



European Commission

Leader+ Magazine



SPECIAL FOCUS

Use of new know-how
and new technologies

EN
2 • 2005





Leader+ Magazine



4 Leader+ in action

6 Initial key findings of the Leader+ initiative

8 Special focus: Use of new know-how and new technologies

- United Kingdom: Breadalbane virtual learning centre project
- Spain: Project @CERCA
- Luxembourg: 'Internet-homes' in rural areas providing a community focus

15 Adding value to local products

- Italy: A strategy for quality products from the Montiferru region of Sardinia
- United Kingdom: Rejuvenating reed and sedge harvesting in the Norfolk Broads

20 Making best use of natural and cultural resources

- Germany: On the way to becoming a region
- Denmark: Hiking shelters provide stepping stones to Danish nature

27 Improving the quality of life in rural areas

- Sweden: Sheena: a musical association striking the right note
- Finland: Safeguarding a village's community in Vasikka-Aho

32 Cooperation in rural development

- Austria and Germany: Transnational education for cultural guiding and management of regional museums: three alpine regions collaborate to provide a new perspective
- The Netherlands and Germany: Partnership Spreewald and Noordwest Overijssel: transnational cooperation in Leader+

39 Women and youth in Leader+

- Ireland: Women in leadership: providing the right course for the rural community
- The Netherlands: The De Buren youth centre

44 New Member States

Country focus: The Czech Republic

48 Leader+ news

- Leader+ seminar in Finland
- A new look for the Leader+ website

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.

In a word ...

Mrs Mariann Fischer Boel,
Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural development

This second issue of the *Leader+ Magazine* will focus particularly on the strategic theme the 'Use of new know-how and new technologies in rural areas'. Although it is not the most frequently selected of the four Leader+ themes, it nevertheless plays a key role in supporting Leader projects on other themes, such as 'Improving the quality of life in rural areas'. This is discussed elsewhere in this edition, and indeed comes through in the various articles.

Leader, as you know, plays an essential role in encouraging innovation in rural areas and opens up new avenues for local development. One innovation path is to identify and upgrade local resources and potential. New opportunities to develop are not always easy to detect. This research requires a lot of voluntary work, creativity and local consultation.

The Community initiative contributes also to the sustainability of development processes at local level by interconnecting or creating synergies between existing chains adding value to products and services (integrated approach).

The initiative is an investment in social capital and awakens also the local actor's interest in learning. It serves as an educational tool and learning process to everyone involved.

Networking, a key element of the Leader method, is the main vehicle for the dissemination and transfer of know-how and innovative practices throughout the EU rural territory.

In a more pragmatic way innovation under Leader is considered as 'something new to the local area' since the local pilot strategies can fund experimental activities that otherwise would not be funded.

I am convinced that Leader+ has a significant input to make to the application of the Lisbon strategy; this 10-year strategy adopted in March 2000 is a commitment to bring about economic, social and environmental renewal in the EU. We need to create jobs and new opportunities in rural areas in particular for young people and women and put technology to the best possible use and pursue innovation.

In the future, the focus on partnership, bottom up and local involvement will become a key element of the new rural development policy. For the next programming period, 2007–13, the Commission has proposed to integrate



(‘mainstream’) the Leader approach into the rural development programmes. This will not only introduce more innovation in the rural development programmes, but also imply a spread of the Leader way of governance throughout Europe: planning and implementing rural development programming in a bottom-up perspective, based on local networking and inter-territorial cooperation.

Each rural area is confronted with the challenges of the global economy; a lack of innovation leads to a weakening of its economic fabric, a decline in its population and a deterioration of local services. This second issue of the *Leader+ Magazine* presents the response of rural areas to these challenges, and in particular, there are several projects which demonstrate the creativity and capacity of people living in rural areas to innovate.

Magna Mater — Crafts with design



Member State: Portugal
Region: Azores
Name of the LAG:
Adeliacor and ASDEPR
Population: 106 603
Surface area: 1 540 km²
Project total cost:
EUR 33 174
EU: EUR 14 573
Other public funds:
EUR 7 852
Private funds: EUR 10 749

Magna Mater is a project in the Azores, organised by a partnership of four institutions: Adeliacor (local development association), ASDEPR (local development association), Centro Regional de Apoio ao Artesanato (regional centre for crafts promotion) and PPART (crafts promotion programme).

The project enhances in an innovative way the contribution of design in traditional island crafts, namely point lace, embroidery (straw over tulle fabric; matiz where the threads used are of different shades of blue), weaving and pottery. In September 2002, two groups, made up of final year student designers from Aveiro University and Azorean handicrafts producers, worked together in workshops on the islands of São Miguel and Faial, and exhibited the results on Faial Island.

The workshop demonstrated the importance of bringing the designers and artisans together since it resulted in an innovative use of traditional patterns, new techniques, and product diversification. It was also a good opportunity to share skills and knowledge amongst the different craftsmen. The project template can be applied to other crafts and regions.

Contact persons:

Arlene Goulart,
Teresa Alvernaz

E-mail:

adeliacor@mail.telepac.pt
asdepr@mail.telepac.pt

Websites: www.adeliacor.org, www.asdepr.com.pt



Photograph provided by
the Portuguese National Network Unit.

Mobile skills in Vannes



Member State: France
Region: Brittany
Name of the LAG:
Pays de Vannes
Population: 66 000
Surface area: 1 107 km²
Project total cost:
EUR 8 056
EU: EUR 1 208
Private funds: EUR 6 848

This was the first time Leader+ was implemented in this area. The project started in 2002, when the crisis in the poultry sector was hitting the regional economy. A new mobile skills assessment centre was then opened, thanks to the provision of permits and to funds allowing the purchase of a second-hand vehicle (value EUR 7 600). The only thing remaining was the payment of the transport and the fitting-out of the office.

According to the Leader+ coordinator, Ms Anne-Cécile Bellazreg, this project 'perfectly fits the needs of the programme's target group — women and young people'. In fact, most people who have used this facility are less than 26 years old and the project has so far achieved bringing more than 20 people back into the labour market, albeit under different conditions (fixed term and/or open-ended contracts, work on specific projects, agency work, etc.). However, the success of the programme does not hide some problems encountered, such as the lack of practical information for newcomers intending to settle in the area, and those related to drugs, alcohol and domestic violence.

'Without the Leader+ grant, I would have had to set up elsewhere', explained Anne-Cécile Bellazreg. 'It is also a passport that has opened up many doors.'

Institutions in rural areas are not always prepared to change old habits. However, the Pays de Vannes area intends to launch further initiatives up to 2006, like young-unemployed mentoring by retired adults, public meetings, game lending and childcare at unusual hours.

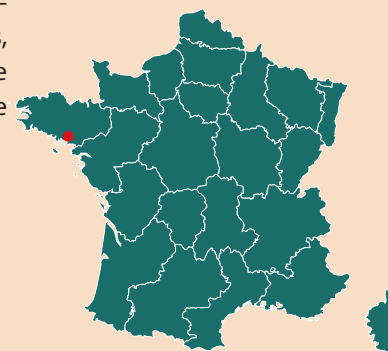
Contact person:

Anne-Cécile Bellazreg

E-mail:

pays.de.vannes@tiscali.fr

Website: n.a.



Photograph provided by the French National Network Unit.

Youth Council speaks up for young people



Member State: Finland
Region, district: Järviseuutu and Härmänmaa, South Ostrobothnia
Name of the LAG: LAG Aisapari
Population: 52 000
Surface area: 3 956 km²
Project total cost: EUR 15 000
EU: EUR 7 500
Other public funds: EUR 7 500

In the Järviseuutu sub-region (district of South Ostrobothnia, western Finland) the views of young people have not always been represented. However, as a result of a Leader+ funded preliminary survey, a sub-regional 'youth council' was established to represent young people in the area. The basic idea behind the project was to make young people feel that they are a part of the region, and their views known.

As a result of the preliminary survey, the project manager, Ms Taru Volotinen, founded a group of active young people (aged around 16–18 years) in each of the five municipalities. These groups then came together to form the sub-regional youth council. The Järviseuutu sub-region includes five municipalities and there is at least one member from each on the youth council.

Taru Volotinen talked with young people and found out what was missing in their home villages. The results showed that young people wanted to have information and events. The groups also discussed what the ideal websites for the youth of Järviseuutu would include and how they would look. They also planned how the youth council would operate and concluded that 'youth information points' were needed in the region's five municipalities. The website www.nuotio.fi is based on the young people's own plan. The sub-regional youth group operates successfully as a youth council and organises youth events.

Now the aim is to inform more young people about the youth council and the existence of its website, and in doing so, to involve as many young people as possible to participate in the local decision-making progress. By providing a focus on spending, the youth council ensures that limited available funding money is spent on youth activities with the widest appeal.

Name of contact person: Ilpo Kakko
E-mail: ilpo.kakko@aisapari.net
Website: www.aisapari.net

Photograph provided by the LAG Aisapari.



Greek country children's camp



Member State: Greece
Region: Peloponnese
Name of the LAG: Olympia Development SA
Population: 56 598
Surface area: 1 556 km²
Project total cost: EUR 436 615
EU: EUR 151 765
Other public funds: EUR 89 723
Private funds: EUR 195 127

A campsite, initially financed by Leader II, and set in 21 acres of land in the region of Palaiofanaro Frixas Olympia, now plans to expand under Leader+. It started in 1999 and has three camping periods from June to September. Each period lasts 22 days. The existing centre will increase its capacity from 160 to 280, for children aged from five to 15, and will develop activities such as training the campers in computer literacy and the Internet, organising hikes and excursions, developing eco-tourism and agro-tourism in riverside activities and so on.

The buildings and grounds will take account of the existing architecture and natural landscape, and will, for example, include wooden buildings, pavilions and pergolas, and use paving stone from the Arta region. The project will add another eight staff to the existing 33, who between them have a variety of skills to meet the needs of the planned activities.

Contact person:

Mrs Gavou Anastasia

E-mail: anol@otenet.gr

Website: www.anol.gr

Photograph provided by the Greek National Network Unit.





Initial key findings of the Leader+ initiative

We are pleased to present some results of an initial analysis of the Leader+ initiative based on 2003 common monitoring indicators. These data were presented to the Leader+ Steering Committee in Brussels on 6 December 2004.

Geographically, the area covered by Leader+ stretches from the Orkneys in the north Atlantic to East Guyana in South America. Within this area of the EU-15 are 892 local action groups (LAGs) which represent a population of around 52 million while the equivalent area covered

is some 1 568 000 km², or almost half of the EU-15's total area.

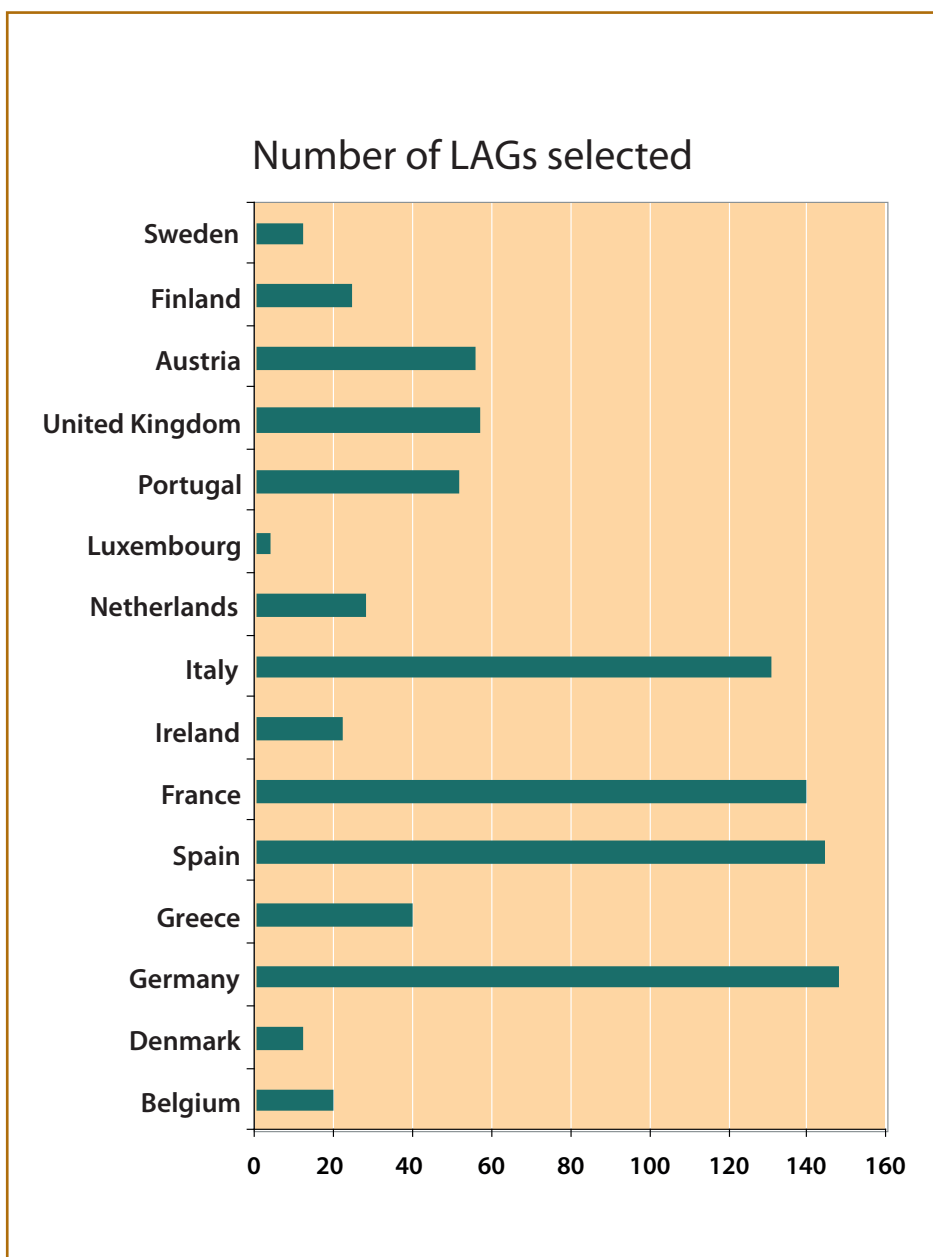
The number of selected LAGs varies from country to country. Luxembourg with four has the fewest, while Germany with 148 has the most. Under the Leader+ initiative, LAGs have to choose a priority theme from four at the start of their programme, or more if the Member State had added a national theme or themes. For example, welcoming new inhabitants and enterprises, and women and youth are additional themes in France.

