

## FINLAND

# Improve the quality of life in rural areas

### Location

Lappeenranta

### Programming period

2007 - 2013

### Axis / Priority

Axis 3

### Funding (EUR)

Total budget 112 000

EAFRD 48 000

### Project duration

2011 – 2013

### Project promoter

South Karelia Social and  
Health Care District (Eksote)

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[www.eksote.fi/mallu](http://www.eksote.fi/mallu)

The 'Mallu does the rounds' project provided an easy-to-access medical service to people in rural areas of Finland using the Mallu bus.

## Summary

Funding from RDPs can be used to introduce new ways of overcoming quality of life challenges in rural areas. In Finland this includes providing mobile healthcare services for remote areas and the 'Mallu bus' project demonstrates the broad range of benefits that this type of good practice can deliver.



Project actions centred on converting a mobile caravan and fitting it out as the mobile healthcare centre. Nurses provide a carefully coordinated set of medical services from the mobile unit. On-board computer and broadband equipment connect the nurses to centralised patient information systems. Planning ensures a fixed route around a catchment area of eight municipalities.

## Results

The service covers an area with at least 100 000 potential patients.

The Mallu bus project has been especially good for supporting the independent living of elderly residents and has helped to prevent illness.

This mobile approach to rural healthcare aids cost-effectiveness for patients and health services because the nurses only recommend patients to a doctor if they really need an appointment. This enables the doctors to concentrate better on their own tasks and therefore improves the efficiency of regional health centres.

Data collected from Mallu's daily activities are being used by health authorities to support the design of their existing service network, plus new operating models in South Karelia and nationwide.

Dental treatment, has been incorporated into an upgraded Mallu community care service. The mobile nurses are also expanding their functions to issue prescriptions for medicines and carry out preliminary care assessments.

## Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ Cost-efficient and flexible services through such new integrated mobile facilities, can address the challenges in supplying social services to isolated areas or dispersed populations.

## Context

Rural Europe is a popular place to live, work, and visit but challenges exist in supplying social services to isolated areas or dispersed populations. Cost is a major factor with healthcare providers needing to locate their main facilities in centralised sites. Rural residents, workers and visitors thus have to travel to towns if they need any form of medical attention. Another increasingly important rural development consideration is the demand for rural healthcare, because populations now commonly contain higher proportions of elderly people, who may have higher medical needs but who are less able to travel.

## Objectives

- The Mallu bus was designed by the South Karelia Social and Health Care District (Eksote) to be an easy-to-use medical service for people in rural areas.
- It also aimed to collate information and evidence for Eksote about the rural healthcare needs of less-populated areas.
- Another aim was to offer cost-efficient and flexible services through its new integrated mobile facility.

## Activities

Introduced in 2010 by Eksote, the project activities centred on converting a mobile caravan and fitting it out as the mobile healthcare centre.

On-board computer and broadband equipment connect the nurses to centralised patient information systems. These bring all the health district's databases to the vehicle and the technology can be used for real-time consulting with more specialised medical staff if needed.

Patients can book appointments online or by telephone and the Mallu bus has also been used to carry out specialised themed services, such as diabetes awareness campaigns.

*“When services are centralised, distances grow. Mobile services are a very good thing for clients. Clinic buses can bring many tests and procedures closer to residents.”*

*Jukka Kärkkäinen: National Institute for Health and Welfare, Finland.*



## Main results

The service is available on a fixed route around a catchment area of eight municipalities taking in at least 100 000 potential patients.

Pharmacy tasks covered include influenza vaccines, health guidance, conducting small operations like removing stitches and clearing ears. Blood pressure monitoring, blood sugar sampling and related advice are also offered. The service is available to local residents as well as tourists or other visitors to the area. Nurses aim to visit each site on the Mallu route every fortnight. The time the vehicle stays at one location varies from one hour upwards, depending on the need.

This mobile approach to rural healthcare aids cost-effectiveness for patients and Eksote because the nurses only recommend patients to a doctor if they really need an appointment. This enables the doctors to concentrate better on their own tasks and therefore improves the efficiency of regional health centres.

The main customer-base is elderly people who experience problems travelling to hospitals or other health clinics. Data collected from Mallu's daily activities has confirmed the service needs of these and other rural residents. Such information is being used by health authorities to support the design of their existing service network, plus new operating models in South Karelia and nationwide.

Additional assistance, including dental treatment, has been incorporated into an upgraded Mallu community care service. The mobile nurses are also expanding their functions to issue prescriptions for medicines and carry out preliminary care assessments.

Additional sources of information

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=Un\\_KbY-4JJ4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Un_KbY-4JJ4)