustainable use of the region's local resources: both natural and human. This has helped to reverse the region's economic decline by acting as a local economic multiplier.

All the businesses in the projects adhere to the 'local quality pact' which forms part of the local development programme. This is designed to create a network of enterprises and the promotion of quality products, as well as the supply of high-quality tourist services. The added value gained by the region is important. So far, 33 seasonal posts and two permanent ones have been created. This has been achieved to a large extent by the vertical integration of these projects within the local economy.

At the same time, the investments carried out under Leader II and Leader+ demonstrate certain innovative aspects, including the original way in which the local products have been used, the increase in the quality of the traditional products, the production of new products, and the growth of alternative tourism related to the natural and environmental resources.

## Integrating local quality products

**Member State:** Greece

**Region:** Western Greece

**Name of the LAG:** Olympia Development SA

**Population:** 56 598

**Surface area:** 1 556 km<sup>2</sup>

### Children's camp:

**Project total cost:** EUR 436 615

**EU:** EUR 151 765

**Other public funds:** EUR 89 723

**Private funds:** EUR 195 127

### Cosmetics from aromatic oils:

**Project total cost:** EUR 265 470

**EU:** EUR 92 914

**Other public funds:** EUR 53 094

**Private funds:** EUR 119 462

### Packaging of aromatic plants:

**Project total cost:** EUR 72 334

**EU:** EUR 26 911

**Other public funds:** EUR 11 131

**Private funds:** EUR 34 292

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Photos provided by the Greek national network unit



However, the main innovative feature relates to the collaboration and networking that has been created and the consequent possibilities that this offers for further tourism and in supplying a more complete range of products.



Getting to know the local area by bike ...

## THE NETHERLANDS

# Countryside exchange in Noord-Beveland

A different way to mobilise local resources and focus on a strategy for adding value to local products, which includes the region itself!

### Introduction

For those living in rural areas, understanding and dealing with changes to the countryside is important, particularly in view of specific events, such as the foot-and-mouth crisis which occurred in 2001 in the Netherlands.

'Countryside exchange' is a method that can help to provide a structure or reference points in such cases. It does so by helping to identify what are the important issues for the area, and by facilitating a discussion about them. The outcome of this process is a series of practical recommendations that can be used to help manage and guide the process of change.

### About countryside exchange

Countryside exchange is a proven method developed by rural development centres in the USA (Glynwood Center) and the United Kingdom (CEI Associates). It depends on experts, who, with no prior knowledge or contact with the hosting area, voluntarily spend one week there in order to understand the area's special characteristics and potential. At the same time, these experts examine what the people and organisations based in the area want, using a questionnaire defined by those living there.

The experts are selected by matching the relevance of their expertise to the specific questions put forward by the hosting area. Since the team of experts come to the area



... and stopping off on the tour to view a local product

without any preconceived ideas, the team members often come up with a different approach and ask questions that would otherwise not be asked. The steps taken in the 'Countryside exchange' procedure can be summarised as:

- form a local action committee,
- design the area questionnaire by consulting all actors in the area,
- prepare an 'exchange week' facilitator and select team members,
- exchange,
- formulate action plans resulting from the team's recommendations,
- evaluate results.



## The first Dutch experience

Over a week in September 2003, the community of Noord-Beveland (in the Province of Zeeland) hosted a countryside exchange team, which comprised two American, three British and three Dutch experts, none of whom had met before. Their aim was to address the core question of the receiving local organising committee (LOC) as to how to give a boost to the economic development of the island (improving the quality of life in the rural communities) while using and improving the existing natural resources: the specific nature, landscape and scenery.

After an intensive week of sightseeing, discussions, meetings and individual interviews with many Noord-Beveland authorities, residents, and with each other, the team of experts was able to offer insight into the specific question which had been asked. These views were presented to a large delegation representing the island's community and visitors from outside the area. This delegation included representatives of the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture involved with rural development.

### In the context of Leader+

The Leader+ network supported the piloting of this method in the Netherlands, notably because of its compatibility with such Leader+ criteria as innovation and the bottom-up approach. The countryside exchange programme appears to work well because the population in the hosting area develops initiatives and takes on responsibilities for its own actions. This means that any initiatives arising from such an exchange usually receive widespread support.

Countryside exchange also stimulates the local leadership and fosters a community spirit in the hosting area. For example, bodies that do not normally interact with each other cooperate intensively during the exchange process, which can lead to a significant new understanding about problems and issues hitherto unexplored. It should also be stressed that this is not a government initiative, but a project organised at the grassroots level.

Leader+ funding was used to stimulate the consultation process with guidance on how to set up a local organisation committee and how to involve the local population, support in developing the core question, and help in finding the external experts for the exchange week.

### Landscape and identity as a local resource

In Noord-Beveland there was much enthusiasm for the project, as seen by the number of people wanting to get involved with the local organising committee.

One of the main results arising from the consultation process was that, although the residents of Noord-Beveland really valued their region's landscape, scenery, quietness and open space, they did not consider it as something to be proud of, or as a resource that could be used. Consequently, a major conclusion from the exchange week was that the region had an important resource which could be marketed, but only in a way that is sustainable. The question therefore became 'What specific local aspects can we use to promote the region that benefit the area and the various actors who live and work there?'

After the exchange week, several action groups were formed to work with the team's recommendations. This work included bringing together the region's agricultural history and identity with tourism, and designing publicity material to promote the region. Another result has been a strengthening of relations with the region's national park, and new possibilities with the farming sector, for instance new crops that are attractive for tourists and visitors.

In conclusion, through the countryside exchange initiative, the community of Noord-Beveland had raised a question which gave them some answers. Arguably though, the most important outcome of this initiative was a better appreciation of the cooperation process in their rural development strategy.



## Countryside exchange Noord-Beveland

**Member State:** The Netherlands

**Region:** Zeeland

**Name of the LAG:** Noord- en Midden Zeeland

**Population:** 99 993

**Surface area:** 851 km<sup>2</sup>

**Project total cost:** EUR 60 900

**EU:** EUR 6 000

**Other public funds:** EUR 20 000

**Private funds:** EUR 34 900

**Period of project eligibility:** 2002–03

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Photos provided by the Dutch national network unit



# MAKING THE BEST USE OF NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES







Hand-crafted skis are still very much part of the region's traditions



One of many winter sporting events taking place in the Haut-Jura

## FRANCE

# Discovering traditional skills in the Haut-Jura

A novel tour highlights specific skills and winter sports, to give a better idea of what goes on 'behind the scenes'

## Introduction

The Haut-Jura is a medium-altitude region, comprising mountains and forests, and boasts a well-developed winter sports tourist industry, clearly identifiable craftwork and industrial traditions, and a wealth of traditional skills that are rooted in specific geographical areas.

These traditional skills are located in various places where the visitor can find craft workshops, industrial sites, museums and, occasionally, natural heritage sites with tourist facilities. The sites on the discovery tours are located in four municipalities and two *départements*: Chaux-Neuve and Chappelle des Bois (Doubs) and Bois d'Amont and Prémamon (Jura).

In addition, the Parc du Haut-Jura LAG <sup>(1)</sup> has decided to set up a themed network of sites, open to the public, which promote not only the local specialty but also the people involved in them. This initiative has been undertaken with a view to putting skills in a regional context (within the boundaries of the park), developing them within a network (rather than centralising the initiative around a single theme, organisation or municipality), and responding to the need to have activities across the whole region.

## Innovative skill-based tours

Organising tours based on local skills addresses several issues.

- It brings together the craft-workers, industrial manufacturers and the craft museum, in order to show the general public how a skill has evolved and can be carried out.
- It makes it easier to organise tailor-made tours for tourists and present demonstrations.
- It draws on prior ethnological research, which can then be made available to a wider audience.

The aim of the tour network is quite innovative since it provides a cultural, educational and tourism-related dimension to sites which, a priori, were initially set up for other purposes. Thanks to the tour, the history, business activity and sport are linked together under the same theme (snow). This gives visitors an overview of the different activities, making it easier for visitors to understand the overall content of the project.



Taking a break from the snow

## Understanding what people really want

In 2001, a sociological study, with a focus on historical aspects, was carried out by the LAG in order to better understand the importance of snow for the Haut-Jura region. At the same time, a survey was carried out questioning pre-selected people at 'discovery' sites. These sites were selected either because they were interested in being open to the public, or because they already had a promotion and development policy. As a result of the survey, several businesses were selected to become part of the 'Espaces et temps de la neige' (Places and periods of snow) network. This network is a public-private concern which incorporates an ecological museum, the Centre National de Ski Nordique (National Nordic Ski Centre) and a ski manufacturer.

In 2003, the implementation stage started and, in 2004, the network linking the four sites that had been identified was set up and opened to the public. With an agreed graphics charter, the display and promotional materials used at the various sites were developed in the framework of a 'tourism development' initiative. This also included an advertising campaign.

## The idea in action

The project's aim is cultural and targets the residents of the nature park as well as visitors from outside the area. During tours at these sites, the visitor can 'travel' through

<sup>(1)</sup> The name of the LAG is derived from 'Parc du Haut-Jura', the name of the natural park.







the different scenes, using a guidebook which combines ethnological and historical information.

The original approach of the tour concept means that this project offers a genuine alternative for promoting and developing the area's local resources and traditional skills. It also includes support for redesign work and for making the sites accessible to the public. Each site is in fact the project owner and is responsible for creating public access and providing the information that is needed for individual visitors or guided tours.

The LAG coordinates and ensures a degree of consistency between the different projects. It is in charge of defining the educational content, the promotion and marketing strategy, and producing the communication tools specifically related to the network. It deals with the sites' applications for subsidies and signs agreements with the beneficiaries. The sites can also sign separate agreements with the financial partners.

### Exploiting cultural values with Leader+

The Leader+ programme has made it possible to approach the issue of local identity by means of an experimental project, based on mobility and taking account of different regional views. For example, at the local level, the project conveys a strong identity and image even though it encompasses only a part of the Jura Massif.

It also gives added value by creating a new network which gives a cultural value to sites which were initially intended for other purposes. By contrast, incorporating different projects on the same theme helps to generate new ideas. The promotional materials used at the different sites are interchangeable and can be used in other contexts, for example with the Maison Michaud ecology museum, the Tuffes-Prémanon Nordic site ski-jumping stadium, an exhibition set design at the Vandel company, and an exhibition and film about ski-jumping. These activities also help to develop other partnerships.

The support of the Leader+ programme gives the sites concerned a level of funding guaranteed over several years, which also brings an active commitment to the project.

