



European Network for
Rural Development

EN

PROJECTS BROCHURE

The European Agricultural
Fund for Rural Development

MIGRANT AND REFUGEE INTEGRATION



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Funded by the



European Network for Rural Development

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The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)

The EAFRD Project Examples brochure forms part of a series of ENRD publications that help encourage information exchange. Each edition of the brochure features different types of projects that have received RDP co-finance from the EAFRD.

Past editions of the EAFRD Projects Brochure can be downloaded from the publications section of the ENRD website.⁽¹⁾ The ENRD collection of good projects and practices⁽²⁾ contains many additional examples of EAFRD assistance to rural development initiatives.

(1) <https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/en/publications-and-media>

(2) <https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/projects-practice>

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Introduction

This edition of the EAFRD Projects Brochure explores how people in rural areas have used EAFRD support to respond to the challenges and opportunities presented by the recent influx of migrants and refugees into the European Union.

Without judgement on broader migration policy questions, the brochure aims to provide a picture of what is actually happening in several rural areas in Europe to deal with the evolving situation in more positive ways.

Unprecedented migration

More than one million migrants and refugees crossed into the EU by land and sea in 2015, representing a fourfold rise compared to 2014 (source: UNHCR, IOM). In the third quarter of 2015, 413 800 people from 149 countries sought asylum in the EU, mostly coming from some of the world's major trouble spots in Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Somalia and Iraq (source: Eurostat).

These flows of refugees and migrants into the EU have posed major challenges. The most dramatic of these have been seen at points of entry – mostly in Mediterranean countries – where many refugees arrive in a critical state requiring emergency humanitarian responses. However, the challenges continue along the migrant routes across Europe and into final destination countries.

Europe's labour market challenge

At the same time, Europe is facing an internal demographic challenge, which threatens the sustainability of its social model. The working age population is set to decrease by approximately 19 million people by 2060, doubling the old age dependency ratio. It is estimated that by 2060 there will be only two workers for every person aged 65 or over.⁽¹⁾

Many rural areas face an even more stark demographic challenge. Whereas some attractive and accessible rural areas close to cities are experiencing a process of 'reverse migration', many remote rural areas are falling into cycles of decline with shops and services closing and young people and families leaving.

(1) The 2015 Ageing Report: Economic and budgetary projections (2013-2060)
http://europa.eu/epc/pdf/ageing_report_2015_en.pdf



A possible win-win

The integration of working-age migrants is one way to reverse depopulation trends, leading to the maintenance or reopening of public services, and the creation of new jobs and economic development in rural areas.

“The early and effective integration of third-country nationals is key to making migration a benefit for the economy and cohesion of our society.”

Dimitris Avramopoulos

European Commissioner for Migration,
Home Affairs, and Citizenship

The ‘New Skills Agenda for Europe’⁽²⁾ released by the European Commission in June 2016, plans to create a ‘Skills Profile Tool Kit for Third Country Nationals’ to support early identification and profiling of the skills and qualifications of such new entrants.

See also the Common Basic Principles (CBP) for Immigrant Integration Policy in the EU.⁽³⁾

Only with sensitive policies

However, despite the logic of a potential win-win scenario for many migrants and rural areas, events in 2015-2016 have shown just how sensitive the issue of migration is. There has been evidence of fear and resentment amongst some EU citizens in the face of the number of new arrivals.

Differences between EU Member States are also notable, both in terms of their experience of migration – point of

entry, point along a migrant route or point of destination – and in their response to refugees and asylum seekers. EU Member States have a significant amount of autonomy regarding how they treat asylum seekers and refugees, resulting in great variations of approach.

The main lesson is that integration is not something that can be decreed or imposed. It is a two-way process that has to be wanted by both the host community and the new arrivals.

There is an open, informal working group of National Rural Networks (NRNs) on ‘social inclusion of refugees and immigrants’, currently involving NRNs from Austria, Finland, Germany, Greece, Slovenia and Sweden.

This group will continue to reflect on the evolving situation of migrants and refugees in rural areas in their countries, including relevant policy changes. It will also identify good and interesting practices, funded by the EAFRD and other programmes.

There are already plans for new Transnational Cooperation projects on this topic between partners in at least Finland, Austria and Sweden.

(2) http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/2016/0610-education-skills-factsheet_en.htm

(3) <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/the-eu-and-integration/eu-actions-to-make-integration-work>

Three EAFRD migrant integration themes

The EAFRD-supported projects in this brochure reflect the reality outlined on the previous pages. They are generally small scale and 'soft' in nature. They certainly do not claim to 'solve' the huge and rapidly evolving migrant crisis, but rather reflect the ambitions of certain individuals and groups to provide an improved local response in rural areas.

