

FRANCE

Social inclusion

Location

LAGs Pays de Coutances,
Pays du Cotentin and Pays
de Saint-Lois. Le Désert.

Programming period

2014 – 2020

Priority

P6 – Social inclusion & local
development

Measure

M19 – LEADER/CLLD

Funding (EUR)

Total budget 41 496
EAFRD 33 197
Private 8 299

Project duration

2016 – 2017

Project promoter

Enerterre

Contact

laubert@enerterre.fr

Website

www.helloasso.com/associations/association-enerterre

Reducing the cost of renovation works for households lacking essential energy services by bringing together local resources, including people's skills and time.

Summary

Enerterre is an association promoting the voluntary renovation of traditional houses for the benefit of people in fuel poverty. The association brings together available resources including people skills and available time, local material, etc. A key element to this approach is the fact that the renovation works are carried out by volunteers under the supervision of building professionals.



In 2016 and 2017, 14 households were helped to undergo renovation through the supervised work of volunteers and additional 18 households received advice and information on financial support. The project promoter is the association Enerterre.

Results

Enerterre enabled participating households to save on average 65.5% of the cost of renovating their homes.

Volunteers offered more than 6 000 work hours.

Enerterre generated a turnover of 60 412 EUR for local craftsmen.

Since November 2017, Enerterre is part of an Erasmus Plus project called 'HELPS'. The HELPS project supports local actors in the four participating countries (Spain, Greece, Italy and France) to endorse and share the Enerterre method.

Lessons & Recommendations



- Keep in mind the first purpose: improve the living conditions of people who suffer from poor housing, favour mutual help and solidarity.
- Use less processed or unprocessed, natural and local materials and appropriate techniques with respect for vernacular heritage and environment.
- Be attentive to the needs expressed by inhabitants and their resources.
- Be patient... assisted self-help housing can be time-consuming.

Context

Enerterre is an association created and supported by the 'Cotentin and Bessin marshlands', which is a regional nature park located in the west of Normandy. This part of rural Normandy has a large number of traditional houses which form an exceptional built heritage. However these very old buildings are deteriorating and need to be renovated. The Regional Nature Park gave financial support for renovation works, however, many low-income households still could not afford it.

Enerterre was set up to address this issue. Its role is to connect resources that are available in the territory such as skills, materials, people's free time, etc. it then organises renovation works using volunteers under the supervision of a building professional with a resulting cost that is much more affordable for beneficiaries. The association uses participative working methods and locally produced natural materials (lime, straw, flax, etc.) as they are more compatible with the old traditional buildings.

Enerterre started out as a project to fight energy poverty within the Energy and Climate Plan that was implemented by the Regional Nature Park: in 2011, it received financing from a national foundation and a professional was hired to supervise the pilot phase. This pilot phase went on for another three years (2012-2015), followed by a transitional phase (2016-2017). With the support of the three LAGs of the area (Pays de Coutances, Pays du Cotentin and Pays de Saint-Lois), the concept was developed into a sustainable economic model. Thus Enerterre turned from a project into a self-supported entity. In 2018, Enerterre became an independent organisation.

Objectives

Enerterre has several long-term goals including:

- Support inhabitants and especially people in fuel poverty to renovate their homes using natural and local materials such as earth, straw, or lime.
- Foster economic development through production and consumption models that protect biodiversity and the conservation of natural resources.
- Develop social cohesion and solidarity.

Activities

Between June 2016 and December 2017, 56 households were identified as potential beneficiaries. These households were either identified by social workers, local elected officials, word of mouth, or they applied for support on their own. The only selection criteria in place was low income. These households were all facing difficult situations (e.g. family, professional or financial problems) and most of them were characterised either by energy poverty or social isolation.

Enerterre helped these households undertake their renovation projects. The support offered included visiting the homes to make a diagnosis of the house's condition and its problems; learning about household members' situation and their needs; designing the renovation project with them; informing them of possible financial support; defining the renovation works needed and how volunteers and beneficiaries will take part in the works to be carried out; raising awareness about energy efficiency and the use of local and natural materials; and putting the beneficiaries in contact with the necessary craftsmen.

