



EAFRD-funded projects

Na-Tür-lich Dorf

Nature conservation at the doorstep

Na-Tür-lich Dorf – Bottom-up creation of individual small-scale projects aims to conserve nature at the doorstep of villages throughout two LAG areas in Germany.

Village habitats (e.g. structurally and species-rich gardens, swallow, sparrow or barn owl nesting sites, village and near-natural meadows and pastures) in the neighbouring LAG areas of Eifel and Zülpicher Börde had undergone decades of deterioration. The «Na-Tür-lich Dorf» project aims to motivate and empower residents to develop individual small-scale projects to promote biodiversity and environmental protection in their communities. Through this project, flower strips, wildflower meadows, native perennials, shrubs and fruit trees and mother shrub beds have been planted and nature garden consultations have been performed, as well as online lectures on topics such as nature gardens, green roofs, wild bees, etc. Pilots to establish nibbling hedges, roof greening, façade greening and sandariums (wild bee nesting beds) were supported, as was distribution of nesting aids kits for bird and bat species. Public awareness raising was also conducted through mass media and ecological village walks to showcase different local biodiversity initiatives.



Location

North Rhine Westphalia (Germany)

Programming period

2014 - 2020

Priority

P1 - Knowledge Transfer and Innovation
P4 - Restoring, Preserving and Enhancing Ecosystems

Measure

M19 - LEADER/CLLD

Funding (EUR)

Total budget 653 926
EAFRD 425 052
Private 228 874

Project duration

2020 - 2023

Project promoter

Biological Station in the District of Euskirchen e.V., Biological Station in the Düren District e.V., Biological Station Bonn/Rhein-Erft e.V., Biological Station StädteRegion Aachen e.V.

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Websites

[Link 1](#), [link 2](#), [link 3](#), [link 4](#), [link 5](#), [link 6](#)

Results

More than 2,000 people have participated in the project, including four districts, two LEADER regions, 20 cities and municipalities as well as numerous associations, initiatives, educational institutions and private individuals. In one district along, over 100 micro-measures have been implemented. Another community created a 100-metre-long flowering strip and various day-care centres and schools built bird and insect nesting aids. Nature conservation features have been designed and established to create wildlife habitats and corridors to prevent landscape fragmentation. The online presentations were well attended (over 200 people in some instances) by not just local residents but people other German federal states and surrounding countries. Similar projects focused on bottom-up community development of small-scale projects to benefit local biodiversity have been created based on the «Na-Tür-lich Dorf» example, and species protection measures have been carried out with cooperation partners as well as other larger events, e.g. the Eifel Seed Festival.

Lessons & Recommendations

Projects implemented by local people for the sustainability of their local area promote socially active village communities. Villages where the inhabitants were well networked or organised in associations experienced more participation in the project and bottom-up development of individual small projects by the residents.

Free expert advice and support with accessing available project funds helped local actors carry out their project ideas in a professional manner. Raising environmental awareness and identification of the regional flora and fauna were also important prerequisites.

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Context

For decades village habitats, such as structurally and species-rich gardens, swallow, sparrow or barn owl nesting sites, village and near-natural meadows and pastures, have been disappearing. In addition, the trend toward fenced gravel gardens and the transformation of villages into «sleeping towns» with little social connection to them as a place of residence has become apparent, especially in rural regions. Building on the success of the LEADER project «DorfBioTop» in the Eifel LEADER region, the «Na-Tür-lich Dorf» project motivates and empowers people in village communities in the neighbouring Eifel and Zülpicher Börde LAG areas to use their own project ideas to promote biodiversity and environmental protection. Many communities lack the technical know-how or funding for their project ideas. This project strengthens their capacity to implement different ideas and sets the hurdle for funding low to facilitate access.

Objectives

The aim of the cross-county and cross-regional project «Na-Tür-lich Dorf» is to protect and promote the dwindling regional biodiversity and local resources. The project facilitates the initiation of individual small-scale projects in the villages, which also fosters networking by various actors in rural areas. The expansion and strengthening of local networks and cooperation plays an important role, as does the transfer of expert knowledge through practical workshops and online lectures. In this way, the project aims to stimulate and strengthen community awareness and action for village biodiversity and the environment, supporting towns, municipalities and civic amenity sites in the conversion to ecological green space management.