The methods employed in this project will be applied to other themes (toys, wood-turning, etc.), with the aim of expanding and strengthening the network, with the more specific elements of the networking project being transferable to other projects. The project owners have realised that the diversity of the sites proposed on the tour has

helped to develop their own specific fields and that Leader+ has been a source of innovation capable of boosting local economic development.

## Traditional skills in the Haut-Jura

**Member State:** France

**Region:** Franche-Comté

**Name of the LAG:** GAL Parc du Haut-Jura

**Population:** 2 648

**Surface area:** 1 651 km<sup>2</sup>

**Project total cost:** EUR 146 900

**EU:** EUR 64 735

**Other public funds:** EUR 82 165

**Period of project eligibility:** July 2003 to June 2005

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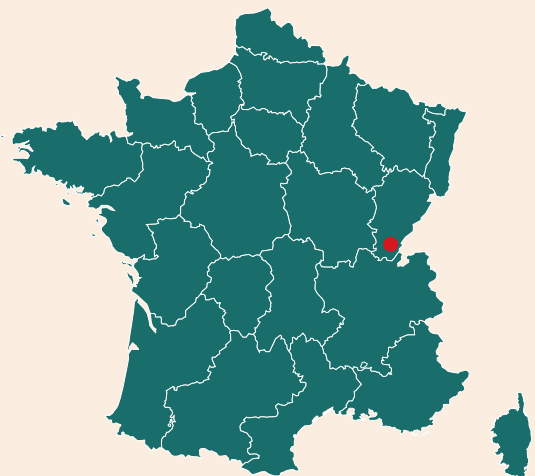
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**Photos provided by the French national network unit**



## AUSTRIA

# Playing history back to the region

Austria's Hausruck region puts on a historic play and finds a dramatic way to address past controversy

By Thomas Kibler, project manager,  
and Luis Fidschuster, Austrian national network unit

## Introduction

The summer of 2005 was memorable for the Leader+ region of Hausruck. Around 7 400 people came to see nine performances of the play *Hunt* (*Hunt oder Der totale Februar*)<sup>(1)</sup>. Despite initial concerns, the performance of the play turned out to be a remarkable success. This is all the more noteworthy since the ingredients for this initiative were anything but promising at the beginning. This in fact sums up the theatre project as a whole. The performances involved 150 actors from the region who took part in a play about the so-called February fights of 1934. There has been extensive coverage in all the Austrian media concerning the play, which was commissioned and financed by Leader+. The internationally renowned author Franzobel, who wrote the play, was honoured with the Nestroy Award: a highly prestigious prize for theatre in Austria.

## Background to the play

The background to this theatre project is the fighting between the paramilitary organisations of the Heimwehr (conservative party) and the Schutzbund (social democrats) in February 1934, which are recorded in Austrian history as the civil war and the workers' uprising. On 12 and 13 February 1934, the armed conflict reached the coal district of the Hausruck, ending in the deaths of 10 people (six of whom were executed without trial) on the side of the Schutzbund and five on the side of the federal armed forces, and incurring two civilian casualties.

The theatre project is a means to reappraise the contemporary history of the region of Hausruck. Rifts in the population resulting from this period can be felt even today, and so the play is an opportunity to address an unspoken past. However, dealing with such violent events of that time has a great potential for controversy and conflict, not only in the Hausruck region but throughout Austria. The author, Franzobel, originates from the Hausruck region and was assigned with developing *Hunt* by

the Leader+ group. For the stage set, the University of the Arts, Linz, Upper Austria, was commissioned to develop a special production in the area of the 'coal crusher' in Kohlgrube near Wolfsegg. That this, untypical (for rural regions) contemporary examination of a highly sensitive issue was possible, and also became a success instead of a 'regional scandal', proved a significant point.

## *Hunt* and the Frankenburg game of dice

The concept for this theatre project came out of the Hausruck LAG's culture working group in 2002. The idea was to come up with something which could be staged in the years when the established production *Frankenburger Würfelspiel* (Frankenburg game of dice) was not being performed. This play involves around 400 amateur actors, and is concerned with the uprising of townspeople and peasants in the 17th century in the region of Hausruck. It is performed every two years and is known well beyond the regional boundaries.

The initiators of *Hunt* set themselves ambitious targets from the beginning. There are many amateur theatre companies and associations in the region of Hausruck. By working with professionals, including such actors as Karl Markovics (Stockinger, Kommissar Rex) and Stefanie Dvorak (Burgtheater, Vienna), the experienced director Georg Schmiedleitner, and the Arts University, Linz, the amateur actors would further develop their skills and qualifications, and the project would thereby become a forum for aspiring actors in the region. The impressive setting posed a great challenge to the actors, so by working with professionals (author, director, actors) the amateur actors could gain confidence and experience to meet the demands of the production.

The social and economic importance of coal mining for the region would also be highlighted. Thus, the choice of selecting an unpopular topic, that still concerns the region of Hausruck, was a conscious one. Addressing the topic would also break through the silence about the fights and executions in February 1934 by means of a literary reappraisal of the past. In addition, the major project *Hunt* would also serve to initiate the networking of the numerous local

(1) 'Hunt' refers to the fact that miners were 'hunted' during the civil war, as well as to the 'wagon' used to transport coal out of the mine.



theatre companies for further supra-regional theatre projects.

### Modern public theatre

*Hunt* is a mixture of historic play and burlesque, modern and critical public theatre. From numerous interviews with contemporary witnesses, Franzobel, the author, has written a play about an almost forgotten, tragic event in regional history: the abolition of a workers' uprising on 12 February 1934 in the Hausruck coal district, and the execution of six members of the social-democratic paramilitary organisation, the Schutzbund. The focus is on the personal destiny of the regional Schutzbund leader Fageth and his partner. A further 40 speaking parts were cast with amateur actors from the region, and a total of 150 people from the region of Hausruck took part in choirs, music groups and as extras.

The setting for the costly production was the first coal crusher in the coal district of Hausruck in Wolfsegg. The coal crusher is one of the most monumental and fascinating industrial memorials from the mining past of the region of Hausruck. Located near the place of the events of that time, where the workers lived in Holzleithen, it provided an appropriate stage for some 100 amateur actors.

### Staging with Leader+ funding

Subsidies from the Leader+ programme were used for the following elements:

- composition of the play,
- direction,
- fees for the professional actors,
- audio and lighting engineering,
- advertising and public relations,
- stage design,
- rental fee for the coal crusher,
- documenting interviews with contemporary witnesses,
- costumes and make-up artist,
- a grandstand.

### Innovative aspects

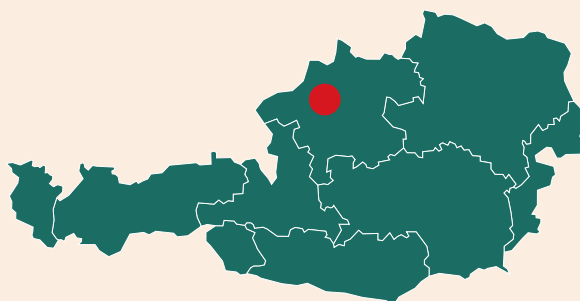
There are several aspects of this project which may be considered innovative:

- the choice of a controversial political theme instead of something of more traditional 'folklore';
- the choice of performing 'open air' in a mining area as a way of contributing to a better understanding of a difficult historical period and thereby contributing to the region's cultural heritage;
- the degree of cooperation between professional and non-professional actors;
- the cooperation of different regional theatre groups in realising such a large project and thereby creating the basis for further events and improving the quality of regional theatre;
- that the LAG commissioned the play from such a renowned writer, which was based on interviews with contemporary witnesses.

### Reflecting on success

Seven performances were initially planned for around 4 000 visitors. Due to the great demand, two additional performances were scheduled, which were sold out within hours. In total, 7 400 visitors came to see the nine performances, and a further 1 600 requests for tickets had to be declined. The media response was also very positive. The debut performance was attended by more than 50 media representatives, including some from abroad, and all the major Austrian daily newspapers reported several times in detail on the spectacular production of *Hunt*. In addition, radio and television reports brought the region, and the way it dealt with a difficult aspect of its past, to the fore.

Apart from media recognition there were also artistic awards. Apart from the Nestroy Award given to the author for the play, the production was awarded a 'special prize' by the Nestroy jury on 26 November 2005. What's more, another production is already planned for summer 2006, with a provisional date for the premiere of 27 July 2006.



### Playing history back to the region

**Member State:** Austria  
**Region, district:** Upper Austria, Region of Hausruck  
**Name of the LAG:** Regionalentwicklungsverband Hausruck

**Population:** 40 783  
**Surface area:** 417 km<sup>2</sup>  
**Project total cost:** EUR 133 000  
**EU:** EUR 66 500  
**Other public funds:** EUR 26 600  
**Private funds:** EUR 39 900  
**Period of project eligibility:** February 2004 to December 2005

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Photos provided by the Hausruck LAG



## UNITED KINGDOM

# Discovering the 'Open church' network

An innovative approach to tourism becomes part of a region's heritage strategy with a link to rural prosperity

## Introduction

The territory for this project covers the rural areas of Wrexham County Borough in north-east Wales, and is characterised by several distinct zones: upland hill farming, urban fringes, lowland areas, and sheep farming. It is also an area with close proximity to the cities of Chester, Manchester and Liverpool, and consequently is home to commuters working in these places. This also has the effect of creating an income imbalance, with some of the more prosperous communities existing in sharp contrast to areas of poverty and deprivation.

The Northern Marches Cymru LAG seeks to develop the capacity of its rural communities by focusing on the Leader+ themes: making best use of regions' cultural and natural resources, and the quality of life in rural areas.

In one such project, the 'Open church' network, the LAG has brought together 12 churches within the Wrexham County Borough, which since its launch in 2003 has explored an innovative approach to church tourism.

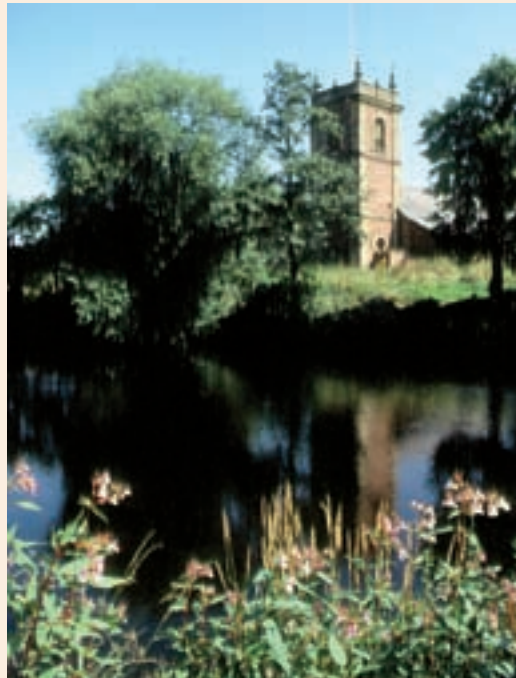
## Unlocking the heritage potential

The project is developing a network of community-based tourist opportunities throughout the Leader+ area. This means that for the first time rural churches are working together, learning from each other, and using economies of scale to produce a quality product for visitors.