For some households, supervised renovation work by volunteers was not the right solution. However, the support provided by Enerterre enabled them to find a suitable solution. In some cases, beneficiaries preferred to carry out only one part of the work with the support of volunteers, while other work was carried out by craftsmen or the beneficiaries themselves.

During that period, Enerterre enabled 14 households to undertake renovation works using the supervised work of volunteers; 18 of the households who had been contacted didn't take part in the project, and decided to undertake renovation work via other means. However, they still benefited from Enerterre's renovation advice and information about financial support.

Where supervised work by volunteers was used, the association put the inhabitants in contact with the building craftsman who agreed to supervise the works. The craftsperson proposed a renovation solution which included the time that the inhabitant and volunteers would need to spend on the worksite to reduce the costs and to make the renovation affordable for the home owner. A contract was then signed between Enerterre, the craftsperson and the home owner. The cost estimate includes the cost of the craftsperson and the materials that the inhabitant will pay if he/she accepts it.

- Enerterre organised participative worksites with the craftsmen, called for volunteers and provided the equipment - including personal protective equipment for the volunteers. Since 2011, Enerterre has built a network of 500 volunteers. For each worksite, the association called for participation and each time, the number of required volunteers was covered.
- On participative worksites, volunteers and inhabitants take part in the renovation works alongside the craftsman. However, inhabitants and volunteers don't have the same obligations. Volunteers give their time for free, whereas the home owners enter the Local Exchange Trading System (LETS). LETS is a system of working time exchange, which means that beneficiary home owners commit to helping other home owners in return of the help they received.
- During the project period, 25 worksites were organised by Enerterre at 14 family homes.

Main Results

Economic benefits:

The participative renovation work enabled the beneficiary households to save on average 65.5% of the costs of the renovation work, compared to the cost of the work if it had been carried out by craftsmen. These savings have been made possible thanks to the volunteers, who provided more than 6 000 hours of work.

The use of the RDP funds created employment at the Enerterre association and work for the local craftsmen. Without the support from Enerterre, the households could not have afforded the renovation works. Enerterre generated a turnover of 60 412 EUR for local craftsmen.

Environmental / Climate action benefits:

The renovation works were mainly internal and external insulation, slab insulation, loft insulation etc. Only local, natural materials were used (i.e. straw bales, hemp, flax, lime, earth). These improvements reduced household energy consumption and cut greenhouse gas emissions, directly contributing to the fight against climate change.

Social benefits:

Inhabitants who benefited from Enerterre support were all in difficult situations (single parents, jobless, socially isolated, unable to afford fuel for heating etc). One

thousand five hundred hours of support from Enerterre enabled them to raise funds, improve their living conditions, meet their neighbours and realise they could be active in their own rehabilitation project. Some of them even started new careers with the building skills they acquired during the projects.

Networking value:

Enerterre relies on a strong network of local partners in order to identify beneficiaries, public and private financial sponsors, building professionals, insurance companies, local authorities and suppliers of local materials. Enerterre also created a network of around 500 volunteers who can help on different worksites.

Transferability:

Enerterre is currently involved in another European project which is co-financed by ERASMUS plus, for replicating this work method in four countries.

Synergies with other EU policies:

Since November 2017, Enerterre has been involved in an Erasmus Plus project called 'HELPS'. The HELPS project aims to support local actors in the four participating countries (Spain, Greece, Italy and France) to establish and share the Enerterre method. It is a flexible model, the effectiveness of which will be measured through the transfer of knowledge and skills and the number of people involved.

This project responds to a general European issue: there is still not enough comfortable housing available at an affordable price in most European countries. This project addresses common challenges in the European Union: according to Eurostat 23.7% of the European population, or more than 118 million people are considered at risk of poverty, or social exclusion. In France, this risk concerns 17.7% of the population, while it is 28.7% in Spain and Italy and 35.7% in Greece.

"I had just lost my job. I was having a hard time and losing confidence. Thanks to Enerterre, I realised that I was able to do things; I also realised that I wasn't the only person in this kind of situation, experiencing such difficulties. This experience restored my self-confidence and allowed me to think that I could make it."

Catherine, home owner.

Additional sources of information

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ff_oeqm9HbY

<https://helpsproject.eu/>

www.facebook.com/Enerterre.HELPS/

*This project has been categorised under 'Social Inclusion' by the nominating National Rural Network