

SWEDEN

Promoting social integration of immigrants

Location
Uddevalla

Programming period
2014 - 2020

Priority
Social inclusion and local development

Measure
M19 – LEADER/CLLD

Funding (EUR)
Total budget 59 657
EAFRD 27 835
National/Regional 13 710
Other 18 112

Project duration
2016 – 2017

Project promoter
Studieförbundet
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A small successful food market initiative in Sweden used EAFRD funding to help immigrants develop their skills, find employment and set up their own business.

Summary

Uddevalla is a small run-down town in western Sweden facing problems of unemployment and poor integration of immigrants. The “potato backyard” is an initiative which started in 2014 and it is about a small local market where small producers and artisans are able to showcase and sell their products combined with cultural activities.



This group of small enterprises and entrepreneurs used EAFRD funding to establish a Work Integrated Social Enterprise (WISE) which helps immigrants learn about entrepreneurship through practical work and supports them to develop their business ideas. Participants attended workshops on business and food, got hands on experience by working at an organic shop and participated in study visits.

Results

15 people with immigrant backgrounds took part in the project.

8 participants went on to long-term internships with enterprises.

One started restaurant training and another set-up a food truck business.

Two to four participants will continue to work at the Potato backyard as full-time trainees.

The project also created a new cookbook containing recipes from the participants' countries of origin.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ Finding the right people who can develop good relationships with governmental institutions and municipal authorities is important. This can facilitate factors such as getting hold of a premises.
- ❑ It is important to explain to people working in governmental institutions what a Work Integrated Social Enterprise is. They can lack understanding of how crucial it is for the new enterprises to actually earn money.

Context

In recent decades Uddevalla, a relatively small town on the Swedish west coast, has had problems with unemployment, segregation and a spirit of hopelessness – especially since big employers like the car factory and the port moved abroad or went bankrupt. Since 2014, a group of small producers and artisans set up a food market in a backyard combined with cultural activities called the “Potato backyard”.

The small market became popular, and its members saw the need for a more diverse range of products. At the same time, they realised that there were many unemployed immigrants in the town who had a lot of knowledge about food and cooking from their different backgrounds. Inspired by a similar project in the big Swedish town Malmö, they decided to start a ‘Work Integrated Social Enterprise’ (WISE) specialising in food production.

Objectives

Overall, the group of entrepreneurs in the Potato backyard wanted to support the development of the town and increase interest in multiculturalism and sustainability.

They also wanted to strengthen the connection between the town and the surrounding countryside, since many of the enterprises in question base their production in the region.

The WISE also aimed to act as a network for enterprises, helping to market and sell a diverse range of products.

Activities

Participants in the project become trainees at the WISE, where they learned how to run a business, went on study visits to food producers and to another WISE, worked with one of the key entrepreneurs (called E.K.logisk handel, a shop for organic produce) and information on how to develop new products. An important part of the educational programme was focused on marketing. Participants were encouraged to develop business ideas, to educate themselves further, or to continue on as full-time trainees.

The project has initiated a development group for the WISE together with the municipality and other important stakeholders working with integration and

unemployment, to discuss how to take the project further. The municipality expressed interest in cooperation with the WISE after the project ends.

The trainees who choose to continue will work with the WISE at a café or a shop at the market.

Main Results

15 immigrants participated in the project.

7 or 8 participants got long-term internships at enterprises. One started restaurant training and another already started a business in the form of a food truck.

2 to 4 participants will continue to work for longer at the Potato backyard, as full-time trainees.

Some of the participants have been in Sweden as long as 8 years without getting a job, and this project was really a success by giving these people new opportunities.

The public, the municipality and enterprises showed much interest for the project. It quickly established itself in the town, injecting hope in the run-down city centre and showing that another way is possible.

To further reach out to the whole town and the surrounding countryside, the project developed a cookery book with multi cultural recipes.

Key lessons

It is important to find the right people who can develop good relationships with governmental institutions and the municipal authorities. This worked well in this project, leading to the possibility of borrowing premises and other resources, for example.

A problem that the project faced was that everyone at the governmental institutions wants this kind of business to succeed, but people often lack understanding of how important it is for the new enterprises to actually earn money. They do not have a very realistic picture of what a WISE is.

“Many of the participants have gained access to the wider world. They now go to other parts of the town, and get to know people that are not from their home countries.”

Representative from a governmental institution

Additional sources of information

www.bohuslaningen.se/praktik-ska-leda-fram-till-f%C3%B6retagande-1.3185814