

LITHUANIA

Implementing local development strategies

Location

Nociūnai

Programming period

2007 – 2013

Axis / Priority

Axis 4 – LEADER

Measure

M413 - Quality of
life/diversification

Funding (EUR)

Total budget 38 647
EAFRD 27 826
National/regional 6 957
Private 3 865

Project duration

2012 – 2014

Project promoter

LAG Kėdainių

Contact

kedainiuvvg@gmail.com

Website

www.kedainiuvvg.lt

The community centre of a small Latvian village was renovated and equipped to support soap production and training courses, thus turning the village into a tourist attraction.

Summary

Nociūnai is a settlement in the South-west of Kėdainiai region and has no natural attraction sights, so it was rarely visited by tourists. Against this background, the community took action to create a new tourist attraction and stimulate the declining local economy.



The community decided to produce soap and to teach others how to do so. EARFD funding supported the renovation of the building and purchase of equipment. During the project a number of reconstructions were financed: the old boiler room was renovated, the roof was changed, water supply system was installed.

Results

Every year the village are visited by more than 1000 people.

Two permanent work places have been created.

The village became an interesting touristic destination. It has also become a place for local artisans to exhibit and sell their goods.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ At the beginning it was hard to make the villagers believe that the successful implementation of this project is possible and that each village can be unique and interesting for foreigners. But the active women proved that even if a village doesn't have natural attraction sights and is transit settlement along the road to a bigger city, it is possible to make it attractive and unique, which then ensures the village's economic growth and satisfaction of villagers themselves.

Context

Nociūnai is a settlement in the South-west of Kėdainiai region, 9km from Kėdainiai, with the community center being in the middle of the village. The village has no natural attraction sights, so it was rarely visited by tourists. Therefore, the village's economic life slowly degrading. There were no new inhabitants, the birth rate was going down and the community was growing older.

Against this background, the community decided to set an attractive establishment in the village themselves by building upon historical values. The women of the village decided to create a soap-making factory and promote it. After a long period of learning and strong volunteering input, a business including two employment places and an economically viable tourist attraction got created.

Objectives

The main goal of the project was to increase the village's attractiveness by improving the conditions of the Nociūnai community gathering place, by adjusting the building to today's needs and by getting more furniture and equipment.

Furthermore, activities aimed at creating an interesting education program for attracting visitors and livening up the village's economy. Nociūnai decided to produce soap and to teach others how to do so. That means, the community had to learn the soap-making technology itself and subsequently to create an educational program for the soap house visitors.

Activities

The project's initiators and main managers were 12 active women from Nociūnai. Before the building was renovated, they already had to know where the educational and soap-making premises should be placed and how they should look like.

EARFD funds were used to support the renovation of the building and for purchasing the equipment. During the project the following activities took place: the old boiler room was renovated, the roof was changed, water supply system was provided (for the first time), and the necessary equipment was bought. Thus, the place for soap-making and educational classes was set up. Interesting the building and renovating was carried out by two women and only one man who fixed the water system.

At the beginning of the project the soap-making factory of Nociūnai had 12 volunteers in the age range from 17 to 60 years old. They cleaned up the premises after the renovation and placed the new furniture and equipment.

After trialling and testing different soap formulas the beneficiaries finally found a unique formula for their soap and called it "The Amber of Nociūnai". The community leader, i.e. the leader of the NGO, was in charge of soap-making. The local school teachers helped a lot with the elaboration of the education program.

The team of the Kėdainiai Local Action Group (LAG) helped with promoting this new attraction: it prepared an advertisement which was posted online as well as in tourism agencies and by other LAGs, all over Lithuania. Everything was made voluntarily and no extra financial resources were used.

In order to accommodate visitors the soap-making factory's volunteers were split into two teams and were always ready to take up visiting excursion groups. Soon the manager had to establish two employment places as the demand for the soap-making services grew.

"We have discussed for a long time how our village could be attractive for others. There have been many suggestions. We chose soap-making as somebody said that this activity has historical links with Nociūnai."

Vaida Stanevičienė Community leader



Main Results

Right now the soap-making factory of Nociūnai is organizing various educational activities, soap-making courses, etc. Every year the soap-makers are visited by more than 1 000 people.

Two permanent work places have been created: one worker is making and packaging the soap, and the other one is leading events.

Nociūnai is no longer only a village “next to the road” – it became an interesting touristic destination and non-traditional event place. It has also become a place for local handmasters to exhibit and sell their goods.

The soap house has already some profit due to the offer to visitors and the educational programs. The community has further ideas how to improve and make the soap-house work more interesting. Besides educational

workshops other attractive activities such as bachelor and birthday parties were organized. The soap house and its programme are becoming more and more popular. Now the visitors only come to visit the attractions and only stay for a short time, so the villagers assume that offering accommodation services might be a good idea for the future development of Nociūnai.

Key lessons

The villagers were sceptical at the project at first and it was hard to make the village’s people believe that the successful implementation of this project is possible. However, the women of the village proved that even if a village doesn’t have natural attraction sights and is transit settlement along the road to a bigger city, it is possible to make it attractive and unique, which then ensures the village’s economic growth and satisfaction of villagers themselves.

Additional sources of information

www.facebook.com/nociunu.muilinycia?fref=photo