

## AUSTRIA

# Local development

### Location

Alberschwende

### Programming period

2014 – 2020

### Priority

P6 – Social inclusion and  
local development

### Measure

M19 – LEADER/CLLD

### Funding (EUR)

Total budget 626 463  
EAFRD 300 702  
National/Regional 200 468  
Other 125 293

### Project duration

2015 – 2019

### Project promoter

Regionalentwicklung  
Vorarlberg eGen

### Contact

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### Website

[www.engagiert-sein.at](http://www.engagiert-sein.at)

**A Local Action Group engaged local coordinators to stimulate volunteer action and engagement in grassroots initiatives.**

## Summary

Since 2016, the Local Action Group “Regional Development Vorarlberg” (Regio-V) has engaged five coordinators of volunteers who are supporting and mobilising civil engagement in 18 villages in a rural region of western Austria. The coordinators are analysing development needs which can be covered by civil initiatives, while supporting citizens in developing projects.



Almost all existing associations and initiatives are receiving support on exchanging experiences, training and education and cooperation. In this way the self-reliance and social capital of the villages is strengthened.

## Results

Five coordinators of volunteers employed.

Coordinators supported 40 projects/initiatives that are implemented by around 200 volunteers.

Increased cooperation has strengthened local communities and resilience.

## Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ Many potential volunteers can be found but to general calls for commitment do not work. Direct contact is needed!
- ❑ Coordinators of volunteers should be present in the municipalities to ensure this direct contact with citizens.
- ❑ It is crucial that the volunteers are recognised for their commitment by the beneficiaries (municipalities, schools, etc.), and coordinators must make sure this happens.
- ❑ Coordinators can act as the interface between citizens and other institutions/organisations that coordinate interesting projects and initiatives but may not reach the public to the extent that they would like.

### Context

The project „Engagiert sein“ (‘Commit yourself’) builds on the experiences of another LEADER project carried out in the previous programme period. This project demonstrated that people can be motivated to volunteer. If the appropriate concept is chosen, interested volunteers will come forward and become engaged in many different activities. Committed persons can contribute their talents to the local society; they can grow with their task and enhance their social competences.

A major lesson from the pilot project was that volunteer commitment needs to be locally mobilised and coordinated and that this has to be done in collaboration with existing institutions. Municipalities that see volunteer commitment as an opportunity should establish a local coordinator to mobilise civic engagement. Within the current LEADER project 18 municipalities in five pilot areas benefited from this offer.

### Objectives

The overall objective of the project was to strengthen the social competences of local communities in the long term by mobilising civil engagement in selected municipalities.

The specific operative goal was to motivate local citizens for civil engagement and strengthen their social competences through the employment of at least five coordinators of volunteers.

### Activities

Given that several pilot areas should benefit from the project, the general coordination was carried out by the Local Action Group Regio-V.

As a first step, Regio-V selected the participating municipalities – 18 in five pilot areas – through discussions with representatives of regions and municipalities. Together with the participating municipalities and regions, Regio-V advertised five jobs for coordinators of volunteers and finalised the selection process. As a result, five coordinators were employed part-time by Regio-V for the duration of the project. Each of the coordinators is located in the region for which he/she is responsible.

The coordinators identify development needs (current problems in the local society) and acquire for each need persons who are willing to commit as volunteers to work on the defined issue. The project allows for a learning process towards more social competences. In cooperation

with local expert organisations the coordinators and the volunteers are able to better carry out tasks of civil engagement. Unused talents are mobilised within the project. The project also contributes to finding and using synergies between local organisations, schools, churches, social associations and municipalities.

The coordinators fulfil the following tasks:

- Identification of development needs and project design;
- Local mobilisation and coordination of citizens on non-profit projects;
- Provision of support to the committed citizens and their projects;
- Coordination of training and creation of opportunities for the exchange of experiences among volunteers;
- Organisation of training and exchange of experiences between coordinators.



### Main results

- Five coordinators of volunteers employed;
- The coordinators supported 40 projects/initiatives which are implemented by around 200 volunteers;
- More attention was given to those in need;
- More people became more socially responsible and willing to further develop their local community
- Increased social competences led to greater tolerance;
- Increased cooperation has strengthened local communities and resilience;
- Increased satisfaction of local population.

### Key lessons

Many potential volunteers can be found, but general calls for commitment do not work. Direct contact is needed, otherwise people who are not yet engaged say that they weren't asked to do something.

Coordinators of volunteers should be present in the municipalities to ensure this direct contact with citizens.

It is important that the coordinators accompany the volunteers once they are committed, ask them how they are, if they need any support, or simply to listen to their stories.

It is also crucial that the volunteers are recognised for their commitment by the beneficiaries (municipalities, schools, etc.), and coordinators should can make sure this happens.

Coordinators act as an interface between citizens and other institutions/organisations that coordinate interesting projects and initiatives but don't reach the people that they would like to.

Ensure that the initiatives end well and are sustainable. Volunteer initiatives can function independently of the project.

Coordinators of volunteers need to be trained for their tasks from the beginning; training is also important for volunteers;

Exchange of experience within the team of coordinators is important for mutual learning.

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### Additional sources of information

[www.regio-v.at/news/publikation-engagiert-sein](http://www.regio-v.at/news/publikation-engagiert-sein)