Locked up in church buildings is a great deal of history and heritage. Each church and their associated buildings have been made more attractive to visitors by providing simple things such as information panels which highlight specific points of interest, opening signs, new benches, etc. In one of the churches for example, a visitor centre has been created with the help of members of the local community which highlights the rich history of the building and its surrounding area. An animatronic monk relates what life may have been like in seventh-century Wales, while other aspects of heritage and culture have been equally exploited to raise awareness of local heroes, including a famous poet, as well as the unique architecture contained within the church structures. This activity has encouraged people to visit some of the unexplored rural areas of Wrexham County Borough.

## Creating an identity

A branding exercise has been undertaken to create a strong identity for the 'Open church' network. It is promoted as a new visitor experience and uses high-quality



One of the 12 churches in the network

marketing materials, with its own logo, visitor packs and posters. This quality branding was considered as essential at the outset in order to place the network in a competitive market place.

Thus the 'Open church' network is promoted as a quality visitor experience, and encourages visitors to spend more time in the area. Local service providers have already begun to benefit as increased visitors make use of local facilities and purchase local produce. This in turn will increase small-scale community-based tourism and encourage return visits.

As a 'project for all', school visits have also been planned, and target marketing to coach tour operators and advertising in specialist publications has attracted a wider audience.

## With the help of Leader+

Leader+ has acted as a catalyst in forming a network of 12 churches (11 rural and one in the town of Wrexham) and provided funding for a variety of joint marketing materials and training. The project has increased community spirit and participation, with local volunteers having been recruited to enable the churches to be open for longer hours





to the public. Northern Marches Cymru has supported volunteers to undergo training in welcoming tourists and tourism activities, thereby increasing their contribution to the project. The volunteers are mainly women who by learning new skills are providing invaluable knowledge of the area and helping to pass on information about the region's culture and history to the younger generation.

Lying at the heart of local communities, churches make ideal venues for planning and advertising festivals and events which celebrate the area's heritage and culture. For example, an annual programme of events is linked with the European Heritage weekends and an arts festival organised by Wrexham County Borough Council.

### The benefits of working together

Another benefit of working together as a network is that of joint merchandising. This means that all the churches in the network are able to purchase quality merchandise in bulk at a reduced cost. This not only promotes the network, but allows it to generate additional income which is

of particular benefit for the smaller churches involved.

However, the main value of this project relates to the improvements made to the infrastructure of the churches. The planned addition of more history displays will ensure that the 'Open church' network has something of permanent interest to offer future visitors. This will help to maintain the long-term sustainability of the project, ensuring that each church in the network is worthy of a visit.

### Continuing the attraction

The development of the project's events and the educational programme will continue to attract new visitors and therefore further increase income generation. The ongoing recruitment process will eventually result in a network of trained volunteers with skills and enthusiasm to ensure the churches remain open.

An additional four new churches joined the network in October 2005, and this together with a 'discovery trail' planned for 2006 will ensure that the 'Open church' network is firmly established as a major visitor attraction for Wrexham.

Already this network has been cited as an example of best practice, and has been presented in workshops in other areas to inform about the processes involved in setting up such a network. This importance has been further underlined by the network's inclusion in the local heritage strategy, which seeks to encourage economic prosperity for Wrexham's rural areas and to raise awareness of linking heritage to local communities.



## 'Open church' network

**Member State:** United Kingdom  
**Region, district:** Northern Marches, Wales  
**Name of the LAG:** Northern Marches Cymru

**Population:** 35 245  
**Surface area:** 424 km<sup>2</sup>  
**Project total cost:** EUR 332 483  
**EU:** EUR 289 229  
**Other public funds:** EUR 9 725  
**Private funds:** EUR 33 529  
**Period of project eligibility:**  
 December 2003 to December 2006

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Photos provided by the UK national network unit



# USE OF NEW KNOW-HOW AND NEW TECHNOLOGIES





# Within close proximity: a regional information strategy

Developing a regional information strategy underlines a local approach to promoting local products and shows how diversity can share a common platform

### Introduction

The Dueceira LAG is situated in Portugal's Beira Litoral region, in the centre of the country. It is an area characterised by forests bordering the Lousã Mountain range, with *albufeiras* (dams) and many rivers; the two most important rivers being the Zêzere and Mondego. These natural features identify the area which is known as Entre Lousã e Zêzere (ELOZ).

Natural features also define the local identity and the socioeconomic conditions. With around 54 000 inhabitants spread over 1 114 km<sup>2</sup>, and seven administrative communes, the region is sparsely populated and suffers from the effects of an ageing and migrating population. The main economic activities are centred on agriculture and forestry. Industries related to wood, such as papermaking, remain an important sector for the region.

Although new technologies are not a main theme for the LAG, providing an information resource to the local population who are physically remote and information poor is nevertheless very much part of the spirit of the Leader philosophy, and indeed this need was a main driver of this project.

The development of an Internet portal is not only a very significant element in the region's development, but also in context of the LAG's own programme. By promoting different projects through this regional portal, the LAG also aims to add value to local resources and products. The various projects presented below provide a better understanding of the way in which this portal can exploit the region's existing projects and thereby its development potential.

### Diversity of projects

There are three quite distinct projects within the strategy, two of which, 'Craft' network and 'Mountain trails', conceived and developed under Leader II, now continue under Leader+ and demonstrate the interest and significance of this online information strategy.

### Mountain trails

The Os Trilhos da Serra (Mountain trails) project's main initial goal was to design and publish a book describing the whole territory and community, but this quickly evolved into the construction of a promotional website for the entire Entre Lousã e Zêzere region, with the goal of boosting the region's tourism, within and beyond its boundaries. Consequently, its content has also been made available in French and English.

### Craft network

In the case of the Artesanato em Rede ('Craft' network), it came about as a project to facilitate cooperation. Its aim is to design and build a craft network: a database of craftsmen and craftswomen, as a means of promoting the region through local trades and professions. The end result was the [www.artesanatorede.com](http://www.artesanatorede.com) website, which is available in English, French and Spanish. This site is significant in both social and economic terms, as it seeks to promote the activities of the region's population, along with information on specific and general cultural features.

This project goes beyond the mere construction and maintenance of a website. In reality, it represents an effort to make direct contact with each one of the region's craftsmen, by creating an inventory of a particular sector of the local economy: something that has never been done before. The creation of a database of 140 local craftsmen has also provided a better understanding about the difficulties these men and women experience, as well as their needs and expectations.

Leader II funded the production of marketing materials which support the craft activities: business cards, bags and packaging, and some signposts give an image of quality and uniformity for the various craft services provided. The LAG has also helped the craftsmen to comply with the certification process regarding their artisanal activities.

Initially faced with a situation where there was little enthusiasm and initiative for e-commerce, the decision was made to keep the website as an online 'shop window' under Leader+, through which the craft products produced by 66 of the selected craftsmen can be seen. In this way, there is a permanent promotion of the region's products, as shown by the 100 000 or so visits. One notable success story of this initiative has been the sale of millstones (used for crushing maize or olives) to customers in the United States of America. It is expected that in a future stage of the project it will also be possible to purchase such products online (e-commerce).

### Cooperate in Portuguese

'Cooperate in Portuguese' ([www.cooperaremportugues.org](http://www.cooperaremportugues.org)) is another activity based on an Internet platform, which links partners based in Brazil, Mozambique, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, São Tomé and Príncipe, Angola and Timor Lorosae. Based on an original idea of the Dueceira LAG, it is a cooperation activity with more than 10 Portuguese LAGs. This project is aimed at reaching and redis-

covering the countries of the Portuguese-speaking world and to rediscover countries that had long ago been integrated as Portuguese colonies. The main interest and strategy behind this project is to stimulate cooperation between the different partners and to build a future common network of mutual interest.

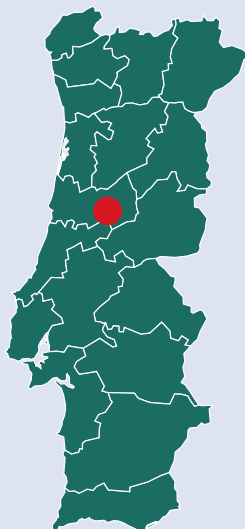
In order to consolidate its partnerships with two of the project's partners, RITS (the business information network) and DLIS (network for local, integrated and sustainable development), the LAG attended the annual 'ExpoBrasil' (fair of local development). At the October 2005 event, the LAG took part in a project co-organised with Fórum de Desenvolvimento Local em língua Portuguesa (Forum for local development in the Portuguese language). This event established further partnerships with organisations in three countries: Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde. With this project, the LAG hopes to gain a better understanding of local development in the different countries, which will provide it with the possibility to make contact with local entities and initiatives, as much for an exchange of experiences as for commercial opportunities.

### A question of strategy

From an early stage, Dueceira recognised the strategic importance of ICT (information and communication technologies), with its clear focus on accessibility, speed, and proximity, for the region's development. The initial aim was to develop a site designed to provide information about the Leader+ programme, stimulate interest in the agricultural life of the Entre Lousã e Zêzere region, and provide a place for contact and participation. In a region with poor access, the Internet is regarded as a tool to both improve access to the region and support development, thereby helping to overcome the resident population's isolation.

With around 300 000 hits, the [www.dueceira.pt](http://www.dueceira.pt) website has already achieved its initial aims. The next stage of development involves creating a portal for the entire Entre Lousã e Zêzere region. This requires an interactive site offering more services. Another recent development has been the launch of an electronic bulletin which is sent directly to around a 1 000 subscribers, and which is an important way of communicating news about local initiatives.

The LAG's information strategy highlights all its current projects and is a means of bringing together such diverse projects as: craft network, mountain trails, and more recently 'Cooperate in Portuguese'. The aim is not just



Promoting the LAG's many projects

about presenting one project in its entirety, but in showing how, by using new technologies, all these projects can come together on one platform.