LAGs could also choose to combine various themes. The following gives an idea of the division of LAGs according to country and theme.

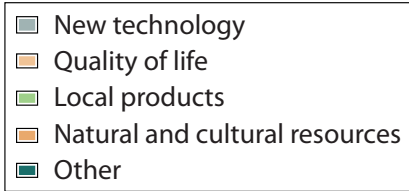
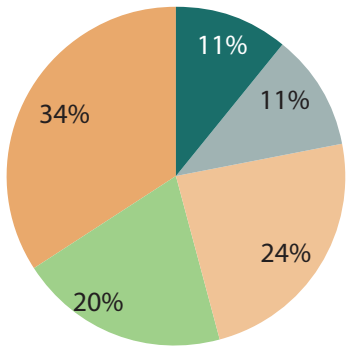
In terms of Action 2 (support for cooperation between rural territories), the majority of partnerships are between the EU-15 Member States. However, seven cooperation partners come from five new Member States: Latvia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Poland and Cyprus. There are also several partners from countries outside the EU area: Switzerland, Serbia-Montenegro, Iceland, Norway, Tunisia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Russia, Brazil and Canada.

There are no specific national criteria added to EC guidelines for a joint project. Some of the types of common actions/products approved are: communication products (website, brochures, publications, films, etc.), training (seminars, lectures, workshops, study visits), research and studies, elaboration of marketing strategy and product development, promotion (participation in conferences, events, fairs), organisation of events (e.g. exhibitions) and investment.

In more than half of these programmes, there are no fixed sub-



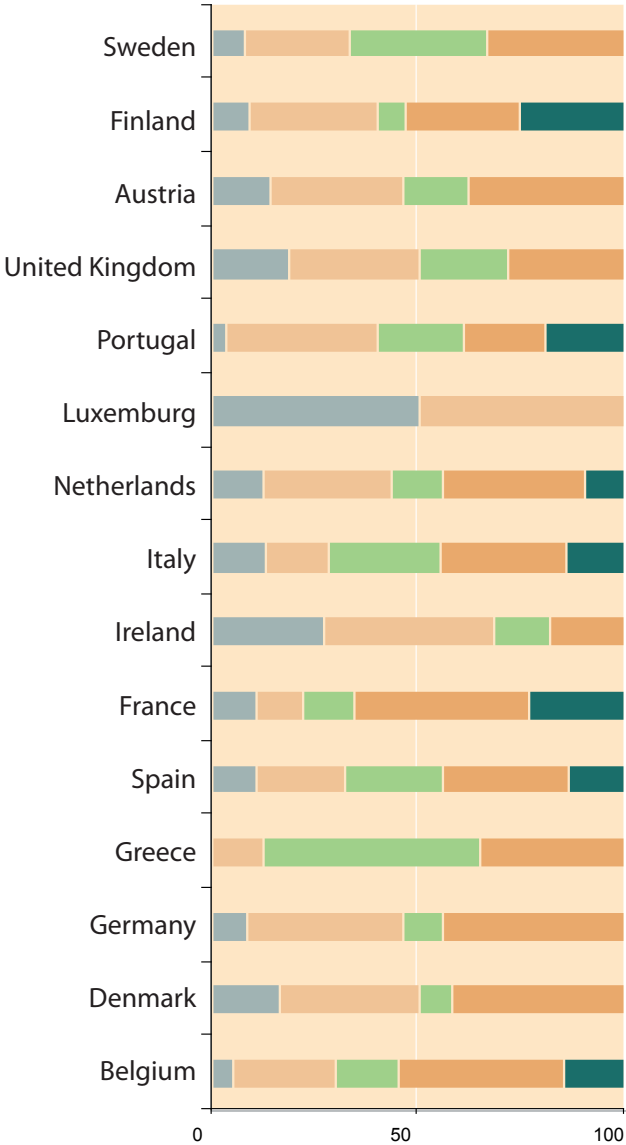
Leader+ priority theme selected by LAGs



mission rounds for project approval, which varies from twice a year (22 programmes), once (one) and four times a year (one).

From the survey, it appeared that the approval process of transnational projects could cause a 'bottleneck' in the cooperation process. This is largely due to differences in the implementation phase of programmes. Other obstacles stem from a lack of harmonised procedures for approval of transnational projects (long deadlines, difficulties in getting approval), and an insufficient level of information on national procedures relating to Action 2.

To encourage LAGs to start transnational cooperation there needs to be a better exchange of information, and a common framework of cooperation. The Leader+ observatory will address this issue with a variety of cooperation tools such as documentation, seminars, as well as an upgrade of the existing partner search tool, details of which you can find on the Leader+ website (<http://europa.eu.int/comm/leaderplus>).



Special focus: USE OF NEW KNOW-HOW AND NEW TECHNOLOGIES

From the findings of the Leader+ initiative, the 'Use of new know-how and new technologies', with 11 % of the total selected projects, is the least chosen of the four vertical themes. However, the fact that the theme was picked by fewer LAGs does not show the whole picture, since it has also a horizontal aspect. In many projects, new know-how and new technologies are used to support projects in the other themes, and indeed examples of this are found in this edition.

The Internet and its related technology is a popular recurring application in rural development. From the projects reviewed in this section, we see the same technology applied in a different and innovative way to achieve similar ends, notably the inclusion of the local populations in both village and information societies. In rural areas though, the use of new know-how and new technologies is not just about information and communication. It equally applies to: distance learning and training, environmental management, healthcare, renewable energy, processing land-based and marine products, and in the production of alternative crops and biotechnologies.

Generally, 'knowing how' is not always the same as technological innovation, which means that the better or wider use of what exists may be more appropriate. In this respect, technology or know-how should be relevant for its target audience. Women, young people and traditional farmers will have a different social and cultural attitude compared with new entrepreneurs coming to a rural area from outside the region. Similarly, for the different subject areas as outlined above, we can think about how new know-how and new technology can be used to stimulate not only rural development but also to develop the technology itself.

In the case of renewable energy, rural areas are often at the forefront of its development. This is not surprising, since energy projects based and linked to locally grown or sourced primary materials such as wood, biomass, recycled methane and water are often directly related to other rural priorities such as farm diversification and economies of scale for collective processing facilities. For Leader+ projects, these linkages are significant, and as such, have the potential to deliver direct local economic as well as environmental benefits.

In terms of the European Union's economic and social policy the adoption of new technologies and growth of 'knowledge-based' industries is a vital element, since they have clear implications for competitiveness, employment and information society. The strategic use of information and communication technologies (ICT) helps to bring distant markets closer together, develop knowledge networks and not least combats social exclusion. For small businesses, ICT can often provide the necessary support for primary research, especially in bringing new products to the market. The Valencia Declaration, of February 2003, stated that:

'Rural areas are a core European asset, which can reach their full potential by using new information and communication technologies (ICT) to increase the quality of life and work opportunities of the citizens in rural areas;

to strengthen the development of the rural economy, both in the traditional and the new sectors, enabling rural areas to fully integrate and participate in the knowledge-based economy of Europe.'

The European Conference 'Information society as key enabler for rural development', Valencia, February 2003.

Under Leader+ there are many different ways that new 'know-how' and new technology have been integrated into a project, and have had a positive impact on the work and lives of those living there.



Bringing ICT skills to rural Scotland.



UNITED KINGDOM

A pilot project providing mobile ICT infrastructures is an opportunity to train in new skills for Scotland's rural communities

Breadalbane virtual learning centre project

The Breadalbane virtual learning centre project has been developed by local people in an effort to address the lack of access to information communication technology (ICT) facilities and training. The project is located in a rural area in northwest Highland's Stirling district, now named Breadalbane by the Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park Authority, and runs initially as a one year pilot project, ending April 2005. It is the only community based and community run virtual learning centre in rural Scotland.

Although the learning is very 'real', it is called 'virtual' because it is not a bricks and mortar project, but a mobile and portable one, based in existing community buildings across the area. The aim is to have a learning centre in each community which is available on set days and at set times to deliver training. This will encourage individual learning for the many people living in the area who currently have no access to modern and fast ICT equipment and training.

The funding from Leader+ has enabled the purchase of laptop computers and the installation of broadband connections in community facilities, which gives the most up-to-date ICT resource for three local communities. These three locations were identified, and after consultation with people in six different communities, were given broadband access.

Making the connection

It was hoped to have the broadband connections in all three village halls in place during the pilot year, but the re-

ality has been a slower than anticipated process, with only one village hall in Tyndrum having the facility. The delays are a result of the time and effort the management group has invested in making sure that local people from each community were happy with the location of the facility. This is because it is important that each 'learning centre' is in a place where it will get the maximum use and derive the maximum benefit in terms of social economic development for the area.

A vital part of the project was to have enough funding to be able to offer the same kind of subsidies for courses that colleges can provide, so that nobody who wants to learn is excluded. To date courses have been run in basic computing skills, digital photography and the European Computer Driving Licence⁽¹⁾. There are also plans to work with the school and parents to enable them to support their children to use the Internet, as well as with youth groups in the area, which involves using the laptop computers and the Internet.

In addition to these courses, there are twice weekly Internet sessions in Tyndrum Village Hall, where anyone can

⁽¹⁾ European computer driving licence (ECDL) is a certification making it possible to validate basic competences of the licence holder in the use of current data-processing applications, and is made up of seven modules. Details can be found at: <http://www.ecdl.com>





The learning centre delivers the necessary skills.

come along and use the Internet how they wish. One of the aims is to support and encourage individuals to enrol on distance learning courses. At the time of writing three women have already done this and have enjoyed studying in an environment where technical support is available in the form of a teaching assistant who is on hand throughout the sessions.

Benefits of learning with Leader+

It was always recognised that the main key to the success of this project would be the employment of a local coordinator to manage the project with the support of a voluntary management group. The importance of this role has become more evident as the project has progressed.

Equally, technical support for the laptops has proved to be vital. With many different people using the laptops at the twice-weekly Internet sessions, the problems caused by viruses etc. have taken a great deal of time to rectify.

A part-term project evaluation has highlighted some positive results. The village of Tyndrum, which in the initial stage was the focus of the project, has normally a population of about 150 people, although this is more, mainly due to young people working in large hotels in the area. With 10 laptops available, people are often queuing to use them. However, there is still more work to be done in terms of encouraging more young local people to use the facility.

The tutored courses, which all employ local tutors, have also been very successful. It is possible to offer 'one to one' tutoring for those lacking the confidence or ability to attend larger classes. Results for the first nine months of the project showed that 71 women and 35 young people had been assisted. These courses had previously been limited by a requirement from further education colleges that at least eight people should attend each course. This ruling had been hard to meet in this rural area, where students were often turned away when classes were cancelled because less than eight people enrolled for them. Under Leader+, courses have taken place irrespective of the number wanting to attend.

Another benefit the project has provided is a boost in income for village halls. These halls are vital community centres in the rural villages but too often they struggle to meet their running costs. By using halls on a regular ba-

sis, Leader+ has provided much needed income. Also the project has given an added impetus to the discussions for the provision of broadband, not only to the Breadalbane community, but to the whole of rural Scotland.

In addition to Leader+ the project has been funded by: Direct Grants; Stirling Council Community Planning Fund; Carnegie UK; Awards for All; and Stirling Council Community Grants Scheme. The major funding has come from Leader+ and the pilot project could not have started without this support. In addition, the programme manager continues to be very supportive and interested in the project's development, and this has been a real source of encouragement. The project is looking for an additional three years funding and in the long term, it is hoped that the service being provided will be recognised as a valuable resource for training and improving employment opportunities in this rural area. This would allow access to mainstream statutory funding.



Breadalbane virtual learning centre

Member State: United Kingdom
Region, district: Scotland, Breadalbane
Name of the LAG: Lomond and Rural Stirling LAG
Population: 2 500
Surface area: 2 437 km²
Project total cost: EUR 98 000
EU: EUR 48 300
Other public funds: EUR 35 000
Private funds: EUR 14 700

Contact person: Suzanne Player
Address: Tyndrum Village Hall, Tyndrum, FK20, Stirlingshire, Scotland
Tel. (44) 015 67 82 01 54
E-mail: players@stirling.gov.uk

Photographs provided by
the LAG Lomond and Rural Stirling



With a watchful eye on the keyboard.

SPAIN

Developing an innovative regional approach for an inclusive ICT strategy, to bridge the 'digital divide' and to secure a place in the future

Project @CERCA

The reality of technological change brings with it new aspects of social inequality, especially, between users and non-users of information technologies, which is commonly known as the 'digital divide'. This new threat of social discrimination also plays an important role in the development of the rural environment. This results in a situation where rural areas are disadvantaged vis-à-vis the urban world in accessing and benefiting from like opportunities.

Coming together under @CERCA

@CERCA is a project born out of the need to address the dependence on new technologies for the future well being of people living in rural areas. It is a cooperative project, which under Leader+ will consider an 'approach for new technologies in overcoming social exclusion for the rural population'.

