Community-led nature conservation in Austria

EAFRD-funded projects

AUSTRIA

Improve the quality of life in rural areas

Location
Vorarlberg

Programming period
2007 - 2013

Axis / Priority
Axis 3 – Enhancing the quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy

Measure
M323 - Conservation and upgrading of the rural heritage

Funding (EUR)
Total budget 680 900
RDP support 680 900*
* Total EU and National contribution

Project duration
2009 – 2014

Project promoter
Amt der Vorarlberger Landesregierung, Abteilung Naturschutz

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Austria`s western Vorarlberg region used EAFRD funding to develop a support network to help its communities protect local wildlife and natural habitats.

Summary

Austria`s western Vorarlberg region created a programme to help its municipalities and communities protect local wildlife, habitats and landscapes.

naturvielfalt Vorarlberg unser Land

The project also aimed to improve the quality of life of inhabitants and develop an educational network.

Participating municipalities developed nature protection plans in conjunction with experts, who accompanied them throughout the planning process. Measures included planting flowers on roadsides, restoration of village streams, the creation of recreation areas and parks, flowering meadows and natural construction projects. Networking and educational events were also organised to exchange experiences.

Results

30 'biodiversity communities' were developed to protect natural areas and the number of municipalities involved is increasing.

Participating communities have met regularly, while festivals and special events have offered platforms for exchanges.

From 2009 to 2013, 36 educational events, 97 biodiversity excursions and 6 courses were held, attended by over 3 000 participants.

Lessons & Recommendations

❑ It is important for organisers of the programmes to work closely with other national initiatives and projects for the best possible synergies for nature conservation work (e.g. cooperation with town planners, with chambers of commerce and local environmental networks).

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Context

Austria`s westernmost federal state, Vorarlberg, wanted a system to help its municipalities and communities protect local wildlife and habitats. The state saw its communities having a special responsibility in conserving surrounding wildlife, natural spaces, waterways and the diversity of landscapes. Vorarlberg`s authorities wanted to use the numerous possibilities at community level to promote conservation of plant and animal species as well as to enhance the value of their habitats. The approach would also improve the quality of life of inhabitants. The system required local knowledge, forward planning and measures specific to each area.

Objectives

`Natural diversity in the community` was a programme designed to help local communities develop specific knowledge and strategies for protecting species and habitats. Participating communities would benefit from individualised consultations, networking opportunities and a possibility to exchange experiences with other participants. Educational courses would also be on offer. The population would be closely involved. A team of experts would be available to the municipalities to accompany them in the planning process as well as in the implementation of projects.

Activities

The programme has been developed since 2008 in cooperation with the Austrian Ecological Institute. Interested municipalities sign a participation agreement. Initial talks are held with an expert in natural diversity. The municipality sets out its objectives and measures for wildlife and habitats over the next years. It is supported by a specialist consultant, who accompanies the community throughout the process. The municipal action plan is adopted and implemented. The projects are evaluated internally every year and the priorities for the following year are developed.

Implemented measures included:

- Planting flowers on roadsides and species-rich meadows for wild bees and butterflies
- Restoration of village streams
- Creation of recreation facilities and nature parks
- Near-natural design of operating areas
- Design of `green` roofs

Main Results

- 30 `biodiversity communities` were developed in Vorarlberg to protect nature.

- The number of municipalities involved has steadily increased during the programming period.

- Municipalities showed their commitment to protecting natural diversity at the political level and have received awards.

- Participating communities have met regularly, while festivals and special events have offered platforms for exchanges.

- From 2009 to 2013, 36 educational events, 97 biodiversity excursions and 6 courses were held, attended by over 3 000 participants.

Key lessons

The program must not be seen in isolation. It is important to work closely with other national programmes, initiatives and projects to create the best possible synergies for nature conservation work. (e.g. cooperation with town planners, with the Economic Chamber and with the network Flowering Landscape).

Natural diversity in the community" is to be understood as a process. Municipalities are accompanied and supported in order to anchor the nature conservation ideas of the municipal day"

Additional sources of information

www.vorarlberg.at/vorarlberg/umwelt_zukunft/umwelt/natur-undumweltschutz/weitereinformationen/naturvielfaltindergemeind/dasprogrammstelltsichvor.htm

www.vorarlberg.at/pdf/nig-taetigkeitsbericht202.pdf

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