## A regional information strategy

**Member State:** Portugal

**Region:** Beira Litoral

**Name of the LAG:** Programa Leader+ ELOZ (Entre Lousã e Zêzere)

**Population:** 54 176

**Surface area:** 1 114 km<sup>2</sup>

**Project total cost:** EUR 26 022

**EU:** EUR 19 516

**Other public funds:** EUR 6 506

**Period of project eligibility:** 2001–06

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Photos provided by Dueceira





A typical rural setting for a solar orchard

## SPAIN

# Solar orchards in a rural setting

**Leader+ helps with testing different systems to produce solar electricity, to provide economic returns for the region and benefits for the environment**

by Julián Monedero: Dobon's Technology, Tenerife, Canary Islands

### Introduction

The project is concerned with a technical study to install solar orchards in rural Tenerife, and is co-financed by Leader+ through Federte, the LAG of Tenerife. The project itself is being carried out by a research, development and technological innovation company.

A solar orchard is a field of photovoltaic solar panels, from which the electricity produced can then be sold on to the electricity grid, thus giving the farmer or landowner a return on the investment.

This type of investment has become more attractive since the application of a new ruling on the production of electricity (Royal Decree 436/2004). This has created a favourable economic climate, particularly for photovoltaic installations which have a maximum capacity of no more than 100 kW. Accordingly, this type of plant receives a pay-

ment which amounts to 575 % of the average electrical tariff for the first 25 years of its life (which means about EUR 0.41 for each kW at present prices), and thereafter 460 % for the rest of the life of the installation.

### Solar orchards: a pilot action

The aim of the project is to provide a site where different photovoltaic systems for generating electricity can be tested and evaluated. Here the LAG has provided a suitably isolated plot of land for a 'solar orchard' in the area around Pájara-Güímar. The objective is to determine, in terms of performance and economic potential, which technology provides the best system for producing solar-generated electricity (in a rural environment).

Since there is a lot of competition in the solar energy industry, particularly from large players, it is important that patents developed by small companies can maintain their competitive edge. An innovative technology (called TETRA-TRACK®) designed by the project developers has been

installed in this solar orchard for testing. The system works using a twin-axis sun-tracking system and combines different levels of photovoltaic concentration. It is described below.

### About the technology

The traditional system is based on a static photovoltaic solar module which is fixed pointing south and is set to an inclined angle according to the site's degree of latitude. In the case of the twin-axis sun-tracking system, the sun is tracked all day long. It uses the same base technology as for the fixed system but has in addition the following options: sun tracking, sun tracking using mirrors, and sun tracking using mirrors and a passive refrigeration system.

The static photovoltaic solar module is the most common system used, mainly for small facilities where it forms an integral part of the buildings. Since the photovoltaic modules are fixed south (but motionless), a great deal of energy is lost, since for most of the day the sun is not perpendicular to the solar panel.

The twin-axis sun-tracking system can follow the sun at any given time, working in the same way as a sunflower, such that there is always a surface (platform) perpendicular to the sun. This revolving device is very useful in solar energy systems, since it can produce more energy than a static system. In order to increase energy production, the twin-axis system allows mirrors to be positioned in such a way that the panels or capturing modules receive not only the direct solar radiation but also the radiation reflected by the mirrors.

### Social and environmental benefits

One of the great advantages of the 'solar orchard' is not only its compatibility with the use of productive agricultural fields but also that otherwise unproductive fields can suddenly be employed, provided of course that they are

blessed with high levels of solar radiation! In Spain there are many such examples in different regions, such as Murcia and Navarra. Apart from this, the activity encourages employment in rural areas by creating jobs related to the systems' relatively simple installation and maintenance, as well as producing a monthly income from the sale of electricity.

This activity has a great potential for the development of the rural environment, owing to its complementary nature as extra income for farmers and cattle breeders and its ability to improve the quality of life of those living in rural areas due to employment opportunities, and for society in general by helping to reduce the emissions from the fossil fuel power stations which generate more than 90 % of the Canary Islands' electricity. On a wider level, this project is in line with the goal of PECAN (the energy plan of the Canary Islands) for 12 % of renewable energies.

According to the co-founder of the company producing photovoltaic modules: 'If only 1 % of the agricultural aid in the next 10 years was designated to solar orchards it would then be possible to create a sustainable and competitive photovoltaic system.'

### First results

The project has several basic goals: to help achieve a more sustainable rural environment, to promote the production of renewable energy by means of non-polluting methods, to be compatible with agriculture, and to contribute to solving the Canary Islands' energy and environmental problems. So far, it appears that the project is on target to address some if not all of these issues.

Initial results show that the twin-axis sun-tracking systems are the most suitable for the rural environment, and estimate a saving of about 30 % on the costs of producing





electricity. The period of depreciation for a fixed photovoltaic installation of 100 kW is between 11 and 13 years, depending on the location. The plants with twin-axis sun tracking shorten the period of depreciation by around three years, and so provide further net benefits for the landowner over the remainder of the life of the amortisation period, which is about three years. Therefore net benefits for the landowner would arise during this period.

## Solar orchards

**Member State:** Spain

**Region:** Canarias

**Name of the LAG:** Federte  
(Federación de Asociaciones de Desarrollo Rural de la Isla de Tenerife)

**Population:** 138 840

**Surface area:** 939 km<sup>2</sup>

**Project total cost:** EUR 79 390

**EU:** EUR 26 465

**Other public funds:** EUR 13 230

**Private funds:** EUR 39 695

**Period of project eligibility:**

August 2004 to May 2006

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Photos provided by the Spanish national network unit



Innovative technology keeps the sun's rays at the right angle



# COOPERATION IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT







Training takes place outdoors ...



## IRELAND AND THE UNITED KINGDOM

# Creative use of digital media: developing the skills of young people

Working with young people in an innovative way, the project shows how two different communities can work together to better understand their regional and personal identities

### Introduction

Two Leader+ LAGs, KELT (County Kildare, Ireland) and Teignbridge Rural Regeneration Partnership (TRRP) (Devon, United Kingdom) have joined forces in a transnational project involving young people working together to achieve common goals. The project gives the participants a chance to develop digital media and life-learning skills, and allows them to explore their creativity and their feeling of regional identity. Two other local partners, the Centre for Performing Arts (Ireland) and Blind Ditch Performance (United Kingdom), are also involved.

### Coming together

'The creation of the project has its origins in a fortunate meeting of like-minded people,' says Justin Larkin, LAG coordinator. This meeting had three crucial elements. Firstly, and most importantly, the two LAGs were motivated to

work with young people in a new and innovative way, and where the work was determined by the young people themselves. Secondly, both LAGs had already undertaken similar projects within their own areas and, thirdly, both LAGs wanted to develop a transnational project around this work.

In April 2004, representatives from KELT and TRRP met at a Leader+ workshop in Scotland. Over the next few months, different possibilities were explored and by November 2004 they were in a position to proceed. A series of meetings during January and February 2005 led to agreement on the final proposal by March 2005.

### Project description and objectives

The project has a number of interesting aspects. At its core is a training initiative for young people aged 14 to 21, which will enable those taking part to express themselves



... and further guidance is given indoors too

in a creative way through a series of short films/DVDs. As a result, these young people can develop both specific technical abilities as well as more general communication skills, in order to inform the wider community of their views about where they live.

In terms of the film production, there are two core themes: the participants' 'perception and reality' of living in each other's home region and 'a day in the life' of this region. The resulting film will be presented to the wider public in three different way:

- public screenings of the film/DVD;
- a tour of the film/DVD showing at local centres, by Vanland<sup>(1)</sup>;
- DVDs distributed to schools and the wider community.

Together with the films that have been produced on these themes, participants will also film and edit a documentary about the making of the transnational project.

A key part of the project is the exchange of methodologies and experience between the LAG areas. This includes exchanges related to personnel training and experiences and the ideas and opinions of the young people, using live links and DVD/film footage. In this way, young people can explore the choices they have, and are able to compare the perceptions and realities of their own daily lives. The training and the resulting films and DVDs were funded by Leader+.

<sup>(1)</sup> Vanland is an Action 1 project funded by Leader+. It comprises a touring caravan which has been converted into a multi-screen exhibition space ([www.vanland.org](http://www.vanland.org)).

## Project outcomes

Alongside developing technical skills in a medium that is innovative, accessible and relevant to them, the project enables young people to express themselves in a creative and professional way. This is achieved through workshops with professionals who help with presentational and digital media skills. Furthermore, by ensuring that the young people themselves have full control over the work they undertake, individual skills are also developed. Teamwork helps with such aspects as dealing with responsibility, leadership roles, building confidence, and respecting and considering alternative views and opinions. These are all integral and important elements of the project. After the filming has been completed, the young people become responsible for showing the completed work.

From a community point of view, the work seeks to portray the character and diversity of local areas. Phil Aubrey (TRRP) notes, 'We did not seek to have the young people work in isolation of their community. We have tried to stimulate and encourage positive interaction.'

This wider community involvement is evident in some unexpected project developments. For example, in Ballitore, County

Kildare, a week-long programme of activity gave a boost to the whole area. Here, the community asked to see the completed footage of the film, which resulted in a première evening. Consequently, in order to host this, an old cinema in Ballitore which had been closed for 40 years was refurbished over a six-week period by the community, from their own resources. In addition, due to the high demand to see the première, live video links were installed in local pubs.

In Devon, as part of the community night in Christow, Blind Ditch Performance showed old film footage, recording life in the region from the 1940s to the 1960s. People were then invited to an interview booth where they could record their own memories and reactions to the archival film. This was managed by the young people who also carried out and filmed the interviews; more than two hours of interviews were recorded. This material is to be presented to South West Regional Film Archive to keep for future generations.

## The cooperation experience

While both LAGs had previous experience with this type of project, the approaches and methodologies used were quite different. By combining techniques, significant added value could be brought to the project.

Flexibility in the work programme and in the scheduling of the different activities meant that the two partners could deliver different aspects of the project independently, while at the same time contributing to each other's ac-





Results of the filming are closely monitored



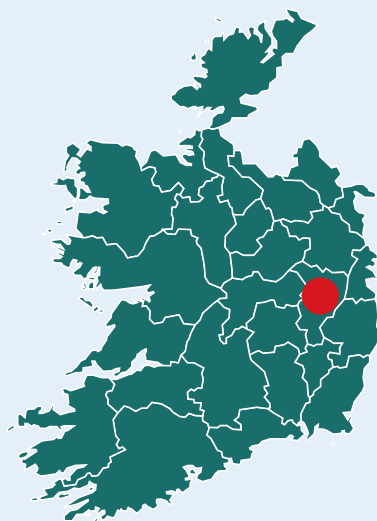
tivities. There were also some specific actions where the partners worked together to deliver project activities, such as a week-long programme of workshops, and filming on location in each of the Leader+ areas. A third element of joint activity is planned around the public launches and presentation of the finished film/DVD.

### Successful innovation

Probably the most critical and innovative aspect of this project is that it is run by the young people themselves. The LAGs provide the training and technical support which allows them to take on this responsibility, so that they can decide on the issues to be explored, the story lines to be developed, the way the story is presented (TV magazine-style broadcast or a short play/drama), the method of filming, how to manage the production, and the final editing.