Around this idea, the following twelve Groups of Rural Development of Andalusia, which includes 179 municipalities, have come together to carry out this exciting project. These are: Asociación para el Desarrollo del Guadajoz y Campiña Este (Córdoba), Grupo de Desarrollo Rural 'Almanzora' (Almería), Grupo de Desarrollo Rural del Valle de Lecrín-Temple y Costa Interior 'Aprovalle-Temple' (Granada), Asociación Grupo de Acción Local 'Campiña Sur' (Córdoba), Asociación para el Desarrollo del Condado de Huelva 'Adercon' (Huelva), Asociación Grupo de Desarrollo Rural 'Valle del Alto Guadiato' (Córdoba), Asociación para el Desarrollo Rural de la Comarca de Guadix (Granada), Asociación para el Desarrollo Rural del Medio Guadalquivir (Cór-

doba), Asociación para el Desarrollo Rural de la Comarca de los Pedroches (Córdoba), Asociación para la Promoción Económica de la Vega — Sierra Elvira 'Promovega' — Sierra Elvira' (Granada), y la Asociación Grupo de Desarrollo Rural 'Sierra de las Nieves'.

The latter group 'Sierra de las Nieves' was designated the coordinating group of the @CERCA project by the Agriculture and Fisheries Department of Andalusia's regional government.

All these groups have some common characteristics that bring them together within @CERCA. These include: low population areas (the average population by municipality is 4 000 inhabitants); poor infrastructures for the development of new technologies; poorly trained population; serious lack of ground communications; and lastly these groups are located to a large extent in relatively isolated mountainous regions of Andalusia.

@CERCA's aims and methodology

The overall aim of this cooperation group is 'to balance the opportunities of the rural community with those of the urban one within the framework of the information society'. On the other hand, there are different objectives which have been jointly agreed by the 12 groups (as listed above), and these are as follows:

- to establish a complementary added value to the programme of local development;





A group exercise in new technologies.

- to obtain sufficient 'critical mass' to develop certain projects;
- to find and benefit from synergies created between the cooperating territories;
- to design the means to exchange experiences between the different cooperating groups. These exchanges to be based on new technologies and suitable for all the groups of rural development in Andalusia;
- to promote a spirit of entrepreneurial cooperation that generates scale economies within the rural companies in order to increase their competitiveness.

Regarding the target population of this project, information access has two aspects. Firstly, it requires the provision of a suitable ICT infrastructure to access the information, and secondly, that the information should be regarded as a 'knowledge-making tool' for generating added value to meet the various project objectives.

Some of the expected outcomes of the project are: improved skills in the use of new technologies within the target population; transfer of knowledge and experience among social and economic actors in rural areas; facilitating access to information in order to carry out all the projects; articulation of rural territories, bringing the local administration closer to citizens.

All these have consequences for employment, since, as it currently accounts for 25 % of new jobs created, the information society is an important employment sector, and is clearly linked to the new technologies covered under @CERCA. Moreover, current demand exceeds supply, and the positions offered are generally at a high level.

Taking all these elements into account, @CERCA will provide to its community a 'social shock absorber' which will cushion the effects of the 'digital divide' and thereby

Project @CERCA

Member State: Spain

Region: Andalucía

Name of leading LAG: Grupo de Desarrollo Rural Sierra de las Nieves

Total covered by project area

Population: 662 416

Surface area: 16 311 km²

Project total cost: EUR 11 196 233

EU: EUR 4 710 283

Other public funds: EUR 2 355 142

Private funds: EUR 4 130 808

Contact person: Ms Mari Paz Arroyo

Address c/ del Pozo, 17
E-29400 Yunquera (Málaga)

Tel. (34) 952 87 27 47

Fax (34) 952 87 27 46

E-mail: agdr@sierranieves.com

Website: <http://www.sierranieves.com>

Photographs provided by the Spanish National Network Unit



the social exclusion and isolation normally associated with it. Thus the primary aim of raising the quality of life for Andalusia's rural population will be achieved by developing the use of new technologies.

The project finance totals some EUR 11 196 233 including contributions from, the EAGGF, the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, the Agriculture and Fisheries Department of Andalusia's regional government, and private contributions. The eligibility period is from 3 October 2002 and ends 30 November 2006.



Following the lesson on the big screen

LUXEMBOURG

'Internet-homes' in rural areas providing a community focus

In recent years the Luxembourg Government has helped to set up so-called 'Internet-homes' in every municipality. In this way, everybody has the possibility to use the new information and communication technologies (ICT).

The idea was to give financial support to buy computers and to install them in a public place where people can have free access during a certain time in the week. Given their ICT experience, the Leader+ LAGs in the northern part of Luxembourg advised their member-municipalities about buying hardware and software. In this way, it became clear that there was a different need between the communities. Some, for example, thought ICT to be unnecessary while others were already very interested and planned to organise training courses for the local population. In the end, they agreed that the Leader+ group should coordinate the whole project initiative between the different local authorities.

Adapting the home for the needs of the community

A large survey and information campaign established the technical needs of the different partners. This resulted in the selection of the classic 'Internet-home' which has six PCs, and several printers. The software for text processing and calculation had then to be adapted to meet the needs of the different local actors. This meant a proposal had to be put to the responsible ministry, in order to adapt the equipment to meet different

needs. Consequently, large 'Internet-homes' comprising of at least 10 workstations were developed, and offered to those communities willing to offer ICT courses. The classic 'Internet-home' of six computers were delivered to other groups and small 'Internet-homes' of two or three computers were located in smaller communities and villages.

Consequently, with the same budget, the government could support three types of Internet-homes, according to what the rural communes in the northern part of Luxembourg required. In fact, this is a good example of cooperation not only in the region itself, but also between the local and national authorities. The same example will be repeated in at least one other Leader+ region in Luxembourg. By the end of 2004, 27 Internet-homes were open for public use. Spread over the whole of the northern region, there are six large 'Internet homes' which can provide training courses and provide access to all those living there.

It was only after the installation phase of the technical equipment that it was soon realised that 'Internet-homes' have to be managed in order that people will make best use of the facilities, and that the villagers want to communicate not only by Internet! 'Internet-homes' have therefore become the new generation of meeting-points for villages where there is no or little social infrastructure.

Already under Leader II, the two LAGs in the northern part of the Grand Duchy had been very busy in organising training courses in all computer domains. Under Leader+, this work had grown to a point where the Leader staff could not guarantee the organisation of these activities,





Monitoring the connection.

and so to help, a special non-profit organisation called 'Tripticon' (Trame Régionale pour l'Initiation Professionnelle aux Techniques de l'Information et de la Communication Ouest-Nord) has been set up. For all classic courses, Tripticon organises also the so-called 'European Computer Driving licence' (¹). If there is an interest, special workshops can be organised for example on Online-Shopping, Web-design, Online-Banking, and creating Homepages etc. The organisation cost, except the payment to the teachers, is co-financed by the Leader+ programme.



Internet-homes in rural areas

Member State: Luxembourg

Region, district: Rédange/Wiltz and Clervaux/Vianden

Name of the LAGs: Red/Wolz & Clerf/Vianden

Population: 35 539

Surface area: 837 km²

Project total cost: EUR 68 000

EU: EUR 13 600

Other public funds: EUR 54 400

Contact person: Mr Fons Jacques

Address 23, an der Gaass
L-9150 Eschdorf

Tel. (352) 89 95 68-1

Fax: (352) 89 95 68-40

E-mail: rw@leader.lu

Website: www.rw.leader.lu

Photographs provided by the Luxembourg National Network Unit

(¹) European computer driving licence (ECDL) is a certification making it possible to validate basic competences of the licence holder in the use of current data-processing applications, and is made up of seven modules.

Details can be found at: <http://www.ecdl.com>

ADDING VALUE TO LOCAL PRODUCTS





The home of 'Casizolu' cheese

ITALY

A Sardinian cheese provides regional identity, prosperity and a strategy for adding value to local products

A strategy for quality products from the Montiferru region of Sardinia

Since the 1950s, the area of the LAG Montiferru, which includes Barigadu and Sinis has witnessed high levels of migration of its rural population to the more urbanised areas. This has been due to the need for both a higher income and better access to social services. As a result, agriculture and all the other traditional activities have lost not only their labour force, but also the knowledge and the skills required to produce the region's traditional products.

Project background

The gradual worsening of the demographic situation, has deeply affected the local community in many ways, for example, a loss of local identity linked to the disappearance of traditional habits and customs. In addition, there are environmental problems caused by the lack of agricultural activity, such as soil erosion, and the loss of ecotypes and endemic species.

The main aim of the LAG Montiferru has been to revitalise the socioeconomic system of the region which itself depends on its livestock and its small craft based enterprises.

This has been realised by:

- adding value to local products and facilitating their access to local markets;

- safeguarding the natural resources which are in danger of becoming extinct;
- promoting the image of Montiferru;
- recapturing the socio-cultural heritage of the local community (the habits and customs that previously characterised the area's rural life).

The LAG already started work under the Leader II initiative, and now under Leader+, a process of adding value and helping local agro-food reach the market place is under way. The project focuses on a typical local cheese, called 'Casizolu'. This cheese is made with milk from a specific breed of cattle, called the Modicano Sarda. The cows graze on free pasture and produce milk which has a distinctive 'wood and leaf' flavour.

About the 'Casizolu' special cheese

The existence of this ancient cow's milk cheese, in the shape of a swollen pear, is especially surprising given that Montiferru is at the heart of an area of goat and sheep cheeses. Mainly women produce this cheese. It is a product completely made by hand, and involves the kneading of the fresh curd under hot water at the right point of the cheese curdling process. This also gives the cheese its distinctive classic shape.



The 'Casizolu' cheese with its distinctive classic shape

Understanding the production process

The production investments for 'Casizolu' cheese have focussed on the following aspects:

1. Orientation, assistance and optimisation of the production process;
 - definition and preparation of a voluntary code in respect of technical production regulations,
 - definition and preparation of a food safety plan,
 - realisation of a specific training course about production techniques.
2. Direct incentives for the operators, with the funding of the processing plants.
3. Orientation, assistance and optimisation of the sales and marketing function:
 - launching the cheese as a traditional product that has been 'saved', and linking it to the image of the Montiferru region;
 - networking with other local quality products (honey, extra virgin olive oil, malvasia wine);
 - strengthening the cheese's presence in the quality catering sector;
 - helping the producers to meet market demands through supply chain management techniques (virtual warehouse).

A marketing road map for 'Casizolu' cheese

The LAG, together with the cheese producers, took part in the 2000 edition of 'Salone del Gusto di Torino' (Food Show held in Turin), which is probably the most important showcase of national products. The regional press was also interested in the 'Casizolu' phenomenon, and wrote numerous articles. Interest by the national press in the product and region soon followed, and this resulted in articles in the different weekly magazines specialising in tourism and wine gastronomy.

Arrangements were also made to distribute the product within the catering sector. For example, restaurants and places of stay (hotels, bed and breakfasts, etc.) have been encouraged to use the cheese in their 'typical and traditional' menus.

'Casizolu' continues with Leader+

The activities realised under Leader II, form the basis of the work now planned with Leader+. Under Leader+, the LAG intends to develop a multi-sectoral network, among the different economic activities, in order to strengthen the organisation of the agri-food supply.

There are several initiatives now in place, which:

- support the LAG's internal network as well as the links outside the area;
- improve the production process on quality by innovative means;
- improve the region's 'welcome' and related customer services;
- facilitate market access for local products.

The good results obtained with the funding of Leader II are an important tool for Leader+. The strategy followed by the LAG concerns not only economic factors but also considers the social and environmental variables. The result is a comprehensive approach to adding value to local products.



A strategy for quality products — Montiferru region (Sardinia)

Member State: Italy
Region, district: Sardinia
Name of the LAG: LAG Montiferru, Barigadu, Sinis
Population: 59 573
Surface area: 1 499 km²
Project total cost: EUR 8 080
EU: EUR 4 096
Other public funds: EUR 2 619
Private funds: EUR 1 365

Contact person: Salvatore Polo
Address: Piazza Mannu snc, Seneghe, I-09070
Tel. (39) 078 35 41 32
Fax (39) 078 35 41 32
E-mail: galmbms@tiscali.it

Photographs provided by the Italian National Network Unit

UNITED KINGDOM

A new association, training, and new technology, all help to secure the future of a region's traditional sector

Rejuvenating reed and sedge harvesting in the Norfolk Broads

A key feature of the Norfolk Broads' landscape is the large expanse of reed and sedge beds that fringes its world famous waterways. Conservationists regard such wetlands as an internationally important habitat, home to rare plants and animals. The tourist may not always appreciate the marsh harriers' requirements for these extensive reed beds but the sight of them circling low in the sky is nevertheless impressive!

Conservation of these areas is dependent upon periodic cutting of the reed and sedge. This has traditionally been harvested commercially to provide raw materials for thatching, thus ensuring a link between the area's built heritage and its natural environment. In tourist publications, reed cutters have often been pictured, normally leaning on a scythe whilst the sun shines upon the neatly stacked bundles of reed.

This romantic image has obscured the reality of local reed cutting. The scythe is seldom used, having been superseded by more efficient machinery. Despite such changes, the Broads' reed and sedge industry has been in severe difficulty caused in part by imports and consequent low prices. Existing reed and sedge cutters have been unable to replace essential machinery whilst the industry has failed to attract newcomers to replace those who retire.

A study published by the Broads Authority in September 2002 identified no more than 20 commercial cutters with very few of these under 30 years of age, and several approaching (or beyond) retirement age. As might be expected, morale was low, with several cutters mistrusting the conservation organisations for seemingly favouring reed bed management by volunteers.

Leader+ funding has now provided training and is restoring new areas of neglected reed bed. This creates opportunities for new businesses whilst increasing the efficiency and income of existing ones.

A new association with Leader+

When local reed cutters approached Broads & Rivers Leader+ to seek support for their businesses, the central request was not surprisingly for the purchase of new machinery that would allow individual cutters to remain in employment. However, it was also recognised that this alone would not turn the industry around.

To fit the principles of Leader+ a new organisation was formed that allowed individual cutters to come together for mutual benefit. This in itself was quite radical. Whilst local cutters already knew each other and naturally had a



Now, new technology replaces the traditional scythe

lot in common, they were always one-person businesses run by individuals used to working largely in isolation. The association was created after seeking guidance about the alternative legal structures available, with the Broads Reed and Sedge Cutters.

