

FINLAND

Local development

Location
Saarijärvi

Programming period
2014 – 2020

Priority
P6 – Social inclusion & local development

Measure
M07 – Basic services & village renewal

Funding (EUR)
Total budget 160 000
EAFRD 67 200
National/Regional 92 800

Project duration
2018 – 2021

Project promoter
LEADER Viisari ry

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A Local Action Group (LAG) in Central Finland created a new network and the enabling conditions for young people to plan and implement their own local development ideas.

Summary

Young people have a key role to play in shaping the future of rural areas. The aim of this project was to enable young people to influence the development and commitment of their home region and to find opportunities for work, entrepreneurship, and accommodation.

The project organised brainstorming workshops and meetings for young people where they thought of ideas to improve their living conditions and discussed issues that are important to them - while reflecting on how to involve other young people in local development. The project also organised events such as virtual reality workshops and produced YouTube videos.

A total of 1 174 young people under the age of 29 participated in the Future Makers project.



Results

Through the 'FutureSession' workshop, teams of young people focussed on three major themes that concern them: climate change, transnational cooperation, and entrepreneurship.

17 videos were produced by the participants and made available on the YouTube channel 'Future Authors'. The videos had a collective total of 43 790 views by the end of the project.

The project created the Business Academy network to promote youth entrepreneurship in Northern Central Finland.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ A key finding was that education concerning youth entrepreneurship is not well organised and that the region lacked an appropriate, supportive environment for encouraging young people's entrepreneurship.
- ❑ The activities implemented were effective because the project was big enough (including nine municipalities), for there to be a rich variety of perspectives, and at the same time small enough not to lose sight of the distinctive features of the people in each municipality.

Context

Rural areas are commonly affected by population decline and a skewed age structure. Young people tend to move out of their areas in search of study and work opportunities, and this move is very often a permanent one. At the same time, the proportion of the older population is growing.

The valuable energy and knowledge of young people, with their insight into the direction of technological developments is therefore underrepresented in rural areas. This means that opportunities for innovation in a rapidly changing technological environment are being missed.

The Viisari LAG's development strategy for 2020 outlines the aim of providing "a comfortable countryside for skilled and enterprising residents" by creating opportunities for young people to influence, plan and implement local actions that will shape their futures.

Objectives

This project aimed at:

- promoting the participation of young people in targeted development activities in the region.
- strengthening their participation in their community.
- creating a positive image of their homeland.
- including their views and skills in the process of shaping rural development actions in their local area.

Activities

The Future Makers project organised the following activities for young participants:

- 34 interactive brainstorming workshops where young people discussed ways to increase their engagement in their home community. Based on the ideas raised at these gatherings, a practical workshop event called the 'FutureSession' was developed. This consisted of photo walks, group work, voting and team building.
- 32 follow-up brainstorming workshops where ideas were further developed. The major themes agreed on were climate change, transnational cooperation, and entrepreneurship.
- 13 meetings to discuss issues that are important for young people and the involvement of other young people in local development.
- 20 events, including virtual reality workshops delivered by young entrepreneurs.
- the production of 17 videos by the participants for the YouTube channel 'Future Authors'. In each video, four young people from each municipality - including at

least one young entrepreneur - presented their ideas about how to improve their area.

A total of 1 174 young people under the age of 29 participated in the Future Makers project. The project paid for services provided by 25 young people.

Key stakeholders in the project included local educational institutions, the Piispala Youth Centre, local development companies, municipal youth activity organisers, other development projects, associations, and companies.

Main results

Nearly all of the young people supported financially by the project were starting out as entrepreneurs.

The project created the Business Academy network to promote youth entrepreneurship in Northern Central Finland. The network meets every two months and is open to all interested parties, e.g. business advisers, educational institutions, development actors and associations.

The youngsters produced videos for the YouTube Channel, which had been viewed a total of 43 790 times by the end of the project.

The experiences and results of the project served as a good basis for planning the forthcoming programming period.

Key lessons

A main lesson learnt was the realisation that education concerning youth entrepreneurship is not well organised. Despite a wide variety of entrepreneurship education in educational institutions, the quality and quantity often depend on a teacher's own interest in entrepreneurship. Development companies, on the other hand, focus on developing start-ups or existing businesses, but overall, there is not enough focus on nurturing the entrepreneurial climate that encourages young people to embark upon their own ventures in the first place.

Increasing regional and international cooperation to promote youth entrepreneurship is essential. At present, international cooperation on the theme only exists between institutions.

The flow of information between different educational institutions, municipalities, and local actors needs to be improved. The communication and activities implemented via the Future Makers project were effective because the project was regional, including nine municipalities, which was wide enough for a rich variety of perspectives, and at the same time small enough not to lose sight of the distinctive features of the people in each municipality.

Additional sources of information

www.instagram.com/tuletekijaks/?hl=fi

www.youtube.com/channel/UCCEpQf5cC2rCWlAKpgprzZA

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