### Conclusion

Even before the project finished, a number of elements of good practice were already evident, with both the young people and the wider communities in both LAG areas benefiting from the project. Reflecting on the work to date, Justin Larkin, LAG manager, says 'In a project of this nature, we had to be flexible and to be able to respond to circumstances as they arose. We think it was essential to allow the project to develop organically. The fact that we built this into our process certainly resulted in a stronger project.'



## Creative use of digital media

**Member State:** Ireland  
**Region:** Border Midland and Western  
**Name of the leading LAG:** Kildare European Leader Teoranta (KELT)

**Member State:** United Kingdom  
**Region:** South-West England  
**Name of the LAG:** Teignbridge Rural Regeneration Partnership (TRRP)

**Total population:** 164 000  
**Surface area:** 1 700 km<sup>2</sup>  
**Project total cost:** EUR 137 094  
**EU:** EUR 78 257  
**Other public funds:** EUR 58 837  
**Period of project eligibility:** May 2005 to May 2006

**Project costs for Ireland**  
**Project total cost:** EUR 95 117  
**EU:** EUR 61 827  
**Other public funds:** EUR 33 290

**Project costs for the United Kingdom**  
**Project total cost:** EUR 41 977  
**EU:** EUR 16 430  
**Other public funds:** EUR 25 547

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Photos provided by the Irish national network unit

## FINLAND AND ITALY

# Orienteering: combining sport with innovation

Under Leader+ a popular sport becomes a source of innovation, cooperation and a model for 'green' tourism

## Introduction

This transnational Leader+ project is the first of its kind. As a pilot action, it brings together groups from Italy and Finland under the umbrella of an innovative orienteering project, which seeks to develop a model for orienteering linked to tourism.

Orienteering is one of the most popular sports in Scandinavia. It is taught in schools as, in order to be successful at the sport, intelligence and reasoning as well as a degree of physical fitness are required. It also brings the participant to areas of natural beauty and, as an activity for all the family, also provides a basis for tourism. Thus, the target groups include not only the regions' youth, their teachers and tutors, but also enterprises concerned with tourism.

The first steps along the project's path brought together two countries from opposite ends of Europe during the summer of 2004, and involved the Aktiivinen Pohjois-Satakunta LAG of Finland and the Antico Frignano e Appennino Reggiano LAG of Italy. Initially, a group of enthusiastic Italian delegates from the tourism consortium of Valli del Cimone, and Italian orienteering experts from the Province of Modena visited the area of the Pohjois-Satakunta ry LAG in Finland. This coincided with the world's largest orienteering event in Jukola, which took place in a zone of natural wilderness in the small municipality of Jämijärvi. Organised mainly by volunteers from local orienteering associations, this annual 24-hour event regularly attracts around 13 000 competitors, and many tens of thousands of spectators.

## The role of the LAGs

The Finnish LAG had an important role in organising meetings between the Italian visitors and the key persons from the local orienteering associations and local authorities. After initial discussions between the different groups, the



Deciding where to go next requires careful thought ...



... though once on the right path it's uphill all the way

future project network was born. Consequently the Italians invited a group of orienteering specialists and LAG representatives from the Pohjois-Satakunta region to visit them and give their opinion on the region of Modena as a suitable venue, and to discuss the various ways to collaborate.

In October 2004, the Finnish experts visited Modena, which reinforced the idea that a cooperation project was a way to exploit the regions' unlocked tourist potential,





inspire local youth associations and develop social skills in an international context. On this basis the LAG councils began planning the project so that it could start in March 2005 in Satakunta, and three months later in Modena.

In autumn 2005, two new partners joined the project: the Italian Allba of South-West Basilicata (LAG) and the new worldwide partner, Park World Tour organisation of Sweden (non-LAG). The LAGs have realised that an essential element of the project are the cultural differences which need to be understood and developed in order to provide the necessary level of innovation.

### Developing project goals and results

The resulting 'Orienteering — sport and innovation' project is the first pilot project of its kind, and has set ambitious targets in order to realise certain goals. These according to the agreed project template are:

- orienteering as a hobby, especially for children and young people,
- the start-up of concrete interregional collaboration,
- the transfer of orienteering know-how,
- developing international skills of the local actors,
- business and marketing actions for the orienteering sector,
- developing ecotourism combined with tourism related to orienteering,
- new innovative ways of social networking,
- a pedagogical methodology related to orienteering,
- the necessary volunteer base.

In its first year, the project has already produced results at both local and international levels. These include:

- an orienteering camp for 50 people (both Italian and Finnish),
- development of education packages for international orienteering for 70 teachers in Modena (Italy),
- an orienteering technical education package (Finland),
- organisation of the 'Mediterranean Open Championship' event and the 'Park World Tour' in Basilicata (Italy),
- creation of tourist events related to orienteering, including marketing materials and a website ([www.fi-ori.com](http://www.fi-ori.com)),
- tailor-made cartography,
- training of orienteering tutors for the disabled.

In terms of the proposed voluntary work taking place in Finland, the project has involved over 200 persons who are working with a variety of Finnish associations. In Italy the projects are carried out using a combination of paid staff and volunteers.

### Importance of Leader+ in cooperation

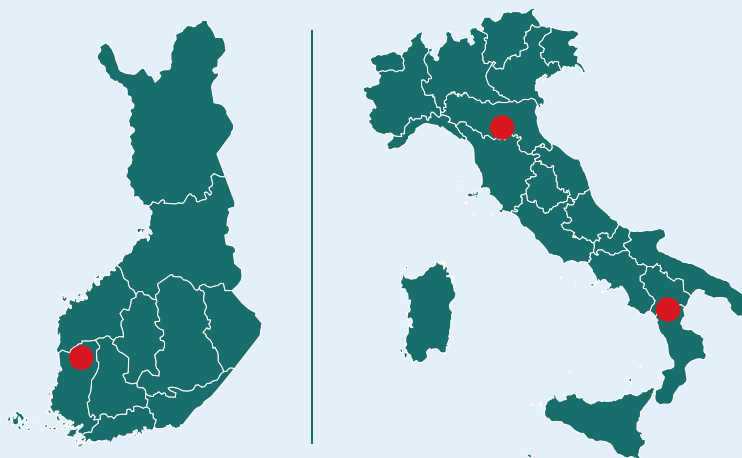
Cooperation in this project has gone beyond what has simply been proposed by a letter or talked about in the various international meetings. There has been lively collaboration on a daily basis, producing concrete results, as outlined above. Thus, the knowledge transfer, particularly in terms of orienteering between the young people in the different areas, has been a tangible outcome of cooperation so far. This has included the transfer of orienteering know-how



... and back at the orienteering camp for education and instruction

(organising competitive events, technical work involving cartography, and education and training) between the different geographical areas and the development of sport-related tourism and business-related activities.

Here, Leader+ has played an important role in helping to develop a tool capable of knowledge transfer between the project partners; another example of how Leader+ is able to address a 'niche' sector and incorporate it in a region's rural development strategy. Without Leader+ the creation and organisation of orienteering events in Basilicata and Modena would not have taken place. In the project as a whole, Leader+ funding has been used in many different ways: for instance in creating and producing marketing materials for sport-related ecotourism, the development of the [www.fi-ori.com](http://www.fi-ori.com) website, and producing different educational material packages for teachers and pilot packages for educational tourism.



## Orienteering — sport and innovation

**Member State:** Finland

**Region, district:** West Finland, Satakunta

**Name of the leading LAG:** Aktiivinen Pohjois-Satakunta ry

**Population:** 51 000

**Surface area:** 6 000 km<sup>2</sup>

**Project total cost:** EUR 65 000

**EU:** EUR 22 750

**Other public funds:** EUR 22 750

**Private funds:** EUR 19 500

**Period of project eligibility:** January 2005 to July 2007

**Name of the contact person:** Krista Antila

**Address:** Ruhkatie 79, FIN-38800 Kankaanpää

**Tel.** (358) 505 20 63 96

**E-mail:** [krista.antila@kankaanpaa.fi](mailto:krista.antila@kankaanpaa.fi)

**Websites:** [www.fi-ori.com](http://www.fi-ori.com); [www.pohjois-satakunta.fi/leader](http://www.pohjois-satakunta.fi/leader)

**Member State:** Italy

**Region:** Emilia-Romagna, Province of Modena

**Name of the LAG:** Gal Antico Frignano e Appennino Reggiano

**Population:** 100 000

**Surface area:** 2 051 km<sup>2</sup>

**Project total cost:** EUR 54 000

**EU:** EUR 43 200

**Other public funds:** EUR 10 800

**Name of the contact person:** Gualtiero Lutti

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**Tel.** (39-059) 82 11 49

**Fax** (39-059) 38 00 63

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**Websites:** [www.fi-ori.com](http://www.fi-ori.com); [www.galmodenareggio.it](http://www.galmodenareggio.it)

**Member State:** Italy

**Region, district:** Region of Basilicata, Lauria

**Name of the LAG:** GAL A.L.L.B.A.

**Population:** 73 394

**Surface area:** 1 504 km<sup>2</sup>

**Project total cost:** EUR 150 000

**EU:** EUR 45 600

**Other public funds:** EUR 65 400

**Private funds:** EUR 39 000

**Name of the contact person:** Christian Merli

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Photos provided by the Finnish national network unit



# WOMEN AND YOUTH IN LEADER+



## UNITED KINGDOM

# An interview with Vanessa Vollans

Rural Development and Programmes Manager,  
East Riding of Yorkshire local action group (LAG)

## Introduction

In September 2002, Mrs Vollans was appointed as the first member of the East Riding Leader+ team to implement the programme and, consequently, relocated from the south-east of England to where she works for the East Riding of Yorkshire Council (local authority), the body accountable for Leader+.

With an early career in training (both general management and interpersonal skills), she then moved to the small-business sector, and this resulted in a career of local, regional and transnational economic development work. She has also run her own business and headed a charity.

In September 2005 she was elected member of the Leader+ United Kingdom network steering group representing the North and the East of England. As part of the Rural Policy and Partnerships Unit, she works closely with the Humber Subregional Rural Pathfinder Manager, and is involved in general rural development issues on a day-to-day basis.

As the person responsible for the Leader+ team, her experience of life in the voluntary, public and private sectors helps enormously with the challenge of delivering the East Riding's development plan at all levels. Although with no Leader I or II experience, Leader+ delivery has accelerated without compromising either the strategic or integrated approach.

## About the region of the East Riding of Yorkshire

Yorkshire's East Riding is a predominantly rural area, and the fifth most sparsely populated county in England. Just over half the population lives in communities with a population of 10 000 or less, compared with 20 % in England, and 95 % of the land is in some form of agricultural use.