The most immediate benefit of the association was the access to grant aid and purchase of basic cutting machines. However, the Leader+ application also sought to improve members' earning potential outside of the reed and sedge cutting seasons. This was done by providing training in other countryside management skills such as chain saw and brush cutter operations.

Perhaps the most important benefits however have been less tangible. The formation of an association has made it easier for conservation organisations and others to seek the views of reed and sedge cutting businesses as a group. Association members have been pleased that for the first time, they have been asked to comment on issues that could affect them — like the targeting of reed bed restoration and design of flood alleviation works.

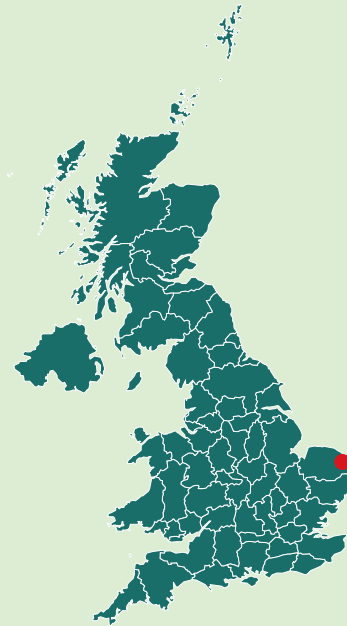
Attracting new entrants

This first project succeeded in halting decline of the local reed and sedge cutting industry and greatly increased confidence and optimism. A second project has now been approved that will address the longer-term needs of the industry by attracting and supporting new entrants, improving the efficiency and incomes of existing businesses and improving the promotion of the Broads' reed and sedge.

The association will provide a training programme to allow volunteers to experience reed and sedge cutting alongside experienced association members, with placements for 12 volunteers over the period 2005–06. The



Norfolk reeds are neatly stacked and ready for use



project will also restore 40 hectares of neglected reed and sedge beds, increasing the area suitable for commercial management and ensuring that new reed cutters will be able to find areas to work in.

Innovation to improve incomes

Fen restoration requires the removal of invasive scrub and clearance of drains that are essential to regulate the flow of water on and off sites. Traditionally, such work has been carried out laboriously by hand yet modern mechanical diggers are unsuitable for many sensitive sites due to their weight. Leader+ funding will allow the association a trial use of new lightweight equipment that should provide a more efficient yet sensitive way of working.

Restoration of neglected reed beds will provide additional earning opportunities for existing cutters, particularly valuable as such works can be completed outside of the reed and sedge cutting seasons. The project will also address the problems caused by the need to work outside during the winter months. Bad weather will always prevent the cutting of reed, however the association will obtain a number of temporary shelters which can not only be used to store cut material but will provide space to 'dress out' (trim) the reed. This flexibility will ensure that cutters do not lose valuable days of work during the season.

Improving promotion

Traditionally, the reed and sedge industry has been difficult to communicate with due to its fragmented nature. One benefit of having formed a reed and sedge cutters' association is that it is now easier to promote its members services and to improve general understanding of the practices of reed and sedge cutting. The association intends to produce both a leaflet and a website, which will provide educational information as well as information about the association and the work of its members.

Looking for cooperation

Norfolk's reed cutters are keen to cooperate with those from other areas, to seek new innovative approaches that will make businesses more efficient whilst continuing to make a positive environmental contribution. Some initial contact has already been made but other proposals are welcome!

Rejuvenating reed and sedge harvesting

Member State: United Kingdom
Region, district: Norfolk
Name of the LAG: Broads & Rivers
Population: 98 945
Surface area: 1 043 km²
Project total cost: EUR 172 425
EU: EUR 58 820
Other public funds: EUR 113 605

Contact person: Malcolm Hackett
Address Economic Development Unit,
 Norfolk County Council, County Hall,
 Martineau Lane, Norwich NR1 2DH,
 United Kingdom
Tel. (44) 16 03 22 89 60
Fax (44) 16 03 22 33 45
E-mail: malcolm.hackett@norfolk.gov.uk
Website: www.broadsandrivers.org.uk

Photographs provided by The Broads Authority

MAKING BEST USE OF NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES



GERMANY

A case of Leader+ funding providing a base for stronger regional identity and a boost for tourist development

'On the way to becoming a region'

Based on an article by Anette Pfeiffer and Jan Swoboda

In terms of art, culture and archaeology the Leader+ region of Oberschwaben has much to offer, and the numerous findings from prehistoric times show that Oberschwaben has always been a popular place for settlers. Under Leader II, one aim was to give people, both locals and tourists, an understanding of these 'treasures' and to use them to stimulate an underdeveloped tourist sector. The next step is to bring all these elements together to provide a single product that can be marketed to tourists and so enhance the region's own identity. Under Leader+, the process of developing critical mass to achieve a regional identity continues and a coordinated marketing strategy for tourism is being developed.

Making the region attractive with Leader+

Under Leader the region has already created new institutions and tourist attractions, notably, the Federseemuseum in Bad Buchau. This open-air facility exhibits the prehistoric settlements, and is very interesting for both children and youth groups. Likewise, the newly built Heuneburg, near Hebertingen-Hundersingen, a former Celtic prince's residence, has become one of the main attractions of the museum.

Elsewhere an event calendar is maintained by the various local authorities to provide a link to all the events in

the region, and information is accessed via www.donaual-ender.de. Another project, present through the whole Leader region, is a result of cooperation with the 'Parc naturel régional du Pilat' in France. Seven artists from this partner region have created seven pieces of art for seven communes. In return, seven artists from Oberschwaben have worked in the Pilat region.

These activities have produced positive results. For example, the number of visitors to the Federseemuseum has doubled since it was opened. However, questions remain about Oberschwaben's image and identity, both from within and outside the region, and consequently the most appropriate marketing strategy for tourism.

Strong partners for marketing

'It is not our main aim to market region Oberschwaben', said Emmanuel Frank, Managing Director of the office branch of the LAG Oberschwaben. 'We intend to offer enough attractions for supra-regional marketing and on the other hand we want to make people in the region aware that there are attractions apart from the Bodensee'. Four supra-regional tourist associations now market the tourist attractions and take care of the bookings, and the collective event calen-



Major towns in the Oberschwaben region



There is much to see and learn during a visit to the Federseemuseum

dar covers new communes, and includes the leisure, gastronomy and hotel business sectors. 'It seems to be more useful not to create our own booking-system, but to apply the system of the tourist associations' remarked Emmanuel Frank.

To create supra regional awareness, the LAG and the tourism associations invite journalists to visit the regional museums and sights and to write about it in various travel magazines. This has the effect of giving greater visibility to the available attractions as well as strengthening cooperation between the different institutions. Internal marketing through a touring exhibition to the different public institutions (commissioned by the LAG), informs about Leader projects. A trilingual picture book presents the Leader supported projects to service providers in the tourist industry. This picture book also serves to strengthen the tourist spirit among the population through the slogan 'A picture book for every place to stay'.

We work together wherever we can

For all marketing actions, a key consideration is close cooperation between the institutions and the regional authorities. Such cooperation requires a regional identity for which the region's size is crucial. If a region is too small, then finding enough things in common in order to create a regional identity and an associated marketing strategy is a problem. In the Oberschwaben area an uneven distribution of tourist attractions results in 'small-regions' with one or two key projects.

For example, the biggest heathland area in southern Germany, around the Federsee, has numerous glacial rel-

icts and other archaeological findings. Elsewhere, 'Kurstadt Bad Buchau' with 4 000 inhabitants, attracts up to 800 visitors per day. From here, tourists can visit the 'Skulpturenfeld Oggelshausen', the 'Bachritterburg' and the 'Heuneburg' in the neighbouring areas. Since the areas around the Federsee have not only one administration area but also a common identity based on the natural characteristics, then marketing here is much easier.

Cooperation in Bad Buchau is evident. The town provides a home to the nature reserve, which in return develops additional activities in environmental education together with the open-air museum, where there one person works full-time in press relations. This has a snowball effect. Articles in the specialist press attract tourists as far away as 50 km. Becoming aware of living in an attractive region alters the local population's perception of their 'cultural and historic treasures'. Moreover, there is continuous reporting in the local newspapers and an increasing range of activities, which can be financed due to the high number of visitors.

Apart from Bad Buchau cooperation is developing slowly. The Federseemuseum and the Bachritterburg cooperate already, but this is not so with the nearby Heuneberg museum, where a border exists, not only in people's minds, but also in daily life. For example, there is no public transport between the two 'Kreise' (administrative districts).

LAGs do their best to enhance and support cooperation. For example they organised an international congress on 'Culture and Tourism in Rural Areas in Europe' in summer 2001. Representatives from local authorities, from the tourist industry, from museums, scientists and artists

discussed how cultural projects could become more interesting for a wider public. Moreover, the LAG created a forum for mayors and representatives of the museums. There is now an idea for a students quiz to raise awareness about local museums.

Getting in touch with history

'The more people know about their region's history, their roots, the more they understand the landscape and identify themselves with it', says Erwin Zillenbiller, initiator of two current Leader+ projects. To this end, Erwin Zillenbiller has realised three public performances with the help of the 'Förderverein (development association) Heuneburg' and they have attracted hundreds of tourists.

These performances can also strengthen the regional identity in the Leader+ region by getting people to look into their own history. In the commune of Kanzach, which has only 530 inhabitants, Leader II funds helped to build a 'Turmhügelburg', a kind of second residence for the 'Bachritter' (knights), a local clan of lower aristocracy. This project not only gave this small region a significant increase in the number of tourists, but led to two more 'Bachritter' festivals with 7 000 visitors.

The Bachritterburg association will be extended with Leader+ money. The development association expects 10 000 visitors, when the whole complex opens in 2005. It is also trying to get marketing help from the transport department of Bad Buchau. Local craftsmen and others involved in the construction will benefit from the opening either by selling their products or by getting new business from the visitors.

In Oggelshausen, the sculpture park provided an opportunity to address the region and its landscape. Oggelshausen has been the venue for two sculptors-symposiums but with an interval of 30 years. The last event took place with funds from Leader II, where international artists created sculptures and then looked for appropriate locations in the landscape. At first, interest came only from tourists but later the local population became more involved.

A travel through time

Under Leader, the range of activities has grown and become more attractive. Cooperation between the different players is now under way, with small projects attracting more and more actors. All these different elements have to be brought together to form an overall picture, and promote the distinctive feature of the region, which is the diversity of its cultural-historical heritage. A possible link for all those 'treasures' from different eras is 'travel through time'. This would bring the different regions and the museums together with other bodies concerned with gastronomy, marketing, hotel business etc. An 'overnight tourist package' could for example open up the more distant attractions for group travels.

Some museums have already discussed such a 'travel through time' concept and a Leader working group could provide the necessary overview and animation. Cooperation between museums and larger tourist hostleries has

been discussed, and for example, a regional brewery may include the 'Bachritterburg' in Kanzach as one of its destinations for bus tours.

The extension of the current signage and the integration of all activities in the maps of trails are further measures, and the LAG together with all relevant sectors, plays a key role in this process of integration.



On the way to becoming a region

Member State: Germany
Region, district: Baden-Württemberg
Name of the LAG: LAG Oberschwaben
Population: 118 322
Surface area: 1108 km²
Project total cost: EUR 11 million
EU: EUR 3.6 million
Other public funds: EUR 5.9 million
Private funds: EUR 1.5 million

Contact person: Emmanuel Frank
Address: Landratsamt Sigmaringen, Leopoldstraße 4, 72488 Sigmaringen
Tel. (49) 07 57 11 02-354
Fax (49) 07 57 11 02-540
E-mail: emmanuel.frank@lrasig.de
Website: www.donaukalender.de

Photographs provided by the German National Network Unit



Simply constructed shelters using local raw materials

DENMARK

Using traditional accommodation opens up a region's great outdoors and provides an international link for hikers

Hiking shelters provide stepping-stones to Danish nature

Based on an article by Karsten Lægdsmand

Grønt Uddannelsescenter (Green Education Centre) is a key point for green projects in the north-western part of Zealand. It has received grants from the Leader+ programme for a project called 'Friluftnet Nordvest' (Outdoor Network North West). The project consists of a network of simple shelters located close to the shores and paths of the region. A network of simple shelters, 60 in total, will allow for hikers, bikers, riders and sailors to tour the whole area in one visit.

This now gives the possibility to all nature-loving people, Danes as well as foreigners, to get to know 'Denmark in a nutshell', since it includes everything: green forests; meandering streams; white beaches and idyllic villages. This area has attracted for many years a growing number

of tourists, and now it is open to everyone.

Ultimately, the project will become a part of Nave Nortrail, which is the international hike around the North Sea.

Project background

Fugledegaard is Denmark's biggest settlement from the Viking Age, and also the entrance to the future nature reserve of Åmosen. From here, Steffen Holberg, who has been the inspiration behind the project said: *'I have been wanting for a long time to make the area more open to those who enjoy being outdoors. We have*



Shelters provide a welcome break...

all you could wish for — and even within hiking distance!

However, simple and cheap overnight accommodation for visitors, whether they come by foot, by bike, on horse or by canoe was required. Based on a Swedish model, the shelters are simple to create. In Danish, they call the shelter 'læskur', which means a simple, open log cabin with grass on the roof, where peasants would sleep when they went up into the mountains in the summertime to make hay. 'Læskurs' are simple to build, and a do-it-yourself kit has been developed, so that a shelter can be constructed in a very short time, and with no special experience required. There is room for up to eight sleeping guests in each shelter and all they have to do is roll out their sleeping bags. Normally three shelters are placed together so that a whole class from school or a group of scouts can spend the night together.

The last 15 shelters are at intervals of 10 kilometers, which allows hikers to reach comfortably the next one during the same day. The main idea is that people can plan their holiday as and where they like, for example, by the sea, in the woods, by a stream or close to towns. In places easily reached by disabled people the shelters are arranged so that they can spend the night there.

Overcoming some project problems

'It's always difficult to start up new projects. But I am used to it. Problems are there to be solved. And I can assure you there were a lot of problems', said Steffen Holberg.