The projects are presented in three sections reflecting the main areas of activity of EAFRD-supported projects in the field of refugee and migrant integration:

1. **Changing the narrative** – the opening section presents four projects focused on improving awareness and understanding between immigrants and host communities. Key approaches include the use of arts and culture and a range of shared activities to bring communities together and break down barriers.
2. **Skills and the labour market** – the middle section presents four projects focused on supporting immigrants to prepare for labour market entry. Key approaches include the development of language skills, work placements, work-based training, entrepreneurship support, as well as work with employers to encourage the positive use of migrants' skills and experiences.
3. **Coordinated responses** – the final section presents four projects that recognise the need to provide coordinated responses to people's multiple needs across access to employment, services and socio-cultural life. Key approaches have included the use of an 'integration coordinator' as well as coordination of multiple activities by LEADER Local Action Groups (LAGs).

The projects presented come from eight EU Member States: Austria; Finland; Germany; Greece; Italy; Luxembourg; Sweden; and the UK. As stated above, this reflects some of the differences experienced and approaches taken within Member States as well as different local realities.

In general, readers will also note that many of the examples have been supported under LEADER. This is partly due to the flexibility of the LEADER method as well as the willingness of certain local communities to direct their LEADER funding to respond to the local challenges posed by increased immigration.

Most rural areas face enough of their own difficulties and they will face a choice when it comes to helping others. This is not a choice that can be imposed. Nevertheless, this brochure provides inspiring examples of how committed individuals and communities – when provided with the right tools and information – can take practical steps that can benefit both migrants and local rural communities.

Thinking to the future

Thinking to possible future EAFRD-supported projects on migrant integration, a number of interesting and inspiring projects have been collated by 'Social Innovation Europe' in a collection called '**Beyond Crisis: Innovative Approaches to Migrant Integration**',⁽⁴⁾ including a number of technology-based solutions.

See also a **capacity-building manual for NGOs** on 'Promoting the Integration of Migrants and Refugees in Rural Areas'⁽⁵⁾ published in 2016 by the 'EurAcademy Association'.

The ENRD Contact Point Team

(4) <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/socialinnovationeurope/en/magazine/beyond-crisis-migrant-integration>

(5) www.euracademy.org/post-format-video

1. Changing the narrative

A first required step to improving the integration of refugees and migrants is to increase understanding between host communities and new arrivals. Such approaches aim to 'change the narrative' around migration, increasing the likelihood of more positive outcomes for all.

Events in 2015-2016 have shown just how sensitive the issue of migrant integration in Europe is. There have been many examples of solidarity and friendship, but also growing insecurity, fear and resentment among EU citizens, sometimes fanned by prejudice and rumour.

The issue of migration "is still often driven by ill-informed perceptions, which, in turn, can lead to public antagonism towards migration. These negative views risk jeopardising efforts to adapt migration policies to the new economic and demographic challenges facing many countries."

**OECD 'Migration Policy Debates',
May 2014**

The EAFRD projects presented in this section have used various means to try to break down barriers and increase understanding between immigrants and host communities in rural areas. Approaches typically focus on raising awareness and bringing communities together.

Raising awareness

Awareness-raising activities and community engagement can be used to 'humanise' the issues around migration and to start conversations about the broader issues and the lives involved. Arts and culture provide particularly strong means to do this, by overcoming initial linguistic boundaries.

The project presented from Greece (p.12) saw local artists inspired by the emerging migrant situation to portray the reality of the lives affected in visual forms. The pieces ask the audience to relate to the lives affected and draw parallels with their own ancestral history of migration.

The project case from Luxembourg (p.8) used community engagement to design 15 benches that were placed across the Moselle region. These 'integration couches' represent inter-cultural diversity as art pieces, but also act as physical meeting places between communities. They aim to start conversations.

Bringing communities together

Often the simplest and most effective way of breaking down barriers is simply to facilitate physical meeting and interaction between communities. Such approaches create opportunities for communities to get to know each other and help develop the language skills of new arrivals.

The project from Sweden (p.6) used traditional bread baking in wood-heated ovens as an activity to bring locals and immigrants together. The key was to use the physical activity as the starting point for dialogue. Trained volunteers facilitated discussions between participants.

A new project from Austria (p.10) is working with local volunteers and associations to develop cultural initiatives to bring communities together. A first successful initiative has been a weekly craft group (sewing and cross-stitching) that has specially invited immigrant women to join.

These seemingly small everyday acts can create the foundations for a future that enriches the new arrivals and the hosts both economically and culturally.



Baking together, sharing experiences in Sweden

The Swedish 'Bread in Bergslagen' project encouraged the baking of bread together as a means of facilitating cultural exchange. Through a shared love of baking, the local community and arrivals, new and old, came together to learn more about each other's traditions and help non-native speakers pick up the language.