The rural East Riding falls broadly into three distinct types of area: the coastal strip, the Wolds, and the hinterlands of the major urban areas of Hull, York and Doncaster. It is an area of wide-open spaces dominated by intensive cereal production and dotted with small villages. Intensive agriculture partly accounts for the region's low tree cover (2.4 % compared with 7 % in England). The coastal plain is low-lying and is the fastest eroding coastline in Europe.

The Leader+ bid area covers 1 389 km<sup>2</sup>, comprises 32 wards (administrative units) and has a current population of approximately 100 000 (the region's total population is 314 000). The LAG area has 3.1 % unemployed (compared with 3.7 % in the Yorkshire and Humber region) and 33 % of the population in the LAG area are economically inactive. Although several villages now serve as dormitories



Vanessa Vollmans, LAG Manager, East Riding of Yorkshire

for Hull, many are still linked to farming, which reflects the good quality farmland in the plains of Holderness and parts of the Wolds. This area is perhaps the most physically remote part of the East Riding of Yorkshire, and economic and social exclusion is a key issue. The market towns of Driffield, Pocklington and Market Weighton service the many attractive villages scattered throughout the rolling landscape. Like the coastal strip, the Wolds are peripheral in relation to major transport networks and population centres and suffer from problems of access and exclusion.

## The interview

**Contact Point: Have you always been interested in rural development? What makes it of particular interest for you?**

Vanessa Vollans: The opportunity to focus primarily on rural development issues coincided with opportunities derived from the Leader+ programme. My career in the south-east involved work which tackled rural issues relating to businesses (start-up, growth and encouraging entrepreneurship), transport and access to services, children's facilities (especially play opportunities and respite for carers), encouraging opportunities to volunteer and help improve skills, facilitate and tackle issues of isolation among the youth, and training socially excluded groups who wanted/needed to become economically active.





The Leader+ programme with its key principles was obviously a European pot of funding with a difference (as they say 'it reaches the parts that other funding programmes do not reach'). But of particular interest to me was that rural development offers and continues to offer the opportunity to amalgamate economic, social and environmental activities within what can be challenging and conflicting demands of our countryside.

**CP: In your particular region, what do you feel are the main issues for people living in rural areas? What do you consider to have been the main contribution of Leader+ in addressing these issues?**

VV: The LAG area typically faces the challenges of remoteness to services, isolation, and implications around the changes to farming. Yet it has diverse and distinctive characteristics which brings opportunities. This has been an essential element in ensuring the viability of the Leader+ development plan. The coastal area contrasts with the Wolds in relation to both the natural and cultural heritage offering, for example, unique opportunities in relation to leisure and tourism.

The larger towns are diverse and incorporate coastal communities and market centres serving agricultural hinterlands: each has its own distinctive characteristics and potential for appropriate development. Small traditional villages sit alongside larger commuter settlements. There is a range of agricultural activity from cereal production on the Wolds (with its large open fields), to the intensive farming of pigs and horticulture in Holderness. Community-based activity and volunteering varies and is better developed in some areas than others. Most of the larger towns have community-based partnerships working to address the needs of their areas, benefiting from the larger critical mass of people and businesses from which to draw. Some settlements have a higher proportion of retired professionals involved in voluntary work. The above, combined with the large population level and range of resources, will ensure sufficient critical mass for the long-term viability of the LAG area.

Leader+, with its proactive approach from the LAG and the Leader+ team in the East Riding, has brought together interested groups, individuals and organisations in a unique way that has facilitated a coming together of identified local opportunities, be they transport projects with an integrated approach to community partnerships, wildlife-friendly farming methods, awareness of local food, or church/heritage tourism potential. The meeting of 'top-down and bottom-up' through the key Leader principles, managed by the LAG, has resulted in the delivery of an integrated programme of activities and development of community-based initiatives which have been set up with long-term sustainability.



The rolling Wolds: one of the region's distinct areas

**CP: Is there a favourite project you are currently involved in? Can you say what it is and why?**

VV: It is difficult to choose one favourite project out of the 45 currently being worked on in the East Riding, especially since the LAG itself has taken quite innovative approaches to funding key 'infrastructure' projects (market towns network, community involvement and capacity building, and community and business networks (Combine)), which have been the building blocks for the East Riding programme. However, we are particularly proud of the 'St James Church — A heritage centre for the Wolds' and the 'East Riding historic churches' ([www.eychurches.org.uk](http://www.eychurches.org.uk)) projects which embrace the entire 'spirit' of Leader and its key principles. This project was featured in a previous edition of the United Kingdom network newsletter in which I highlighted the way that the East Riding LAG had proactively facilitated the coming together of interested heritage/churches/ tourism/business groups.

This work was done with a view to working with key players to develop a project that would realise the potential of our heritage through an integrated, strategic approach to maximising potential economic tourism opportunities. The project illustrates a true 'bottom-up, area-based, local partnership approach' in tackling one of our key potential tourism aims, wealth-creating opportunities.

A specific community group consisting of highly skilled and knowledgeable community representatives has been newly constituted to manage the implementation and long-term sustainability of church tourism in our area — capacity-building in practice! Following a successful Heritage Lottery Fund application from the group, an officer has been appointed who sits in the local authority offices with the tourism team, is on the payroll/management systems with the churches' regional commission, and yet reports direct to the newly created management committee.

The innovative approach to church trails means that it is not just incorporating the churches on their own, but it is creating 'tourism loops' based on a cross-sector partnership working with rural transport, country houses (public and private), and heritage cycle routes, each of these be-

ing a project supported by Leader+ and part of our 'Leader family' as it is known locally. It has also secured further private-sector funds to run its own small grants scheme. The labour-intensive support which came with the project work and its implementation required for a successful Leader project (true to all its principles) became very apparent with this project (two years from idea to implementation), but has been worth all the hours the Leader+ team and the LAG have and continued to invest in it.

**CP: People look to Leader+ for ideas about best practice, especially in the new Member States. What for you are the most important criteria for determining best practice and why?**

VV: One of the key features of the Leader model is the LAG area-based partnership which has responsibility for identifying and meeting local development needs, and therefore enhancing rural opportunities in our area of 'untapped potential'. In the interests of demonstrating 'best practice', the East Riding of Yorkshire LAG has maximised the facilitation of key projects working on a multi-sectoral, bottom-up decision-making process. However, it is evident that the meeting of 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' is also an ingredient in the success of the LAG as one requires the close interaction of the other.

Capacity building of the East Riding LAG members has been integral to the strategic delivery of the programme. Attendance at conferences/events/meetings broader than the Leader+ remit has been encouraged, and members have maximised opportunities when invited to other key regional, subregional partner events or meetings. The East Riding LAG has been part of a recognisable 'network of rural providers' during its relatively short lifetime and the demise of this strong foundation would be a waste.

The joining up of individual market town regeneration partnerships with other sector- or subject-specific organisations and individual experts has ensured that the broader rural agenda has been incorporated in the delivery of the programme — not always overtly, but the programme team ensures this happens in many ways. High-quality professional support for such a partnership is essential to provide an informed voice from the most local level. It was the 'professional' team behind the delivery of the programme that encouraged the 'joined-up' thinking, project delivery and forward strategy at the beginning, but now we see the outcome of this at each meeting through the high quality of members' contributions in discussions. The opportunity of working closely with the 'Humber rural pathfinder trials' will ensure that this and other models of best practice, from the structure through to project activities, are captured to inform future rural delivery structures.

**CP: Innovation has been a key principle in Leader+. How important do you consider this aspect in rural development policy in general?**

VV: A very broad interpretation of the principle of 'innovation' has been adopted from the start by the East Riding of Yorkshire LAG, especially since there were more basic challenges of seeking out the wealth of untapped potential in our area. The region had no history of running Leader I or II, and there was a distinct lack of a 'bidding culture' in most of the LAG area where no major funds had previously been secured for rural development or regeneration. The ability to locally manage the 'relative' concept and practical application of the 'innovation principle' has been embraced by the LAG and applied in a very local context, based on local knowledge and our local distinctiveness.

The principle of 'innovation' has enabled the LAG and the Leader+ team to facilitate new ways of thinking and joint working amongst our rural communities and partnerships. It has helped remove barriers between 'market towns' and has encouraged informed 'risk taking'. In general the LAG has been able to investigate new ways of doing things, together with utilising opportunities to build on best practice. However, it is sometimes the opportunity to consolidate which can be just as valuable. It's similar to balancing the encouragement of experimentation from communities and still achieving effective programme delivery. No one said that running Leader was easy!

**CP: In terms of your responsibilities and experience in implementing Leader+, is there any particular message you'd like to give either to the national or European administrations for the coming programming period?**

VV: Experience of implementing Leader+ in the East Riding has only been drawn from the last three years, and therefore initial comments are specific to this local experience. The Leader team is hosted by the local authority (East Riding of Yorkshire Council) and is based in a rural outreach office in one of our market towns. As the programme manager, I have felt the benefits of being part of a nationally acknowledged 'excellent' authority that achieved 'Beacon' council status (also known as the 'Oscars' of local government) for 'developing the rural economy'. It is currently the lead on rural pathfinder status for the region (one of only eight trialling and capturing models for the delivery of rural services). Being at the leading edge of rural development at this interesting and challenging time has enabled the Leader model to be captured at a local and regional level.

At the very fundamental level of need, it has been demonstrated in the East Riding that an experienced, excellent local authority is well-placed to deliver programmes. It has good accountability status, back-up and support mechanisms (support staff, ICT resources, quality standards, training opportunities, etc.), and has been invaluable to maintaining good financial systems and reporting. This has







Signposting the way to local villages

helped minimise risk, and the ability to ‘bank roll’ projects has been in existence from day one in the East Riding, as very few community groups have the ability to claim defrayed expenditure when they have no cash to start with.

At project level, applicants and operators continue to be frustrated by the sheer volume of paperwork associated with the Leader+ programme, and details of evidence that are required to be kept. Although there is an understanding of the reasons for this, there is a need for the standardisation of all funding forms. It is fair to say that, despite commendable efforts by the team, some potential applicants have been deterred from applying for funds. The labour-intensive support required by capacity-build project operators to manage the contractual requirements is not fully recognised in the low 15 % administration ceiling placed on the programme.

At an LAG partnership delivery level, it is clear to see in the East Riding that having a partnership made up of local rural ‘actors’ has encouraged individuals and community-based partner organisations to have a direct impact on the programmes’ content and activities. As a formal subgroup of the East Riding of Yorkshire Rural Partnership, the LAG members have demonstrated effective local decision-making from people who understand, live and work in our rural area in voluntary, professional, public or private capacities. Some of the members and therefore their skills, experiences and expertise would be missed.