One of the initial obstacles was the need to get planning permission for shelters, quite different from the time when peasants built them where they thought it most practical, and without needing to ask anyone. The project would not have been possible without funds from Leader+. Nor would it have been possible without the many volunteers, who helped setting up the shelters. Leader+ making a difference

'Without the money from Leader+ and without the help from

the Leader+ coordinator there would have been no project', explained Steffen Holberg. *'You almost have to have scientific knowledge to get money from a programme like this. And it has not been so easy to make use of the money in the correct way. In both cases, the guidance by the coordinator has helped ensuring that we got through intact. It's a key factor that you can get guidance within the region and that we do not have to get in contact with some ministerial office in Copenhagen, where it can be difficult to find the right person and get some qualified advice.'*

The project has created a new opportunity for nature-loving people, people living in the area as well as visitors. In the future, visitors to the area who have been hiking round the North Sea trail will use the paths that are now being established.

Furthermore, this project has helped to ensure that a local sawmill does not close down. *'It's difficult to get wood*





... with sleeping bags ready for use.

at good prices, and we have high wages in Denmark. It's an obvious risk that local jobs are phased out to countries with lower wages' said Steffen Holberg.

Future perspectives

The project will also develop 'Stinet Nordvest' (Hiking network North West) and with the setting up of the last shelters, the different paths will then link to the Nave Nortrail.

There is also a chance for a transnational cooperation project between nature reserves in Europe, following a recent study visit to the nature reserves of Thüringer Wald in Germany and Rockingham Forest in England. On this subject, Steffen Holberg said 'I learned a lot, and I got many ideas. Not only about the cooperation, but I also got good contacts, with who I am now about to follow up.' As a final idea he said, 'How about for instance a European village with hiking shelters built by young people from the European countries?'



Outdoor network northwest

Member State: Denmark

Region, district: West Zealand

Name of the LAG: Leader+ West Zealand

Population: 60 000

Surface area: 985 km²

Project total cost: EUR 216 196

EU: EUR 54 066

Other public funds: EUR 54 066

Private funds: EUR 108 064

Contact person: Steffen Holberg

Address: Godthåb Mølle, Bakkedraget 20, DK-4450 Jyderup, Denmark

Tel. (45) 59 26 24 04

E-mail: steffen@heltude.dk

Websites: www.shelternet.dk and www.heltude.dk

Photographs provided by Steffen Holberg



IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN RURAL AREAS



SWEDEN

Leader+ helps to finance musical ambitions and achieves both 'quality and equality of life' at the same time.

Sheena: a musical association striking the right note

Based on an article by Åsa Johnsen, President of Sheena

This is a story about how a small Leader grant awarded one summer led to a follow up initiative the next. As an association, Sheena now receives funding and other support from the Leader+ LAG, Astrid Lindgrens Hembygd, who endorses cooperation as an essential driving force for social development. Sheena aims to expand the range of activities and to enable young people to develop their proper roles. Through Sheena, young musicians, especially girls, get access to skills, stages and equipment, which would otherwise not have been possible in such a rural area. The project fulfills the aim of quality of life for Astrid Lindgrens Hembygd, by 'creating a good environment to be brought up in'.

The first project, a music camp called Popkollo, was arranged a couple of weeks during the summer of 2003, and was followed by another one a year later. Through Leader+ the 2003 music camp already received a subsidy. The resulting music association, Sheena, was responsible for the next summer camp in 2004. Before the start of Sheena, another Leader+ contribution financed a feasibility study to launch events that took place mainly during spring 2004. Since these results were very positive, the association was founded, and subsequently became responsible for the whole summer camp 2004, and received further funding from Leader+.

The story

This story starts in fact with a pop music summer camp, for girls between 12 and 16 years of age, with a clear focus on pop music. The camp was called Popkollo ('kollo' in Swedish means summer camp). The idea was born in the summer of 2002 by one of the biggest pop stars in Sweden called Marit Bergman. Already established in the music business her solo artist career has now taken off but she was nevertheless well aware of the lack of gender equality on the music scene. At concerts, 'gigs' as well as at different clubs, she was often the only female. This made her feel quite alone in a male-dominated culture. Something was wrong. For Marit the idea of arranging a pop music camp for girls was to do something positive instead of complaining.

The planning of the first pop music camp identified some factors that were the root of gender segregation and discrimination in the music world. Among these were a lack of positive feedback, no role models and few ideas. In contrast to boys, traditionally girl's musical ambitions are different and they do not always receive the same kind of positive feedback and encouragement from parents, teach-



A solo spot for Locasanna

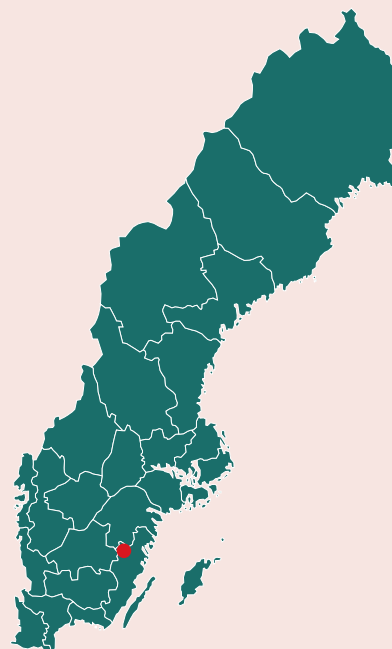
ers or people in authority. Indeed, only a few women exist in the history of rock music. According to Molly Neumann, member of the legendary Riot Girl-band 'Bratmobile', it is not that girls and women lack confidence in playing music, more that they do not even have the idea to play music. In a world with clear norms setting out girls' and boys' behaviour and appearance, situations can exist where certain interests are contradictory to gender requirements. For example, there is no reason why a girl should not play the drums, or why a boy should not like jazz dance.

Creating a pedagogic environment

Popkollo launched a unique pedagogic about a simple relationship for youth in general and girls in particular. This pedagogic has inspired the development and organisation of other camps for youth, circus, film, dance and hip hop. In all cases, the aim is to put the individual first, and then offer the possibility to go 'on stage' and develop the personal qualities required. The first Popkollo in 2003 was far from an organisational miracle. The organisers were begin-



Girls taking centre stage with Sheena



ners and consequently the planning and the logistics were quite shaky, but overall the 'kollo' was a success. However, the most elementary goal was achieved, which was to create an environment where girls are firstly allowed to be individuals, and secondly to be musicians. This allows their creativity to be taken seriously and to move beyond the commonly used 'girlmusic' and 'girlband' expressions. This is an essential component in the work on gender equality: to take into account, in a general way, that a girl's creativity and way of doing things is both relevant and significant.

What Sheena means

The Popkollo was the start of a broader activity and concept, and is proof that such methods are needed. The organisation around Popkollo gave birth to Sheena <http://www.sheena.se/popkollo.html>

Sheena's objective is to carry on the work, to inspire and to encourage a young girl's interest in and commitment to music. One part of Sheena's activity is to organise smaller events, such as the 'Grrrl Day' and various concerts. Another part is to continue certain activities such as instrument workshops, seminars, cafés and group meetings.

Sheena is an opportunity to keep a space for girls to act and to develop as individuals. This remains a priority and a basic objective. Sheena's strength has never been something you can measure in quantitative terms. During a very short time, the organisation has grown to be something very important for a few, rather than for many. Its strength is in the attitude and respect with which the girls are treated within Sheena. The 'knowledge capital', which comes from the association, is in the awareness about society's limiting and restricting influence on boys and girls. Sheena wants to break away from this, by offering a wide range of possibilities. The ability to spread this knowledge has a lot to do with meeting, inspiring and supporting young people who have the ambition to set up an association, to organize concerts and to create bands.

In an ideal world, a girl rather than being introduced into traditionally male-dominated environments would be there on her own initiative, to be present and to par-

Sheena — Quality of life for young girls

Member State: Sweden

Region, district: Småland

Name of the LAG: Astrid Lindgrens Hembygd

Surface area: 3 455 km²

Population: 49 828

Project total cost: EUR 45 778

EU: EUR 14 889

Other public funds: EUR 21 222

Private funds: EUR 9 667

Contact person: Jytte Rüdiger

Address: Lögstadsgatan 6, SE 598 39 Vimmerby, Sweden

Tel. (46) 49 21 41 44

Fax (46) 49 21 88 55

E-mail: jytte@astridlindgrenshembygd.se

Website: www.astridlindgrenshembygd.se

Photographs provided by the Swedish National Network Unit

ticipate. Young people need role models and sources of inspiration that can show them the way and present them with credible possibilities. Leader+ has enabled this work. 'Astrid Lindgrens Hembygd (Swedish LAG) has made it possible to organize Popkollo as well as other activities', says Åsa Johnsen, President of Sheena. 'What is more, we have been able to continue to develop our association, Sheena, and to achieve our main objective: to raise girl's consciousness about the means and ways available to enter all areas of society. Sheena is the mentor in this work acting as a role model. A role in itself as important as the activities.'



Ready for the customers.

FINLAND

Safeguarding a village's community in Vasikka-Aho

Pooling resources for a common cause secures not only the future of the village hall and its shop but also its way of life

The Alapää district in Evijärvi is made up of three villages and has a total population of 608. Vasikka-aho village is the business centre of this district and its services are also used by the village of Ina. There are also holiday cottages, which in summer doubles the number of people using these services.

In Vasikka-Aho, the possible closure of the last village shop would also mean the disappearance of the last remaining village services, with villagers then having to travel more than 10km to the nearest shops in Evijärvi. Without a shop, the heart of what was previously a lively village community would also have disappeared. Thus the potential migration of people and its consequent distortion of the village's age structure, along with the disintegration of village spirit, was a real threat to the village's future.

So the villagers began to think about how this situation could be resolved, since the availability of basic local services is one of the cornerstones of the village way of life. The means to resolve these issues were found in the community, namely: an entrepreneurial spirit; an active village committee; and not least an optimistic view of the future. The villagers pooled their resources and set about saving the local services in their home village.

Special efforts required for fund raising

According to Mr Eino Ahola and Mr Samuli Klemola, the lo-

cal project leaders, there was a great need for a new shop, since the old one was both small and impractical. It was also housed in a 1930s building which was in a really bad condition being too cold in the winter and hot in the summer.

Around 2002 the villagers founded the Vasikka-aho development cooperative whose task was to preserve the village's life. The idea was that if enough money could be raised, then they would build proper premises to save the village's services. The idea was for a village house with enough space for both a local shop and a community centre. The villagers felt this was an important issue and they were also ready for voluntary work. The proof of this commitment was in the cooperative capital collected, which totalled EUR 63 000. The largest investors were local associations and other organisations, with almost all the families living in the area investing their own money in the project.

In addition to the capital collected by the cooperative, more funding was needed. The decision to build was given when the Finnish LAG Aisapari ry awarded EUR 63 000 of Leader+ funding for investments, although a bank loan of



Mr Samuli Klemola and Mr Eino Ahola outside the village hall.

EUR 250 000 was also required. With the money in place the longed-for village hall and village shop was completed, and the local shop opened its doors in December 2004, and the community hall soon after.

The new village hall

The community hall is provided free of charge for the use of the whole village, and can be used for such functions as: leisure activities; study groups; advice for small enterprises; and product demonstrations etc.

The premises have cooking facilities and a refrigerator, and computers will also be bought for the use of the villagers. The building belongs to the villagers and enhances their community spirit because they have built and funded it together. The villagers' own voluntary work in the project has been significant, and the work will continue in the summer of 2005 when the building will be painted and the surrounding grounds completed.

The traditional shop gets a new look

Shopkeepers Tuula Kinnunen and Sonja Lahti are beaming with happiness in their new premises. 'This is the villagers' own shop, without them we would not be here,' they say. They can now display the products on the shelves, and there is also a new baking oven where buns and 'Karelian pasties' are baked a few times a week.

There is a regular stream of customers, but Kinnunen and Lahti are looking forward to the summer months when the number of customers will be almost doubled with the arrival of holidaymakers.

The shop has banking services in the form of Internet banking and a cash point. The Internet banking facility is used daily and there is a plan to give some training to the villagers in how to use it. Samuli Klemola remarks that for the older population it is easier to visit the village Internet bank than to go all the way to the bank in Evijär. The shop has also applied for a permit to act as a post office.

The shopkeepers pay rent to the Vasikka-aho development Cooperation, and with that the cooperative pays off its loan to the bank.

Satisfied consumers

Everybody seems more than happy with the final result: both the project leaders; the shopkeepers working in the new premises; and the actual users of the building, the villagers themselves. The new premises are praised. Even the shop selection seems bigger than before because now the products can be better displayed.

One of the greatest threats to rural areas is that services disappear to distant town centres. This has now been prevented in Vasikka-aho village in Evijärvi. In rural areas a local shop is an essential part of the culture and village community. Without one there would be a weakening of the village's character which would seem less welcoming. The appeal of the area as a living place is also significantly better when basic services can be found in one's own village. The small miracle in Vasikka-aho was achieved by people dedicated to a common cause.



The Village Hall/Shop

Member State: Finland

Region, district: Järviseuutu and Härmänmaa, South Ostrobothnia,

Name of the LAG: LAG Aisapari

Population: 52 000

Surface area: 3 956 km²

Project total cost: EUR 103 000

EU: EUR 31 300

Other public funds: EUR 31 300

Contact person: Ilpo Kakko

Address: Kehätie 6, FIN-62200 Kauhava

Tel. (358) 64 34 29 60

Fax (358) 408 30 65 41

E-mail: ilpo.kakko@aisapari.net

Website: www.aisapari.net

Photographs provided by the LAG Aisapari

COOPERATION IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT





With the region's history at their feet.