Restoring traditional baking practice

Wood-heated ovens are commonly found in many old cottages across Sweden. 'Arbetarnas Bildningsförbund' (ABF) – the Workers' Educational Association and the project beneficiary – realised that the restoration of these traditional ovens could provide a good opportunity for bringing different sections of the community together over a common gastronomic practice.

"Every culture has bread. There is no right or wrong when it comes to bread – it's just different ways of baking. The question is how can we use bread and baking as an integration tool?"

Barbro Fischerstrom
LAG manager 'LEADER Bergslagen'

The first step of the 'Bread in Bergslagen' project was to take an inventory of all the wood-heated baking ovens in the area belonging to Ecomuseum Bergslagen, which covers the provinces of Dalcarlia, Västmanland and Örebro. Many old ovens that had not been used for decades were then restored and made fully operational. Experts were hired to spread know-how on the restoration and maintenance of these old ovens.

These restored ovens became meeting places for Swedes and those born abroad. Baking was shown to be a simple means of bringing people together. Participation was voluntary with baking meet-ups up to once a week.

Around 300 people were directly involved in the project, of which around 75 were from countries other than Sweden. Including those engaged in the restoration work, the figure rises to more than 1 200.

"Many of our immigrants have baked bread in wood-heated ovens. This leads to a mutual exchange of skills and to a meeting of traditions. Baking together is also a natural way to learn the language."

Eva Långberg
Project manager



© Kristina Litvjak, European Union, 2016

Baking bread is an activity that can bring people from different cultural backgrounds together.

More than bread

The organisers, however, emphasise that the project was about more than just baking. The key was to use the baking experience as an opportunity to start conversations and make connections. Participants shared baking techniques and recipes, but also started to exchange stories and experiences from daily life.

Voluntary leaders were trained to facilitate new contacts among the participants and different themes were chosen for each occasion. The baking groups were a launching point for discussions on topics including equality and women's rights.

The traditional wood ovens were found to be particularly appropriate as an integration tool. Not only was it an activity that people from different cultures could come together around relatively easily, but the longer baking times provided more time for the bakers to talk.

“We talk about much more than just baking. [Everything from] children, schools, buses, weather, shopping, life in general, and of course about Sweden compared to their home countries. There has been a bigger focus on what is actually similar between us, rather than focusing on the differences. In the end, we understand each other better.”

Eva Långberg
Project manager

For the immigrant populations themselves, the project provided a way to understand more about Swedish culture and improve their language skills, facilitating their integration. According to the project organisers, baking was just a means of engaging immigrants, many of whom are now actively involved in sporting activities, fishing and other pastimes.

Ensuring a legacy

The achievements of the project were recognised in Sweden in 2013 when it won a best integration project award. The challenge for the team now is to ensure that the project has a lasting legacy.

Many of the bakers are continuing to bake together, and ABF has organised follow-up courses on baking special kinds of bread. The bread is sold at local food markets and fairs, and discussions have been held to develop a business based on wood-heated baking. The beneficiary’s website links to a wide range of bread recipes and lists a few local stores where the right ingredients can be purchased.

Baking areas as places of integration is a concept that is spreading to other regions of Sweden. But the organisers say that the broader lesson of the project is that many simple everyday activities can become tools of integration. They emphasise that there are more things than bread to use as a starting point for dialogue.

“Integration is about connecting people and creating understanding between individuals. One can never get along with everybody, but there is always someone who can become a good friend.”

Barbro Fischerstrom
LAG manager ‘LEADER Bergslagen’

Project Name	‘Bröd i Bergslagen’ (‘Bread in Bergslagen’)
Type of beneficiary	ABF, Workers’ Educational Association
Period	2010-2013
Project funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total cost: € 135 400 • EAFRD contribution: € 112 200 • Private contribution: € 23 200
Further info	www.abf.se/Distrikt-och-avdelningar/ABF-Dalarna/ABF-Dala-Finnmark/Brod-i-Bergslagen/
Contact	Eva Långberg eva.langberg@abf.se



Baking bread is hard work, but also allows time to start conversations and get to know one another.

© Kristina Lityjak, European Union, 2016

A new 'Integration Pact' in Miselerland, Luxembourg

The 'Integration Pact' project created opportunities for residents from different origins, generations and socio-economic backgrounds to engage in a variety of social exchanges in Luxembourg's Moselle region. The project promoted active participation of all inhabitants in the community through cultural and artistic initiatives.

A new approach to integration

The project started with the creation of a coordination service in 2012 to create closer links between national and municipal authorities working on strategies to integrate non-Luxembourgish residents in the Moselle region. The service fostered a strong network of regional actors, associations and volunteers promoting integration and recognition of diversity.