**CP: If you could choose, what role would you like to have under the new rural development regulation? How would this differ from what you currently do?**

VV: For the future I see it as paramount that delivery of rural programmes is devolved to a manageable and appro-

priate scale both geographically and by population (with realistic coverage). However, engagement from a regional level must be further encouraged in order to maximise the opportunity to have the delivery of rural programmes informed from a very local level. It would be tragic to waste the existing work, capacity building, and experience that has been achieved during Leader+ within our local LAG.

I want to be part of a network that works together to have a closely linked, clear strategic arm and a clear delivery arm. It would ensure the ‘bottom up’, integrated, strategic and innovative principles are interpreted from a Leader model perspective across a whole range of opportunities. Should this happen, I would like to see myself being part of an integrated customer-focused, local team, working with a truly ‘local delivery partnership’ which is responsible for a whole series of programmes that are integrated at the point of delivery — to enhance rural opportunities for and with the people of the East Riding. I relocated to the area to do the job and I would like the opportunity to take this work further for the benefit of the people of the East Riding.

Should this not be possible — I aspire to be ‘head of form design’ in order to come up with the most simplistic paperwork and systems that are less onerous and make everybody else’s life who is left in charge of rural programmes a little less challenging, so they can concentrate on quality project development and delivery! (We Leader programme managers always do thrive on a challenge!)

Photos provided by the United Kingdom national network unit

## GERMANY

# Where Leader+ is trendy!

Based in the countryside of Kitzingen, young people are prepared for 'real life' through measures concerning education, training and integration

By Maja Schmidt, LAG coordinator, ZIEL Kitzingen

## Introduction

In the summer of 2002, ZIEL, the local action group (LAG), was considering how it could make its region more attractive in terms of lifestyle and economy, both for its inhabitants and visitors. This also meant considering how to make better use of the region's potential.

At the time the region's youth was not really considered. However, it was soon realised that discussing the region's future would make little sense without taking into account the views of its 'future citizens'. To support and give its youth a regional perspective has now become one of the main aims of the LAG, and many projects, especially for young people, have been started. The two Leader+ projects discussed below, apart from their education and qualification aspects, are about developing social skills.

## Bringing people together

One of the first Leader+ projects in the Kitzingen rural area's region was the Jugendhof Schwanberg (youth centre on Mount Schwanberg). Since it opened in May 2003, both handicapped and non-handicapped youngsters have been able to spend time together at this youth camp. Moreover, the project coordinator (a registered association known as Geistliches Zentrum Schwanberg eV) works together with children and youth groups in the region, bringing people of different social, cultural and religious backgrounds to-

gether. The project supports the (so-called) weaker group made up of those with a physical or mental handicap while the other (stronger) group becomes more sensitive and aware about the needs of the others. 'Young people need inspiration beyond what they get on a daily basis at school, and which helps them to develop their creativity and imagination, and where they can learn a sound set of ground rules to help them achieve social skills,' explains Christian Klose, Manager of the Geistliches Zentrum. The concept of integrating different groups seems to work: in 2004 there were 10 000 overnight stays. 'The fact that many children would like to stay another week shows very well how attractive the Jugendhof is,' says Klose.

However, it is not only young people who benefit from the project. Excursions such as visits to museums, guided tours to a vineyard, and nature-study walks with a forester in the nearby Steigerwald (Steiger forest) are also included in the programme. Moreover, the Jugendhof Schwanberg sources some of its food supplies from regional producers and is one of several synergies which benefit the regional economy.

## Competence through voluntary work

Since spring 2005 Jugendpakt eV (Youth Pact), the registered association, has offered the 'Voluntary work for qualification' project to young people from the district of Kitzingen. The aim is to teach key skills via special course modules, which help the youngsters with the transition from

Both handicapped and non-handicapped youngsters spend time together on the project





school to the job market and, at the same time, provide an introduction to the voluntary sector. One course module, lasting three months, ends with the completion of a voluntary work project. In the framework of this module, 12 to 15 youngsters meet regularly and are accompanied by a team leader and instructors. Apart from key competencies in such aspects as communication skills and project management, this also develops capacity for team-work, tolerance, self-confidence, and insight into the world of work. Those who participate regularly obtain a certificate at the end of the course. The youngsters are targeted through schools and other existing youth associations and organisations.

Although new apprenticeships as such are not created, these youngsters nevertheless get experience of the 'life-long learning processes' at an earlier stage than would normally be available from typical school programmes. Also local communities and businesses can take advantage of this innovative educational offer. For example, while local administration communes benefit from the voluntary work projects, the companies can select from a bigger pool of graduates, better qualified in key areas. In the future, it is planned that companies place their own apprentices on these voluntary courses.

The project '8 for 9 and 10M' was one of the first of this kind of voluntary project. It involves a group of eighth-grade secondary school pupils to independently organise a 'graduation event' for the grades 9 and 10 school-leavers. This involves planning the programme, preparing a buffet for 250 persons, organising a slide-show for the 'leaving classes' and designing a leaflet. In this way, the youngsters, with the support of their team leaders, are able to prove their newly acquired skills in project and event management. First results show that once the youngsters get started, they really don't want to stop working on these voluntary projects.

### A new project just started

Another youth project started in spring 2006. It involves an exchange of apprentices from the gastronomic sector in the framework of transnational cooperation with the Berner Seeland region (Lakeland of the Bern region) in Switzerland.



Project management requires a 'hands-on' approach

## Where Leader+ is trendy!

**Member State:** Germany  
**Region, district:** Franconia/Bavaria  
**Name of the LAG:** ZIEL, Kitzingen

**Population:** 89 525  
**Surface area:** 684 km<sup>2</sup>

**Name of the project:** Jugendhof Schwanberg  
**Project total cost:** EUR 2 337 000  
**EU:** EUR 150 000  
**Other public funds:** EUR 1 420 810  
**Private funds:** EUR 766 190  
**Period of project eligibility:** October 2002 to June 2003

**Name of the project:** Jugendpakt Kitzingen  
**Project total cost:** EUR 88 142  
**EU:** EUR 44 071  
**Other public funds:** EUR 21 600  
**Private funds:** EUR 22 471  
**Period of project eligibility:** January 2005 to December 2007

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Photos provided by the German national network unit



## NEW MEMBER STATES

# Leader+ in Poland: capacity building



By Andrzej Hałasiewicz, PhD, Deputy Director of the Foundation of Assistance Programmes for Agriculture (FAPA)

### In urgent need of programmes to transform rural areas

Polish rural areas have a tremendous development potential. Their people, communities, along with their abundance of culture and natural wealth, if used properly, can all be used to mutual benefit in the development of Poland and the rest of the EU. Thus it is extremely important that EU policies are constructed in such a way as to make best use of this potential. Leader+-type activities are highly needed in Polish rural areas because they can, more than other measures, release the potential of the existing local resources.

Unlike the 'old' Member States, Poland has not had the possibility to develop the practice or gather experience of implementing the programme until now. There is therefore a need to search for a way to make up for this lost time and to prepare a good system of management and implementation. However, the first priority is to help prepare local communities to operate efficiently during the new programming period 2007–13. Given the very important role

that the Leader+-type approach is going to play, Poland decided to focus on capacity building during its first years of EU membership, i.e. 2004–06.

### Under the framework of the 'Restructuring and modernisation of the food sector and rural development' sectoral operational programme (SOP)

As in the other 'new' Member States who have chosen to implement it, the EU's Leader+-type measure in Poland is implemented as one of the measures in the programme funded by the EAGGF Guidance Section. In Poland, the SOP measure 2.7 'Pilot programme Leader+' is aimed at stimulating activities in local communities and their commitment to develop and implement local strategies of rural areas' development.

The 'Leader+-type measure' is implemented under two schemes. The aim of Scheme I is to establish local action groups (LAGs) and to carry out an analysis of the development potential of rural areas. This is to be initiated by local communities and provides the basis to develop an integrated strategy of rural area development (ISRAD).

The specific activities to be implemented under Scheme I include training, information dissemination and advisory activities, and enhancement of the engagement of rural citizens in the process of preparing rural areas' development analysis and strategies. This is to be accompanied by the establishment of public-private partnerships.

Under Scheme II, once they have acquired the relevant experience and administrative capacity required to manage public funds, the LAGs will implement their respective strategies. These include the promotion of rural areas and the stimulation of cooperation between local partners. This scheme will also cover multisectoral activities (indeed exclusively 'soft' activities), especially those that take ac-







Mr Ryszard Nawrocki, the head of Stare Miasto Community, speaking at the Leader partnership meeting in Stare Miasto on 6 December 2005

count of tourism development, protection and promotion of the natural environment, landscape and historic-cultural resources, promotion, development and production of regional products, and training activities.

Prepared largely as a result of the local communities' initiatives under Scheme I, and implemented under Scheme II, the ISRAD will determine the development guidelines in the areas in question. Such strategies should take account of at least one of the following themes:

- application of new know-how as well as new technologies to improve the competitiveness of products and services developed in rural areas;
- improved living standards in rural areas;
- adding value to local products, especially due to improved market access of small production units as a result of joint activities;
- utilisation of natural and cultural resources, including the potential of areas covered by the Natura 2000 network.

All these activities, including training and advice to the ultimate beneficiaries, receive a subsidy covering 100 % of eligible costs.

### Implementation

The responsibility for implementing the Leader+ type measure has been delegated by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (managing authority of the SOP) to the Foundation of Assistance Programmes for Agriculture (FAPA), which acts as the implementing body for this measure (as well as for 'training' and 'advisory service' measures) and has experience of many years with regard to implementing regional programmes and in cooperating with self-governing authorities and local institutions.

Applications for Scheme I were to be made by 31 December 2004. In all, 248 applications were submitted under this scheme, for a total of PLN 31 194 184.58 (EUR 7 698 276). Most applications were from the follow-

ing voivodships: Małopolskie, Świętokrzyskie, Mazowieckie and Podkarpackie. Following formal verification and technical checks, and taking into account the allocation of funds, the steering committee of the SOP adopted Resolution No 19/2005 at a session of 3 June 2005. This resolution included a list of projects that the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development approved on 14 June 2005. This meant 174 projects were approved to receive a total funding of PLN 22 810 611.20 (allocation available for this scheme: EUR 5.575 million <sup>(1)</sup>).

A call for applications under Scheme II was expected to be announced in mid-March 2006 and has a total funding of EUR 13.175 million <sup>(1)</sup> allocated to it. This means that a minimum of 80 local action groups will have a chance to implement their strategies and could obtain a maximum funding of around PLN 750 000 (EUR 187 500).