AUSTRIA AND GERMANY

Transnational education for cultural guiding and management of regional museums:

Three alpine regions collaborate to provide a new perspective

Based on an article by Günter Salchner and Luis Fidlshuster

With 104 participants, 25 lecturers and 47 workshops covering 20 different modules, a transnational training project for Leader+ regions is in place. The regions in question are: Auerbergland (DE); Ausserfern (AT) and Ostallgäu (DE). The project looks at the related culture and history of these three areas, which are all located in the Bavarian-Austrian alpine region. Following the training of cultural guides and museum curators, the rich cultural heritage of the Allgäu and the Ausserfern should experience a boost. By linking tourism and culture, the project should create new employment, in particular for women, and will strengthen the tie between homeland and its history for young people.

The cooperation project covers the period May 2003 to June 2005. The qualification programme for cultural guides covered the period from May to July 2003, and from the 79 participants 55 were successful. The programme for the museum curators took place from May 2004 to August 2004 and all of the 25 participants qualified. Apart from education, the planning and implementation of marketing

activities was an important part of the project.

The starting point

The LAGs were only in place for a few months, when their managing directors met for a first exchange of ideas. The meeting concluded that the development strategies of the three neighbouring LAGs had many common objectives and would provide many possibilities for future cooperation. Since transnational cooperation projects are more complex and have greater risks than local ones, the three Leader+ managers started to look for a strong basis for cooperation. They already knew that the basis for success (and prerequisite) of a transnational project depends on a strong belief that the project will be of significant benefit for the three LAGs concerned. After a critical and comprehensive project evaluation, they decided to base their cooperation on improving the link of history and culture with





Castles provide a historical link with the region.



Guide training starts in the classroom.

tourism and employment. This was the starting point for the project 'Transnational education for cultural guiding and management of regional museums'.

Preparing for cooperation

An enquiry to local tourism experts and various cultural facilities confirmed the need for skilled cultural guides and museum curators. Several local and regional cultural projects previously funded under Leader e.g. the Via Claudia Augusta, the European Castle museum and a regional association of museums, showed a lot of interest in networking and cooperation in the field of qualification.

To get some ideas about best practice, the three LAG managers got in contact with the Italian LAG, Val Venosta, in South Tyrol who had implemented a similar project under Leader. The next step was the early involvement of the regional authorities. With a detailed draft of the project concept, the three LAGs then invited those authorities in charge of the project approval to a 'mini-European summit'. Together they discussed and clarified questions concerning the approval procedure, which proved to be a big help in the successful project implementation. An important element of this clarification was the agreement that the LAG Ostallgäu should be lead partner and therefore handle all payments and the entire accounting process. This meant that the LAGs could avoid the foreign banks' high transfer charges. Also crucial for the success of the project was from the very beginning a clear understanding about competence and responsibility between the partner LAGs.

The two parts of the project

The project consists of two parts: education for cultural guiding and education for management of regional museums. Part one, education for cultural guides, started in May 2003. At first, the 79 participants from the three Leader+ areas got basic instructions comprising the following:

- history of the regions of Ausserfern and Ostallgäu
- cultural and historical inquiry
- business management
- rhetoric training.

In the second phase of the project, the participants could choose from a large number of courses on regional historic themes according to their interests, for example:

- Roman history
- Celts and Alemanni
- Baroque in the region
- King Ludwig.

The participants learned how to present information on these themes to both locals and tourists in a coherent and lively manner. Over half, 57 %, of the participants were women, and a high participation rate of young people showed that regional history and culture are not only interesting for older people, but also offer a good opportunity to involve young people in rural development.

The second part of the project, education for museum curators, started in June 2004. The contents of the workshops and seminars took account of the needs of the regional museums and the cultural facilities, and included the following:

- positioning (unique selling proposition) of museums
- concepts for exhibitions
- documentation and inventory
- writing and catalogue design
- museum pedagogics
- knowledge management
- cultural marketing.

All lecturers were experts from large museums in the central towns of the three regions concerned as well as from the 'contact point' for the private museums of Bavaria. The courses alternated between the different regional museums, which gave the participants the chance to become acquainted with the different themes and special features of the regional museums. Altogether 25 participants took part in the courses, of which 14 were women.

Support for market entry

The crucial point of educational projects is often the application of the acquired knowledge. The demand for cultural guiding by the regional tourist associations and hotels depends on the marketing of this new offer. Therefore the initiators of the project were quite clear from the start, that the trained cultural guides would need help in getting started. Comprehensive marketing activities therefore have been an essential part of the project. The website www.kulturfuehrung.info has information on the possible guided cultural tours; the guides themselves; and how to book a guided tour. It is possible to book guided tours

on the following themes: the Alemanni in the region; the guild of Ausserfern; regional architecture; castles in Allgäu and Ausserfern; fortress of Ehrenberg; cruising on the Lech River; regional history of iron mining etc.

A further measure was the production of a folder for practicing cultural guidance in the three Leader+ areas, and this was delivered to the regional hotels and guest-houses.

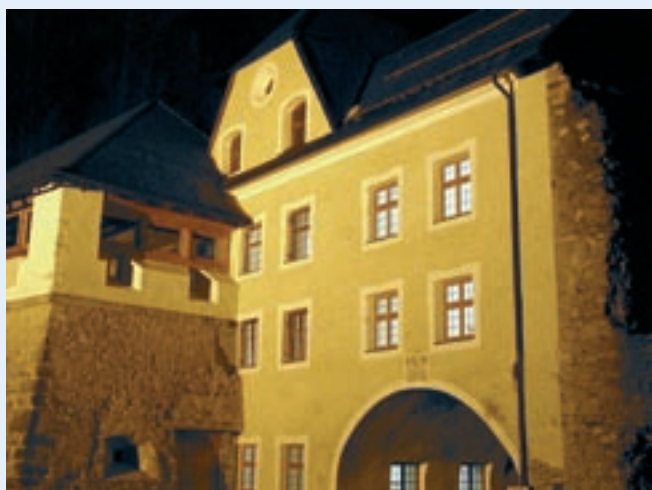
Another marketing activity concerns the public 'cultural days' of Allgäu-Ausserfern which includes, free guided tours, and free exhibitions in the various regional museums. Furthermore, the cultural guides have founded their own association that looks after public relations, marketing and other qualifications to improve standards. All these measures are at the initiative of the cultural guides who get additional support by the LAGs as and when required.

Results

At the end of 2004, 35 cultural guides had achieved the required level for market entry and now sell guided tours regularly. The networking of cultural guides and the regional museums has also improved. Thus, a sustainable basis for future cooperation has emerged as an important additional outcome of the project.

Transfer of best practice

When Michaela Waldmann, managing director of the LAG Ostallgäu, presented this transnational project at the 2003 Euregia (fair and conference for regional development) in Friedrichshafen (Germany), several German and Austrian LAGs showed an interest in doing the same thing for their regions. In the Austrian Leader+ area Ötztal/Upper Inn Valley the implementation of a similar education project will start in spring 2005. The nature park 'Hoher Fläming' (Germany) has already introduced this concept. In addition more than a dozen LAGs have asked for details about the project concept.



One of many interesting places to visit.



Transnational education for cultural guiding and management

Member States: Austria and Germany
Regions, districts: Land Tirol (AUT), Regierungsbezirke Schwaben and Oberbayern (GER).

Name of the LAG: Außerfern (Austria), Auerbergland (Germany) and Ostallgäu (Germany)

Population:

31 445 (LAG Außerfern)
 19 300 (LAG Auerbergland)
 123 000 (LAG Ostallgäu)

Surface area:

1 237 km² (LAG Außerfern)
 250 km² (LAG Auerbergland)
 1 285 km² (LAG Ostallgäu)

Project total cost: EUR 30 000

EU: EUR 15 000

Private funds: EUR 15 000

Contact person: Günter Salchner

Address: REA Außerfern, Kohlplatz 7, A-6600 Pflach

Tel. (43-5672) 623 87

Fax (43-5672) 623 87-139

E-mail: rea@allesausserfern.at

Website: www.allesausserfern.at/rea

Photographs provided by LAG Ausserfern



The areas' waterways are an ideal way to visit the region

THE NETHERLANDS AND GERMANY

A partnership of two Leader+ regions with similar characteristics, come together to produce a strategy for transnational tourism that benefits both partners

Partnership Spreewald and Noordwest Overijssel: transnational cooperation in Leader+

Project background

September 2002 saw the beginnings of a cooperation procedure between the regions of Spreewald (Germany) and Noordwest Overijssel (the Netherlands). The process started with the visit of a delegation from the Dutch State Forestry to its German equivalent. This visit came about because of the similar physical characteristics of the two areas, which focused mainly on the management of

their respective nature reserves. Both Spreewald, located 100 km southeast of Berlin, and Northwest Overijssel, a Dutch National Park in the eastern part of the Netherlands close to the IJsselmeer, are typical wetland peat bog areas. They are both characterised by a landscape that consists of a mosaic of shallow lakes, rivers, reed land, forests and meadows.

There are however considerable differences between the two areas. The Spreewald wetland area is ten times

bigger than Northwest Overijssel, and due to the much smaller population density, there is less intensive land use for agriculture and much less tourism. Thus, the natural state of the Spreewald area is much better. In Spreewald, both the internal and the external marketing of regional products are of vital importance for the area, while in Northwest Overijssel it is mainly tourism. Nevertheless, both regions suffer from similar problems, problems that are closely related to the restrictions imposed by their natural landscapes, and as a result, the challenges and opportunities for these two areas are similar. This is especially so in terms of improving the quality of life, by maintaining and developing basic services (cultural, health, education and basic food supplies) and for developing socio-economic tourism.

The cooperation approach

It soon became clear that cooperation in the broader sense would be beneficial to both regions. The Leader+ programme offered a good opportunity to address the financial, methodological and organisational aspects of cooperation. Therefore, as a next step, the Leader+ delegations from both regions came together in order to devise a common programme aimed at achieving the following goals:

1. improving and raising efficiency of the socioeconomic situation in the two Leader+ areas by stimulating tourism;
2. reinforcing the regional identity;
3. developing new approaches for broadening local income in rural areas.

To help implement the cooperation procedure, an 'umbrella' plan was drawn-up and agreed upon which highlighted the following four main themes:

1. development of a master plan for both regions in which the approved amount of (water) tourism would be allocated to zones of high and low natural value and vulnerability (in the context of the protection of rare species (biodiversity) or the disturbance of vulnerable bird species);
2. production of a common marketing concept in comparable tourist regions;
3. development of a regional product development for tourism;
4. development of marketing and information activities for tourists in similar nature sites.

This approach of building an overall plan had the advantage of providing a focused and operational work programme for the different specialist groups on each of the above themes. In this way, themes are geared towards project development. In addition, an overall plan allows

the LAGs to judge projects in an integral way and gives the opportunity to link the proposals put forward from the different themes.

Results of cooperation

Even with this procedure in place, the process of cooperation is slow. At the end of 2004 the first two (small) projects were presented to the managing authorities' under the heading: 'Experiencing nature and culture in Northwest Overijssel and Spreewald by improving tourism in either of the two areas'. The main goal is to increase the number of tourists between the two areas, especially out of the summer high season. Promoting tourism in the two areas is done via the Internet and by presentation at fairs. Each region contributes in total around EUR 36 000 each for the projects. The benefits of the projects will be a larger critical mass for tourism in both regions and the cooperative development of new concepts for low-season tourist activities.

Moreover, notwithstanding the fact that the Leader+ method facilitates the cooperative action quite well, and language is not one of the main problems, arriving at concrete results has been difficult.

There are several possible reasons for this.

- Cultural backgrounds and habits differ significantly, resulting in a long-term 'discussing and fine-tuning process' before commonly agreed themes can be translated into a programme.
- According to the Leader+ guidelines on cooperation, finding appropriate themes or projects that may turn out to be beneficial for both parties is a complex search;
- Finding appropriate partners, who are able to develop a project that is innovative appeared to be quite difficult.
- Finding sufficient co-financing on the German side has been proved difficult because of the small number of entrepreneurs working in this field, the lack of private money in general and the lack of initiative taken by potential partners.
- Although Leader+ procedures are quite well defined and in themselves transparent, the procedures and legislation that are applicable in the two countries/regions/managing authorities, differ markedly, and bringing them into line has taken time.





Partnership Spreewald and Noordwest Overijssel

Member State: Germany
Region, district: Brandenburg
Name of the LAG: LAG Spreewaldverein
Population: 261 000
Surface area: 2 962 km²
Project total cost: EUR 36 000
EU: EUR 28 800
Other public funds: EUR 7 200

Member State: The Netherlands
Region, district: Overijssel, East-Netherlands
Population: 43 000
Surface area: 320 km²
Name of the LAG: Noordwest Overijssel
Total funding: EUR 36 000
EU: 21 600
Other public funds: EUR 7 200
Private Funds: EUR 7 200

Contact person: Dieter Irlbacher
Address: Am Neuhaus 7, 15907 Lübben (Spreewald)
Tel. (49(0)35 46 84 26
Fax (49(0)35 46 86 43
E-mail: spreewaldverein@t-online.de
Website: www.spreewald-erlebnis.de

Contact person: Tea Snippe
Address: Gemeente Steenwijkerland
Vendelweg 1
Postbox 162 8330 AD Steenwijk
Tel. (31-521) 53 87 44
Fax (31-521) 53 85 09
E-mail: tea.snippe@steenwijkerland.nl
Website: www.leaderplus.nl

Photograph provided by the Dutch Managing Authority

Now the most difficult parts of the cooperation process are over, the project is expected to deliver a number of interesting results over the forthcoming years, which will provide a stimulus for both regions. These are:

- a coordinated approach towards the improvement and extension of tourism in wetland areas, also in traditionally tourist low seasons;
- the development and exploitation of specific machines for the management of wet grasslands;
- working with architecture and housing in wetland areas.

Moreover, there is a good opportunity that this initiative may extend towards other wetland areas throughout Europe. One link being looked at is cooperation under the DELTA 2000 initiative in the Po Delta Area, called 'A network of European wetlands.'

The possibilities that the Leader+ initiative offers in facilitating transnational networking and cooperation is, in itself, an important phenomenon that can clearly bring about closer European exchange and cultural awareness.

