

SLOVENIA

Implementing local development strategies

Location

Ljubljana – Dobrunje

Programming period

2007 – 2013

Axis / Priority

Axis 4 – LEADER

Funding (EUR)

Total budget 160 048

EAFRD 84 667

National/regional 21 167

Private 54 214

Project duration

2009 – 2014

Project promoter

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A LEADER project tackled the limited possibilities of children in the peripheral part of the capital city of Ljubljana to engage in free-time activities.

Summary

Most villages around Ljubljana experienced growth of population in recent years. The project tackled the limited possibilities of the children in the peripheral part of the capital city of Ljubljana to engage in free-time activities.



3 primary schools with its 10 subsidiary schools cooperated in a wide range of creative activities. Key activities organised included organising creative workshops to give the opportunity to children to explore local history, traditional crafts and customs, nature and tourism; eco workshops focused on re-using waste materials, inter-school visits, etc.

Results

1 049 children were involved in project activities; from 60 in year 2009 to 300 in 2014;

67 teachers and 22 technical staff worked in the project voluntarily;

106 local actors and 16 associations participated in the activities;

209 eco workshops were implemented, 35 promotional events, 13 visits organised between the subsidiary schools, 3 presentations in the capital city, 6 annual events, 6 games without borders, etc.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ Without the good leadership and motivation of the project team and without support from the wider local community the project could not be realised to this extent and success. Volunteering is one of the main features of the project.
- ❑ Good coordination and management capacities were also decisive for the project success. The intensity of interaction, project activities and events was very high and in addition there were also many administrative requirements. For future projects a more balanced approach and reduced number of activities is recommended.

Context

Children in rural areas around the Slovenian capital city of Ljubljana have few opportunities to engage in leisure activities. Most villages around Ljubljana experienced growth of population in recent years. Young families settled in and parents daily commute to work whereas children visit the local subsidiary school until age of 10. Access to various cultural, sports or other free time activities in small rural environments is limited, while the logistics to attend activities in the capital is often too complicated to organise. For years, primary schools in rural areas have been an important social hub for the local population. However, with limited capacities and means it has become more and more difficult to offer any additional programmes.

The project idea was initiated by a teacher at the subsidiary school at the small village of Janče near Ljubljana. The village has only 23 inhabitants. The main challenge was to offer children quality free time and to strengthen the role of the subsidiary schools within the local community. The central primary school supported the initiative and the first application for the project was prepared and approved by the LAG. Successful implementation led to an extension of the project into additional phases with new activities and with additional schools joining the initiative.

In the period 2009 – 2014, altogether five interlinked projects were implemented, all with a common head title and focusing on specific themes.

Objectives

The general project objective was to raise the quality of life for children living in the countryside by:

- Creating opportunities for children to engage in various free time activities;
- Developing the social capital of the youngest generations;
- Raising awareness on environmental issues;
- Stimulating the creativity of the children;
- Strengthening intergenerational cooperation;
- Support the subsidiary school in becoming the centre of social life in the village.

Activities

The projects were implemented within six years and involved 13 schools located in the eastern part of Ljubljana in its final stage. In 2009, the cooperation started among the central primary school Sostro and its four subsidiaries in Janče, Besnica, Lipoglav and Prežganje. In 2010 the central primary school Stična with subsidiaries in Ambrus, Muljava, Krka and Višnja Gora joined the project. Since 2012, the project was extended to the central primary school Škofljica with two subsidiaries in Lavrica and Želimlje.

In all projects the same basic framework was used. However, each year adapted to different key themes: *'Preserve the past and step into future'*, *'My place – my pride'*, *'Customs of my home place'*, *'Local culinary and farm work'*, *'Tourist souvenir of my home place'*.

Key activities organised included:

- Creative workshops gave that the opportunity to children to explore local history, heritage, traditional crafts and customs, nature and tourism. Each school connected with local associations and elderly who could pass special skills and knowledge to the young generations. E.g. they tried bread baking, making of clay figures, baskets, and paper flowers, learn folk songs and dances, created theatre performances, made photo exhibitions of their work.
- Eco workshops focused on re-using waste materials (cartons, boxes, textile, bottles, newspapers, etc.) to create artistic work and souvenirs;
- My place-my pride: the children explored local environments and presented the findings on posters or in brochures;
- 'Games without borders' were organised annually at six different schools – each time a different set of typical games were prepared, all aiming at trying different skills;
- Inter-school visits – children from one school visited another school to get to know each other and create friendships. Children presented their schools and places worth visiting;
- Subsidiary schools presented themselves in the city of Ljubljana;
- A project calendar was created each year using the photos from project activities;
- A closing event celebrating the village life was also organised annually at different schools, presenting the work accomplished.

For publicity and information purposes, a range of promotional materials were prepared and two project brochures were issued where the activities and results were captured in detail. The children who were engaged in activities and learned new skills, transferred them to their parents. Parents also attended some activities. Feedback from children, parents and teachers was collected, analysed and served for improvement of future work.

The project required a high level of coordination and organisation. Each school appointed a coordinator that cooperated with the project leader and organised activities within each community. Annual plans of activities were made, which were coordinated by the project leader. It is important to note that financial support of the project was mainly used for project materials, printing, travels, catering and that both teachers and local supporters worked in the project voluntarily.

Main Results

The proposed concept worked well and the cooperation of 4 schools in year 1 extended to 13 schools in the final phase.

Results in numbers:

- 1 049 children were involved in project activities; the number has been growing from 60 in year 2009 to 300 in 2014;
- 67 teachers and 22 technical staff worked in the project voluntarily;
- 106 local actors and 16 associations participated in the activities and shared skills and knowledge with younger generations;
- 209 eco workshops were implemented, 35 promotional events, 13 visits organised between the subsidiary schools, 3 presentations in the capital city, 6 annual events, 6 games without borders, etc.

Most important qualitative achievements:

- Children in rural areas were given quality time and their creative potentials were activated; by presenting their home place in public their self-confidence has grown and the sense of belonging and pride developed;
- Increased intergenerational cooperation - elderly people enjoyed passing their knowledge to the young and felt included. Many invited children to their homes and provided the necessary materials. 95% of surveyed

children liked the opportunity to work with people from the village;

- Pre-school children got to know their future school friends what made the entrance into school easier for them; children who now attend the central school, like to come back and take part in the events;
- Increased awareness about environmental issues, waste separation and recycling.
- Increased social capital; many interactions between children and teachers from different schools developed, traditional skills and knowledge were passed to the young, the pride of place increased; new friendships were made;
- Local identity strengthened, 94% of surveyed children would prefer to live in the countryside.
- They survey among parents showed a very high level of satisfaction with the variety of offered activities. 83% believe that the school contributed to increased connections between the school and the village.

In 2012, the project was awarded by the Movement for preserving and promoting of the Slovenian cultural and natural heritage/landscape KULTURA-NATURA in the category: education, training and awareness raising.

After the completion of the project, workshops and exchanges between the subsidiary schools still continue, however with lower intensity.

Key lessons

The project managed to create and activate positive energy among key actors: teachers, local actors, children, parents, local population. Without the good leadership and motivation of the project team, as well as the support from the wider local community the project could not be realised to this extent and success. Volunteering is one of the main features of the project.

Good coordination and management capacities were also decisive for the project success. A great deal of work was carried out by the project leader. The intensity of interaction, the number of project activities and events was very high and there were also many administrative requirements. For future projects a more balanced approach and reduced number of activities is recommended.

It should be noted that the project opened new themes for cooperation, such as working with elderly, sustainable gardening, climate changes, and others.