The amount is not sufficient to meet the full demand, as partnerships included in Scheme I cover less than 40 % of Polish territory and Scheme II will cover only about one third of rural areas in Poland. Additional funds are therefore required in the next programming period in order to address the enthusiasm of the groups established as a result of these schemes, as well as to support the process of creating new partnerships.

### First national meeting of Leader: initiatives and LAGs

The first national meeting of Leader initiatives and groups was held in Falenty near Warsaw on 16 and 17 November 2005. The meeting was entitled 'Leader programme for the future of Polish villages'. The conference was organised by the 'Cooperation Fund' Foundation, Agrolinia programme, which has provided regular training to organisers of local partnerships since 2002.

<sup>(1)</sup> Source: Programming complement to the SOP submitted to the European Commission.

**The countryside of the Tatra mountains near Zakopane**

EPA PHOTO EPA Janek Skarzynski

The meeting raised a lot of interest with over 200 participants from Poland and abroad. It was also attended by representatives of all current Leader-type partnerships in Poland, representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the administration bodies, those concerned with managing and implementing the Leader programme, representatives of organisations supporting the whole process, and representatives of the European Leader+ Observatory and the ELARD network. It was followed on 19 December by a conference organised by the Polish Leader+ network, selected in October 2005 and required to operate for a two-month period in order to develop a variety of networking tools. These include a magazine, leaflet and website ([www.leaderplus.org.pl](http://www.leaderplus.org.pl)) from where a database of all the beneficiaries of Scheme I is available.

**Example of an initiative**

The municipalities of Stare Miasto and Rychwał started to implement Leader+ jointly, with a view to establishing a local action group and developing an integrated strategy for developing rural areas. The issues raised at the joint session of the Municipality Council for Stare Miasto and Municipality Council in Rychwał, which took place on 6 December 2005 in a new gymnasium hall of Gimnazjum (post-elementary school) in Stare Miasto, are set out below.

- Under Scheme I, the aim is to set up the local action group called 'Partnership for the municipalities of Stare Miasto and Rychwał'. The partnership will cover two adjoining municipalities (national administrative units), those of Stare Miasto and Rychwał, and include local entrepreneurs, associations and other groups. Promotional activities will include the distribution of various



promotional materials, posting information on notice boards, issuing a special promotional map showing 'Historic interest sites and monuments of the Stare Miasto and Rychwał municipalities', information meetings with entrepreneurs and NGOs, and local product promotion. The whole project will work towards establishing the 'Partnership for the municipalities of Stare Miasto and Rychwał'.

- The members of the LAG will be trained on topics such as promotion of rural areas, formal questions of establishing partnerships, and establishing and registering LAGs. Furthermore, the LAG will participate in a workshop on how to draft an association statute, and in conferences on LAG activities and cooperation between sectors within the partnership. Moreover, Scheme I will support the analysis of the development potential for rural areas, which is to be initiated by the local community. It will also provide the basis for developing an integrated strategy of rural areas' development (ISRAD). To achieve this aim, some advisory services will be provided as will information about training and promotional activities. All this is to help engage inhabitants of rural areas in the process of developing their understanding of rural area development and creating public-private partnerships.





## Leader+ Observatory seminar: 'Adding value to local products', from 14 to 18 February 2006, in Grosseto (Tuscany), Italy



The seminar itself took place in a distinct rural setting

### Introduction

'Adding value to local products: innovation and access to wider markets' was the theme of this three-day seminar, which took place from 14 to 18 February, in Grosseto, Tuscany, Italy. Organised by the Leader+ Observatory and hosted by the local FAR Maremma LAG, the event provided an opportunity for more than 100 LAGs to learn more about the importance of this strategic theme through a series of presentations, workshops and round-table discussions. With 18 Member States represented, it was also an occasion to seek new partners for transnational cooperation projects. Field visits to local Leader+-funded projects gave delegates a chance to discover how the local area, which represents around one fifth of the Tuscany region, is 'adding value to its local products'.

Amongst the introductions and welcome speeches, Giovanni Alessandri, President of FAR Maremma, described the region's main characteristics. He emphasised the region's rich heritage of local resources and products, which fit naturally with the LAG's central theme of 'adding value to local products'. However, it is also the case that, besides developing existing products, they have also a pilot strategy which includes improving the quality of life, and the use

of new technologies and know-how. In order to achieve these goals, the LAG is also involved in both inter-territorial and transnational cooperation projects.

### Setting the scene for added value

The first speech in the plenary session was given by Mr Carlo Ricci, rural development consultant, who spoke from an Italian perspective about the issues that an LAG needs to consider when developing a strategy aimed at promoting added value. He mentioned some of the radical cultural changes which had taken place over the past 10 years, such as the collapse of prices in respect of certain products, a dependency on compensatory funding, changes in the level of EU support, and a decline in the workforce, particularly of young people. Reference was also made to the 'gastronaut' concept which offers an understanding of a territory's value based on its gastronomic identity, and which can for example lead to the development of such strategies as 'wine routes'. This is in addition to other considerations such as biodiversity, and the region's capacity (in terms of human resources) to develop its tourist potential.

All these issues may require a different business strategy and therefore a need to change traditional behaviour in view of product quality and quality labels, traditional links between producers and consumers, new trends and threats in regional planning, and different ways of marketing local products.

In her speech, Ms Cécile Levret, from Euromontana, spoke about the quality image of mountain products and their direct connection with the territory, which enables them to be marketed as traditional, based on natural and local resources, having respect for the seasons, and linked to the mountain environment (climate and altitude). The strong link between tradition and environment appears to account for much of the success of mountain products, and on this basis it has been possible to develop a European Charter for Mountain Quality Food Products.



Some of the local products to which Leader+ adds value

One of the key ideas of the charter is that the qualities of products are firmly linked to that of the territories where they are produced. The charter specifically addresses food products, and not only targets greater satisfaction for the consumers of these products, but also the local population and tourists visiting these regions (territorial consumers). Enterprises and farms which process primary agricultural resources in order to manufacture mountain products are also required to take account of their geographical environment and sustainable development criteria. Thus production methods must: respect the environment, in particular the local water quality; encourage the maintenance of the biological, genetic and cultural heritage of mountain areas; develop the local knowledge base of mountain areas; and manage rural areas and their landscapes.

Putting the pieces of the development jigsaw together was the subject of the presentation given by Gerallt Llewellyn Jones, of the Mentor Môn LAG, Anglesey, United Kingdom. Several of the LAG's projects were presented in order to show how a region, such as the Isle of Anglesey, with little in the way of local products, had successfully used Leader+ in an innovative way. Several 'local products' have been successfully developed, notably under the 'Mona Bauhaus' project, in order to develop new products for the global marketplace. In applying the original Bauhaus philosophy <sup>(1)</sup> the LAG has adopted an innovative approach to new product development. This concept has been applied to the natural environment, local heritage, local food resources, and the local imagery and resources. It does so by returning to the fundamentals of basic material and design and brings together specialists from different backgrounds to produce prototypes for the mass market. With a number of successful products, such as a range of bathing products based on the island's heritage and sea products, as well as an innovative chair, the LAG's

<sup>(1)</sup> An avant-garde art and design school established in Germany by Walter Gropius in 1919; it was closed in 1933 by the national socialist authorities.



The exhibition area was a focus of interest for the delegates

experience proves the value of Leader in developing local products.

A series of parallel workshops covering different horizontal themes related to the theme of 'adding value to local products': innovation; tourism products/routes; craft products; joint marketing actions; viability for local products; agricultural supported products; restructuring and labelling, as well as an 'open space'. Here the attendees were able to listen to presentations about relevant case studies and exchange their ideas and experience with other LAGs. The key messages were then presented in the afternoon plenary session. Conclusions from these working sessions, along with other conference documentation, can be found in the events section of the Leader+ website (<http://ec.europa.eu/comm/leaderplus>).

### Local field visits

The second day of the conference provided an opportunity to visit Leader+-funded projects within the territory of the







Welcomed to the event by Giovanni Alessandri, President of FAR Maremma, the hosting LAG



With some words from Teresio Delfino, Vice Minister, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Policies

hosting LAG. One project, Sapori d'Amiata, is managed by an association (Associazione Strada del vino Montecucco) which was established in 2000. The project promotes and develops the 'Amiata chestnut' by means of a chestnut trail and a house-museum which gives a vision of the local traditional lifestyle and also hosts a didactic centre.

The second project, which started under Leader II and continues under Leader+, is managed by the Associazione Strada del vino dei colli di Maremma (<http://www.terreditoscana.regione.toscana.it/stradedelvino/ita/maremma.html>). It is a project which promotes and adds value to the regions' wine products, and has been able, through a cooperative, to bring together many small wine producers who, in a modern central processing plant, produce and bottle a range of local wines under strict quality control and also benefit from joint marketing activities. There was also a visit to the wine museum in the nearby town of Scansano.

On the third day, a 'cooperation area' ran in parallel with a series of round tables, one-to-one sessions, a project exhibition and a demonstration of the partner search tool. One positive result of this session was the conclusion of a cooperation agreement between LAGs in Finland, Italy and Spain which will run from 1 March 2006 to 31 May 2007. The partners are: Peräpohjolan kehitys ry LAG (the lead partner from Finland), Valle de Ayora Cofrentes (Spain) and Le Macine, GAL Cosvel, and GAL Bradanica LAGs (Italy).

The project is called 'Moving around the provinces' (MAP) and aims to create new tourism opportunities, especially for SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) that work in the tourist industry. Eventually, a transnational cooperation network will share knowledge about the different kinds of tourism and products which can be implemented, based on the results of individual domestic pilot projects.

In the closing ceremony, speeches were given by Grazia Mammuccini, chairwoman of Azienda Regionale per lo Sviluppo e l'innovazione nel settore agricole-forestale della Regione Toscana (ARSIA), and Susanna Cenni, Assessor for Agriculture, Region of Tuscany. Both speakers confirmed the importance of strong rural economies and the need to maintain integrated rural policies, since they give regions such as Maremma an opportunity to develop their local economy and maintain their identity.

Finally, the seminar demonstrated another side of transnational cooperation with the inauguration of the Leader+ choir! Singing their own version of John Lennon's song 'Imagine', it showed in true Leader+ style an innovative bottom-up approach to singing, which also scored a big hit with its audience.



With a little imagination, the Leader+ choir sings a tribute to the Leader initiative

# Leader+ Magazine



**Leader+ Magazine** is published three times a year by the European Observatory of Rural Areas.

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# Leader+ profile



## 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 (EUR 2 143.5 million after mid-term indexation) is funded by the EAGGF Guidance Section and the remainder by public and private contribution.