WOMEN AND YOUTH IN LEADER+



IRELAND

Women in Leadership: providing the right course for the rural community

Why are Irish women still earning less than their male counterparts, under-represented in decision-making structures and finding it difficult to reach top levels of their various professions? One group of women in rural Ireland came together in 2004 to complete a training course entitled 'Women in Leadership'. The course explored the above issues and provided the tools for participants to progress in their chosen fields, such as employment or community development. The success of this accredited course was a visible demonstration of the impact that Leader+ can have on rural women, in helping them to access employment, and enhancing their participation in community decision-making structures.

Developing the programme

Established in 1989, Ballyhoura Development Limited is a rural development company covering north Cork and south east Limerick (Ireland). The aim of the organisation is to diversify the area's economic base, and to help people living in the area to improve the quality of their lives, through community development; education and training in economic development across manufacturing, food processing, information communication technology and rural tourism.

In addition to the Leader+ programme, Ballyhoura Development Ltd also manages a number of other programmes and projects, including the Local Development Social Inclusion programme, the National Rural Development programme, the Rural Social Scheme and the Vital Voices Equality Measure (1).

The Vital Voices programme is supported under the National Equality for Women Measure which supports work specifically focused on improving opportunities for women in Ireland and aims to enhance the capacity of women to participate in decision-making processes by specifically targeting women who are actively involved with decision-making structures (voluntary / community / statutory), but who are for individual or institutional reasons, not reaching their full potential. The Vital Voices programme targets women's groups, women in business and enterprise, farm-women, women in the statutory and non-statutory sector, women's networks, unemployed women, minority women, lone parents, traveller women and women in political and non-political groups. The Vital Voices programme of Ballyhoura Development complements the Leader+ programme in that they both include rural women as a target group and support them in achieving an enhanced quality of life.

The development of targeted supports to women and strengthening the presence of women's groups in Ballyhoura Country (1) is one of the objectives of the Vital Voices Programme. In achieving this objective, the training

course, 'Women in Leadership', was delivered through the Action 13 Measure 'Training for Women' under the Leader+ programme.

Participants in an earlier two-day workshop explored 'Women and Participation'. This workshop covered such topics as the barriers facing women in participating in the areas of community and employment, and, potential strategies to enhance women's participation in these areas. Participants in this workshop identified the need for a 'Women in Leadership' course. However, a key challenge in organising the 'Women in Leadership' course was to ensure that the course content and structure emerged from actual needs vocalised by women. To achieve this, the Vital Voices Development Officer consulted and engaged both with women on a one-to-one basis and with local women's groups. Two issues, which emerged from this process, was the women's dislike of traditional classroom environments and time issues. This engagement and consultation process assisted in the development of the course content and structure.

The 'Women in Leadership' course was therefore structured to avoid a traditional 'classroom' environment and it also took account of the time pressures that often make it difficult for women to attend education/training courses. After consultation on the course content and format, a 10-module course, held over eight months was developed; the course was extremely practical in its delivery and outputs. Specific supports were built into the course, including one-to-one careers information/life guidance, and participation by the women in a computerised job suggestion programme for adults. The course took place in Kilmallock, County Limerick and had 15 participants.

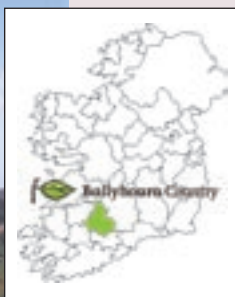
Some results

The emphasis on training through the Vital Voices programme has had a two-fold outcome. Firstly, it has helped women either to return to work or to progress within the workforce (or to become self-employed). Its impact has also been highly visible in the way it has supported and encouraged leadership by women in the community, both in terms of broad-based development activities and par-

(1) Ballyhoura Country is the area covered by Ballyhoura Development Ltd.



The Ballyhoura region provides the right course for women in the rural community



participation in local decision-making structures.

The successful progression of participants has been a notable success of the training.

- Two women have taken up positions (as Chairperson and as Secretary) of local community-based networks which feed into local governance structures.
- One woman has become a member of the County Community and Voluntary Forum ⁽²⁾.
- One participant was a founder member of a national organisation: 'Women for action on disability and equality' (WADE).
- Two participants were directly supported into full-time employment.
- Four participants have commenced accredited training to support their career progression.

A key success factor in this course was that it emerged as a need from the target group and the modules were subsequently tailored to address these needs. The diverse backgrounds and interests of the participants also enhanced the course as it resulted in a wide range of viewpoints and inputs and consequently enhanced the learning of all participants.

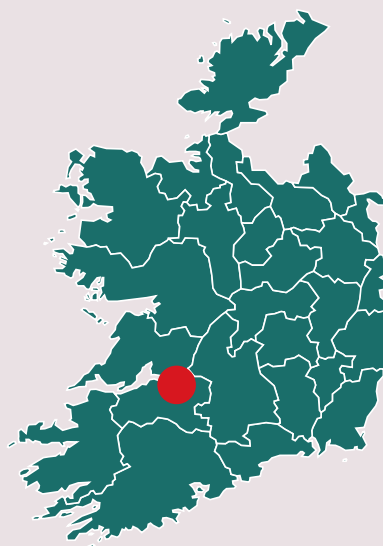
The varying needs of women in rural areas emerged as a key issue: it should not be assumed that rural women have a commonality of needs as this can lead to a generalisation of issues, methodologies and solutions.

Participation of women from the 'Women in leadership' course in this network has resulted in further requests for training from other women. Courses such as 'Mentoring for Women in Employment', and 'Women in decision-making' were identified as required training courses by local women. The 'Vital Voices programme' continues to work closely with an area-based women's network to ensure the needs of women are being addressed ⁽³⁾.

⁽²⁾ The County Community and Voluntary Forum is a county-wide group, consisting of representatives from community and voluntary groups across the county. A key aim of the Forum is to agree and articulate the common views of the many and diverse community and voluntary organisations within the county.

⁽³⁾ Two further 'Women in leadership' courses have been delivered in Ballyhoura Country; these were funded through the 'Vital Voices programme'.

By working together to provide the 'Women in Leadership' course, the two programmes (Vital Voices and Leader+) provided strong complementarity and integration of supports to rural women and ensured that there was no duplication of resources or effort. Leader+ has not only made a strong impact on the lives of the course participants but has also provided valuable role models for other women. These role models have shown that through identifying their needs and participating in training, their quality of life can be enhanced.



Women in leadership

Member State: Ireland

Region, district: North Cork and south east Limerick

Name of the LAG: Ballyhoura Development Limited

Population: 56 000

Surface area: 1 430 km²

Course project total cost: EUR 6 666

EU funded: EUR 6 000

Private funds: EUR 666

Contact person: Tara O'Doherty

Address: Ballyhoura Development Ltd, Kilfinane

Co Limerick, Ireland

Tel. (353) 06 39 13 00

Fax (353) 06 39 13 30

E-mail: t.odoherty@ballyhoura.org

Website: www.ballyhouracountry.com

Photograph and map provided by the Irish National Network Unit



A new venue for the polder's youth

THE NETHERLANDS

A project carried out by Dutch youth becomes a star attraction for Saturday nights on the polders

The 'De Buren' youth centre

Wearing cowboy boots, a cowboy hat and with a beer in the hand, about 600 partygoers imagine that they are in the Wild West. One month later, the same young people are dancing to the music from a new Flevoland band. All of this takes place in Jongeren centrum de Buren (Youth Centre — The Neighbours) in Emmeloord. One weekend the brand new centre is decorated for a Country & Western party and a month later, a rock band gives a glittering performance.

'Until recently, a night out in the polder was pretty boring because there was not a lot going on' says Johan Fuite from the youth association '19Nu Noordoostpolder'. 'There were just a few good festivals in the summer and on a typical Saturday evening there was little to choose from'. However, things are different now. Thanks to the youth association, Emmeloord, has had a youth centre since November 2003, and once a month it is the place to be!

The project comes to life

Johan Fuite recalls the old association building of Jongeren 19Nu, a temporary wooden hut that was no longer up to standard and needed to be replaced. For the young people

the big question was 'what now?' 'Fortunately we got a lot of help from the Noordoostpolder municipality', says Johan Fuite. 'Two councillors fought for a new location to be found in Emmeloord and they pointed out that we could apply for a Leader+ subsidy'. Due to the complexity of such a new building project, the young people decided to set up a separate charitable association. That became De Buren and Johan Fuite is its chairman.

Over the past two years, Johan Fuite and his friends have put a lot of time and energy into the new building project. 'Over a period of three months we worked on it for two to three evenings per week', says Johan Fuite. 'We did loads of painting and hung up a lot of stuff, from lamps and emergency exits boards to coat hooks and mirrors. This has saved thousands of euros.'

The result is superb. The new clubhouse is a modern building, built in black and grey. Inside it is warm and welcoming. The walls are made from soundproof material and there are emergency exits on all sides. In a nutshell the building satisfies all of the relevant requirements.



THE 'DE BUREN' YOUTH CENTRE

Member State: The Netherlands
Region, district: Province of Flevoland
Name of the LAG: Flevoland
Population: 102 516
Surface area: 1 238 km²
Project total cost: EUR 401 025
EU: EUR 120 307
Other public funds: EUR 68 067
Private funds: EUR 212 651

Contact person: M Korterik
Address PO Box 55 — 8200 AB Lelystad
Tel. (31) 320 26 56 76
Fax (31) 320 21 35 66
E-mail: Mireille.Korterik@flevoland.nl
Websites: www.leaderplus.nl
www.flevoland.nl/europa

Photograph provided by the Dutch Managing Authority

Financing with Leader+ and involving the local community

Jongeren 19Nu was formed following the amalgamation of three associations for rural young people. The association has 650 members between the ages of 16 and 30 years. Most of the members come from the 10 villages around Emmeloord, but since the opening of the new club, the interest in Emmeloord has also increased. 'That is what we had hoped for,' says Johan Fuite. 'Since the opening we have gained an extra 70 members.'

The members held a lot of events to finance the project, for example, an auction raised EUR 57 000. As well as the Leader+ subsidy, the association has received funding from the municipality and lots of local sponsors. 'The local community has been really generous to us,' says Johan Fuite. 'The sponsors are often former members, so there is a strong sense of involvement.'

As well as the main room, Clubhouse De Buren also has a meeting room, which is used a lot by its own associations as well as by clubs from outside. 'Once a month there is a party, often with a band, and sometimes there is a club

on a Sunday,' says Johan Fuite. 'It is mainly about having a building where you can meet, so that you do not have to get together at somebody's house or have to hire something. For everybody under the age of 20, having a youth centre in the polder is fantastic. Young people aged 20 and older often have a driving licence and so they can seek their pleasure elsewhere. Yet they come to the parties as well. If we have party here then it is always full!'

Johan Fuite reflects on a unique and instructive project. It still feels somewhat unreal when he walks around the building. He has already distanced himself a bit from the entire project. 'After the opening the building was no longer ours. During the building phase we had a very close-knit little club and now it is for everyone. So there were mixed feelings,' he laughs. But the chairman is particularly happy that everything is going so well and that the Noordoostpolder now has one more new entertainment venue for young people.

THE NEW MEMBER STATES

Country Focus: The Czech Republic



Current situation

The Czech Republic has an area of 78 866 km², and with a population of 10.3 million; the average population density is 130 inhabitants per km². Around 75 % of the population live in rural areas, and agricultural land represents a little more than half of the country's total area. In January 2000, around 25 % of the Czech population lived in rural settlements of up to 2 000 inhabitants. From 1991 to 2000 there had been a slight increase of people living in rural settlements compared to a decline in the urban areas.

Agricultural activities play an important role in rural development. Institutional and structural changes in the agricultural sector over the past decade have also worsened the socioeconomic conditions, not least higher long-term unemployment, depopulation in some areas and a weakening in the provision of services and infrastructure. Compared to the national economy as a whole, the agricultural sector has a less favourable age structure of employees, a lower share of employed women and of qualified workers, although agricultural employment does show marked regional differences.

Rural development and multi-functional agriculture

Within the Community support framework, there are five operational programmes (OP), including rural development and multi-functional agriculture. Under the period 2004–06 this operational programme is co-funded from the EAGGF Guidance Section and the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance (FIFG). It has a global objective to improve the performance of the agricultural sector in terms of the economy as a whole, taking into account

the following: employment; environmental conservation, sustainable development in agriculture, forest and water management along with quality processing of agricultural produce.

In the context of the Czech national development plan this OP is in line with current regional and rural development policy, in so far as it supports securing the safety and quality of foodstuffs, creation of new jobs in rural areas, equality between men and women and improvement of the environment.

Leader+ type measures in the Czech Republic

On 1 May 2004 the Czech Republic along with nine other countries (Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) became a full member of the European Union.

These new Member States may benefit from a Leader-type measure to be co-funded by the EAGGF Guidance under their Objective 1 programmes. The preparation for the Leader+ type measure in the Czech Republic already started in 2002 by organising seminars and trainings, and a Phare twinning project heavily supported these activities.

Currently, a Leader+ scheme is listed as sub-measure 2.1.4. in the 'Operational Programme Rural Development and Multifunctional Agriculture' with allocated public expenditure of EUR 5 million for the strategy implementation and EUR 1.53 million for acquisition of skills, both for the period 2004–06.

In total, the managing authority received 30 applications. The selection was carried out by an expert group, nominated by the Minister of Agriculture, according to the criteria, approved by the Monitoring Committee. At the same time, strategies were evaluated by the National Selection Committee and at the end of December 2004, the sum of points, awarded by both bodies, determined the 10 best strategies and five alternative strategies.

Contracts will then soon be finalised, so that LAGs can already start receiving applications for proposals under their particular strategies.

The Managing Authority intends to hold regular meetings with the selected LAGs, in order to channel information, to control efficient use of available funding, and to monitor the appropriate implementation.