Activities

The project is based on a large number of bottom-up, small-scale projects within the 370 km² project area. Materials to plant flower strips, wildflower meadows, native perennials, shrubs and fruit trees were provided to local inhabitants and institutions with whom the actors worked. Shrub beds were established. Kits to create nesting aids for bird and bat species were distributed, e.g. to primary schools, which were particularly popular. Professional kit assembly was carried out through the project as well as advice on how to care for the nesting aids.

Furthermore, pilot projects to establish nibbling hedges, roof greening, façade greening and sandariums (wild bee nesting beds) were supported. Regional seedlings, insect and bird watering places and the construction of sandariums were used in day-care centres to help communicate about the complexities of the insect world. A children's quiz was available at the public events as well as a nature painting corner and interactive models to teach the lifecycle of snails, amphibians and insects in a playful way. Some day-care centres and schools undertook hands-on environmental education about groups of animals and habitats with didactic support from ESD (Education for Sustainable Development). During the project week at a local grammar school, traditional mowing with a scythe was also taught in a practical workshop.

In addition to the many small projects, the entire project was accompanied by public relations work. This included social media, webpage design, reports, press articles and publications in trade journals. Event dates were advertised in local newspapers and online. Ecological village walks were offered, which were designed to be open to all and presented best practice examples in one's own village. Nature garden consultations were performed, as well as online lectures on topics such as nature gardens, green roofs, wild bees, etc. Additional events of public interest and workshops were held.

Project leaders in the LAG areas are available to provide free expert advice and access to financial support for the implementation of targeted measures. Synergies have been built with network partners so that work processes could be streamlined or implemented at reduced costs. By arranging long-term cooperation with environmental organisations (e.g. NABU e.V. or EGE Eulen e.V.), sustainable support is also ensured beyond the project period.

Main results

In total, more than 2,000 people have already been reached in the regions and actively participated in achieving the project's goals. All municipalities and small towns in the project area participated, including four districts, two LEADER regions, 20 cities and municipalities as well as numerous associations, initiatives, educational institutions and private individuals. In the Euskirchen district alone, over 100 micro-measures have been implemented, numerous advisory meetings have been held and cooperation has been ongoing with the municipal farms. Other projects have been developed based on the «Na-Tür-lich Dorf» project concept as well.

Numerous nature conservation features have been established in the area. In Binsfeld, for example, a 100-metre-long flowering strip was created. With project support, the Weilerswist Youth Parliament created a wildflower meadow with an insect hotel. Bird nesting boxes for garden birds were also built in the youth centre. At the 2022 Heimbach town festival, a local school "Freie Schule" built nesting aids for house martins out of plaster and straw with the help of volunteers. In Mechernich Wachendorf, the village children built bird nesting aids at home during the Covid-19 pandemic and distributed them along the main village avenue.

Networking resulted as species protection measures have been carried out in cooperation with partners in many cases, e.g. NABU e.V., EGE Eulen e.V. or local initiatives such as the meadow network or «Summen und Blühen» in Bad

Münstereifel. The cooperation partners are often also co-initiators on site and partners in the implementation of larger events, such as the Eifel Seed Festival and «Sonntag ist Saattag» (Sunday is Seed Day). The project also cooperated with the «Insektenoasen in der Bördelandschaft» (Insect Oases in the Bördeland Landscape) project, aimed at designing green habitats and corridors between open landscape and settlements.

Some of the online presentations attracted more than 200 participants, and several press appearances and articles on the core topics of the project promoted awareness of the importance and benefits of biodiversity. The online lectures have attracted audience members from other federal states within Germany and even from Switzerland or Austria.

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Additional sources of information

[Natur in NRW \(LANUV\): Page 28 ff](#)

[Film of the previous project DorfBiotop!](#)

This project has been categorised under 'Green futures' by the nominating National Rural Network