The selected LAGS and their fields of intervention are presented below:

(ES = enterprise subject = the name of the company)

LAG: Region Haná:

- Agricultural cooperative Těšetice (ES) — Mechanisation centre Těšetice;
- TJ Sokol Těšetice — Renovation of multipurpose culture centre of the TJ Sokol Těšetice;
- Municipality Náměšť na Hané — Reconstruction of Health centre in Náměšť na Hané;
- Municipality Luběnice — Cycle-path Luběnice — Těšetice;
- Municipality Slatinice — Reconstruction of fire-station in Lípy.

LAG: Civil association Blossom of South Bohemia Garden:

- Zemcheba s.r.o. (ES) — Pasteurisation tunnel purchase;
- Karel Gregora (ES) — Distillery technology equipment purchase;
- ZEAS AGRO a.s. Rábín (ES) — Palette warehouse for apples;
- František Krump (ES) — Blower sprayer purchase;
- Mikroregion Chelčicko-Lhenický, association of municipalities — Modern communication; system of the micro region.

LAG: Micro region Buchlov:

- Břetislav Jakubík (ES) — Wine Jakubík;
- Municipality Modrá — Open air museum Modrá — technical and production facility for handicrafts and tourists;
- Municipality Tupy — Tupy pottery museum.

LAG: Český západ — Místní partnerství o.s.:

- Mikroregion Konstantinolázeňsko — Marking of cycle paths;
- Stříbrský region — Marking of cycle paths;
- Římskokatolická farnost OH -St. John's church preservation;
- Válek Květoslav (ES) — Maintenance and machinery purchase;
- Agrofarmy Bezručice s.r.o. (ES) — Machinery purchase.

LAG: Krajina srdce:

- Obec Borotín — Creation of biomass market;
- Liho-Blanice, spol. s r.o. (ES) — Building a reference site with production of industrial alcohol and bio-gas and biomass station for local biomass processing;
- Obec Chotoviny — Composition and renovation of crush-assorting line;
- Dobrovolný svazek měst a obcí Mikroregionu Venkov — Involvement of a foreign partner in Info-system e-village market.



LAG: Pobeskydí, z.s.p.o.:

- AGRO-DOMINIK, s.r.o. (ES) — New way for agricultural engineering;
- TOZOS spol. s r.o. (ES) — Modernisation of technology for energy plant growing;
- Družstvo Raškovice (ES) — Growing and harvesting of biomass;
- Ing. Jan Kopčák (ES) — Wood chip production.
- Czeslaw Sikora (ES)

LAG: Podještědí:

- DTZ Liberec s.r.o. (ES) — Renovation of warehouse sheet;
- Štěpánka Hyklová (ES) — Breeding equipment for Arabic horse breeding;
- Obec Proseč pod Ještědem — Purchase of machinery for landscape maintenance;
- Stará Dáma Křižany s.r.o. (ES) — Increase of employment and production for cider business;
- Obec Křižany — Use of Luzice architecture for improving living standards in rural areas.

LAG: Region Poodří:

- Obec Suchdol n. O. — Renovation of cultural and sport facilities in the municipality;
- AGROSUMAK, a.s. Suchdol n. O. (ES) — Changing of litter technology;
- ZEMSPOL, a.s., Studénka (ES) — Resolution of waste management in protected zone Poodri.

LAG: Posázaví, o.p.s.:

- OF ČR Votice o.s — Boiler-room — facility for meeting, nature and culture;
- Obec Čerčany — Park at the Municipality house;
- Jednota Sokol Louňovice pod Blaníkem — Construction of information centre;
- Jiří Šternberg (ES) — Ječniště castle — renovation of roofs, facades and fence;
- Obec Chotýšany — Water basin Židák — construction works and silt removal.

LAG: Pošumaví, z.s.p.o.:

- Ladislav Švec (ES) — Pension 'Nad Kapličkou' for agro tourism;
- František Šafanda (ES) — Šafanda Centrum;
- Město Kdyně — Cultural house Vítovky;
- Střední zemědělská škola — Meteorological station.

LAG: Přemyslovské střední Čechy:

- Město Velvary — Renovation of Malovarsky pond;
- Zem. farma P.Reš (ES) — Purchase of machinery for use in agriculture;
- Město Libčice n. Vlt. — Renovation of area around the open air pool in Libčice n. Vlt.;
- Město Slaný — Renovation of public road in Dolín.

LAG: Sdružení růže:

- Ing. Blíženc (ES) — Completing construction of company facilities;
- Město Borovany;
- Obec Pohorská Ves;
- Klášter Nové Hrady — Renovation of chimneys and shingle roof;
- Sdružení Růže.

LAG: Vladař, z.s.p.o.:

- Město Toužim — Right for information, active participation of citizens;
- BOTEPLUS s.r.o. (ES) — Modernisation of technical equipment for farming services — purchase of machinery for maintaining meadows and pastures;
- Obec Lubenec — Mobile cultural and social facility;
- Obec Třebeň — Show windows of countryside — improving village look;
- Obec Valeč — Inter-regional cooperation Chebská stezka.

LAG: Vltava, o.s.:

- PRO — ODPAD, o.s. — Grinder purchase for Kompostárna Jarošovice;
- Pomoc Týn n. Vltavou o.s. — Let's meet in village square in Čihovice;
- Josef Krška (ES) — Purchase of a new tractor;
- Milena Kříšťanová (ES) — Purchase of a new tractor with output of 108-140 kW;
- Ing. Miroslav Jiříček (ES) — Reconstruction of farm building.

LAG: Srdce Čech, o.p.s.:

- František Michálek (ES) — Semi-mounted plough;
- Svazek obcí mikroregionu Bratronicko — Operational computer connection of micro-regions associated in o.p.s. Srdce Čech;
- Jaroslav Kohout (ES) — Reconstruction of horse stables;
- Svazek obcí Střední Povltaví — Creation of information centre for association of municipalities in Střední Povltaví.

LAG: Rozvoj Krnovska OPS

- Ing. Ilja Miovský (ES) — Modernisation of company's utilities;
- Oldřich Pustka (ES) — Creation of dustproof and consolidated handling area.

Contact:

Managing authority of the Community support framework (CFS)

Ministry for Regional Development
European Integration and Structural Funds
Department
Staroměstské náměstí 6
110 15 Praha 1
Czech Republic

CSF Managing Director

Mr Arnost Marks
Tel. (420) 224 86 14 24
fax (420) 224 81 29 30.
e-mail: arnost.marks@mnr.cz

Leader+ seminar in Finland



From left to right : Mr. Timo Vesiluoma, Suupohja Development Association; Mr. Eero Uusitalo, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Finland; Mr. Jean-Michel Courades, European Commission; Mrs. Véronique Weyland-Ammeux, Leader+ Contact Point

The Leader+ Observatory held its first decentralised seminar in Finland, 6–10 April 2005 on the theme of: ‘New know-how and new technologies in rural areas’.

about a wide variety of Leader+ funded projects, and take note of the Leader+ approach in action, notably: innovation; bottom-up; sustainability; best practice; and not least cooperation. All this in the relatively small region of Ostrobothnia!

The Finnish perspective

While Finland is known to many as a nation with skills in information and communication technologies, the seminar also provided insight into other areas associated with the seminar theme. Finland has been a pioneer not only in embracing new-technologies but also in the way it has adopted the Leader+ initiative. With its well established traditions in the timber industry, and awareness of environmental issues, it is not surprising that the seminar provided a rich programme where participants could learn

About the theme

The innovative character of the Leader+ initiative based on this central theme is not only associated with the application of new technologies in rural areas, but can also mean exploitation of traditional know-how to open up markets for new products or services or new knowledge about territorial management. The innovative actions which were presented in this seminar will hopefully contribute to economic diversification, competitiveness, and economic growth in rural areas all over the EU. The seminar’s main goals were: to address local action groups (LAGs) under



Visit to the premises of Kauhajoki Foodpark



Leader+ support generates tangible results

the Leader+ initiative; have an exchange of views and experiences on their strategies and programmes; and to trigger transnational cooperation projects.

About the event

More than 120 participants, which included Leader+ LAGs who had registered their particular interest in the seminar theme, were welcomed by Mr Vesiluoma, the Chief Executive of Suupohja Development Association. Suupohja with its local expertise in wood, furniture, agriculture and food, and automation systems, was an excellent place for the Leader+ participants to become acquainted with Finnish know-how and new technology, as conditions for LAG work. Also included was an introduction to a transnational pilot project called Transnet, which is a project involving eight regions in five Member States: Ireland, Finland, the Netherlands, Italy and France, and whose aim is to develop the capabilities of rural entrepreneurs with respect to export and marketing through networking and training. Workshop sessions then allowed for a variety of discussions of the seminar's theme, including: the mainstreaming of Leader+ and innovation in the Finnish context; welfare technology; and new technologies in the ITC sector.

The towns of Teuva, Jurva and Kauhajoki played host to the second day's activities. In Teuva, an adult education centre called TEAK, home to traditional and industrial handicrafts as well as testing of new technologies for wood processing, presented its main activities. TEAK the leading company in this sector, informed the group about how the treatments offered provide a European alternative for rain forest species, and how this technology has already been implemented in a transnational cooperation project 'Thermal wood treatment for Irish Sitka spruce' (see Leader+ Magazine No 1). They also heard about laser technology, wood compression and thermal treatments.

In Jurva, a recently built carpenter's centre 'Nikkarikeskus' funded with Leader+, and dedicated to design

and marketing, informed about the various achievements through 'know-how' and learned about the role of the carpenter's centre. The centre also promotes furniture skills, exhibitions and a variety of business and product services. It also cooperates with its neighbouring local technical school.

A foodpark in Kauhajoki, which includes a test plant, a business incubator and logistic functions, set the scene for learning about new-technologies as applied to the food industry. The visitors learned about how new know-how provides synergies which benefit such functions as: sales; marketing; warehousing; packaging and production.

Transnational cooperation was an important part of the programme, and on the last day, four themed round tables were organised: waste-technologies, mainstreamed Leader+ (including the new EU Member States and candidate countries); renewable energy; and network building. These provided a focus for those LAGs seeking partners and projects in these various fields. This process was facilitated by one-to-one sessions to give LAGs advice on starting the cooperation process, and to help them identify the necessary steps involved in realising a transnational project. Finally, a small cooperation fair was able to provide additional information about four projects as examples of best practise.

You can find out more about the presentations, workshop and results of this seminar from the Leader+ website: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/leaderplus>



The Suupohja Development Association's team

Finland,
April 6-10, 2005



Handicraft in the Pohjanmaan Nikkarikeskus Skills and Information Centre for the Furniture Industry



Visiting the TEAK (Teuva Adult Education Centre)

A new look for the Leader+ website



The Leader+ website has been given a new look! It also has some new features, which, with its many links, now makes the site a comprehensive tool for all those interested in rural development in the EU, and the Leader+ initiative in particular.

The home page menus and general information are available in all the languages of the enlarged EU. Specific information, related to the Leader+ initiative, such as national programmes, including information about initiatives projects and local actors, is in both the language of origin and English.

With both a static and interactive part, the site gives the visitor a variety of search options. From the static side, you can find out about such things as 'Who's who' in Leader+: the people working in the Leader+ Observatory and Contact Point; and those working at the National level in the different Member States to support the national and regional programmes. Country files contain basic facts about the different national Leader+ programmes, and other programme documentation is available in the 'publications', 'library' and 'archive' sections. For example, from 'publications' you can download 'Flash News' and Leader+ Magazine, and in the library, many reference documents covering programme aspects, such as monitoring, evaluation, methodology, cooperation and best practice are available.

The events section has a useful calendar of Leader+ events, and includes those organised by the Leader+ Observatory, national network units, and other events of interest for those engaged in rural development. Online registration to conferences and seminars is normally possible via the site. You can also download Leader+ marketing

materials, including logos, pictures, templates and other practical items.

Leader+ Interactive contains various tools to access a variety of databases, compiled and updated to provide European wide Leader+ information. Here you can use the updated 'partner search' tool, for finding partners for your cooperation projects, consulting the LAG database, as well as consulting the cooperation projects database itself. Subscriptions to publications are possible via the site, as well as via the publications themselves.

No website would be complete without the opportunity to receive feedback from its visitors, and the Leader+ site is no exception. Using the 'contact' button, you can inform Leader+ Observatory, about what you are doing in Leader+, and any questions you may have will be answered directly by e-mail if not already answered from the FAQ database.

**Why not take a look now
(<http://europa.eu.int/comm/leaderplus/>)!**

Leader+ Magazine



Leader+ Magazine is published three times a year by the Observatory of rural areas.

Leader ('Links between Actions for the Development of the Rural Economy') is a Community initiative launched by the European Commission and coordinated by its Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (Unit F3). The contents of Leader+ Magazine do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union institutions.

Editorial board: European Observatory of rural areas

Person responsible at law: Athanasios Christidis, European Commission, DG Agriculture and Rural Development, Unit F.3, 130 rue de la Loi, B-1040 Brussels

Contributors to this issue: Leader+ National Network Units

Photographs: Photographs are the copyright of the European Commission except the photographs indicated

Cover photo: photo provided by the Luxemburg National Network Unit

Leader+ Magazine is published in 19 official languages of the European Union and has a print run of 35 880 copies

For further information: Leader+ Contact Point, Rue du Marteau 81, B-1000 Brussels. Tel. (32-2) 235 20 20. Fax (32-2) 280 04 38. E-mail: contact.point@Leaderplus.org. Website: <http://europa.eu.int/comm//leaderplus>

© European Communities, 2005

Reproduction is authorised provided the source is acknowledged

Printed in Italy

PRINTED ON WHITE CHLORINE-FREE PAPER

For additional orders of Leader+ Magazine

please send an e-mail to contact.point@leaderplus.org or send your request by fax or by mail mentioning your comprehensive coordinates and the quantity and language version needed to:

Leader+ Contact Point
Rue du Marteau 81
B-1000 Brussels
Tel. (32-2) 235 20 20
Fax (32-2) 280 04 38

You can also subscribe to Leader+ publications. In order to have your name added to our mailing list, please register online using the form available at the following address:

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/leaderplus>



Leader+ Profile



Name:

Leader ('links between actions for the development for 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:

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