"Miselerland's rural population is rather conservative so the project aimed to open minds and dissipate fears by bringing communities together. The networking allowed every single municipality and community to benefit from the experiences, the know-how and the assistance of the whole region and the national organisations."

Philippe Eschenauer
Managing Director of LEADER Miselerland

Almost 40 % of Moselle's 37 000 inhabitants are non-Luxembourgish residents, with Portugal, Germany and France among the most significant countries of origin. In the last 50 years, the

population of Moselle has doubled, with many attracted by the region's fast economic growth. More recently, refugees have settled in the area. Some 123 different nationalities live in the villages between Schengen and Wasserbillig.

"We decided not to leave it to chance how all these beautiful people live together and therefore we decided to work out a LEADER project on the question of how we live together".

Philippe Eschenauer
Managing Director of LEADER Miselerland

The 'Integration Pact' project was designed as a bottom-up strategy with many volunteers working on a local level, coordinated by a regional project leader working full-time. The project was based on the principle of integration as a two-way process requiring commitment from both new entrants and the host area.

The project's coordination service worked closely with schools, youth centres, cultural institutions and sports clubs to raise awareness of diversity and develop community activities.



The 'integration couches' act as intercultural meeting places and symbols of social integration.

Integration couches

The project launched a number of activities, including an art competition to design benches and seats to be placed in the area, which were labelled 'integration couches'. These aimed to bring residents of different backgrounds and origins together to create symbolic places for further meetings between community members.

Some 15 integration couches were created, each by a different group of residents aged from three to 88 and from 12 different communities. They worked together to create and decorate seats from a range of materials, including wood, metal, mosaic and even beer cans. Each design was unique and prizes were awarded to the top three artworks.

The project encouraged creativity whilst also stimulating residents in an original way to reflect on how communities live together. The integration couches themselves were placed near to community spaces – such as football pitches, school grounds and footpaths – acting as visible symbols of social integration.

“You get to know people if you get engaged in these integration events. And you see them again at other events. The success of these integration projects is that people notice that the ‘foreigners’ really want to contribute to the region”.

Berto Reijnders
Artist and project volunteer

‘Win(e)tegration’

Other events of the 'Integration Pact' included wine tastings and 'world cafés' between different age and community groups. They also aimed to provide alternative ways to bring people together, to help them to get to know the region and each other better.

The 'Win(e)tegration' initiative brought together winemakers from Luxembourg, France and Germany, members of the integration committees and residents from different backgrounds and origins. Wine-tasting events were organised with a quiz on the wines and region, enabling people to get to know each other in a relaxed and fun setting.

“It is easier to get along with someone you know. That is the key idea of this event. Our goal is to bring people closer through Luxembourg wines. The starting point is to get them to know the region, the Luxembourg Moselle, its wines and its culture”.

Ségolène Charvet
Project coordinator



© LEADER Miselerland

15 integration couches were designed by community groups and installed at locations across the territory.

The additional 'world cafés' initiative brought together local residents over a cup of coffee and some cake. It focused on exchanging experiences and ideas between age groups. The conclusions from the meeting were put together as recommendations for making positive changes within the community.

Building for the future

The projects have had a very positive impact on the communities, bringing people closer together, and increasing opportunities for interaction. In 2015, ten of the area's 14 municipalities decided to widen the network, developing a new series of integration projects. The authorities are also working on an international initiative with partners across the border in Germany.

Project Name	'Integration Pact'
Type of beneficiary	Local Action Group
Period	2012-2014
Project funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total cost: € 216 801 • Combined EAFRD + national contribution: € 145 257 • Municipalities' contribution: € 71 544
Further info	www.mosellediversity.eu
Contact	philippe.eschenauer@miselerland.lu

Finding a home, sharing a homeland in Austria

The 'Heimat.sharing' ('Homeland.Sharing') project in south-eastern Upper Austria is stimulating joint cultural initiatives using LEADER funding. The project is working to generate dialogue, cultural exchange and tolerance.

A desire to change attitudes

The 'Heimat.sharing' LEADER project has been the result of an initiative started in 2014 by Hildegund Morgan, Head of Integration Centre at Caritas Paraplü and Siegfried Kristöfl, a local historian. These two like-minded citizens wanted to better include immigrants in the cultural development of the Traunviertler Alpenvorland region in Austria.

More specifically, they wanted to provide greater integration opportunities for new arrivals and improve attitudes towards immigrants – from seeing them only as 'foreigners' to seeing them as individuals who can contribute their skills and expertise to society.

"Without the comprehensive LEADER Strategy process 2014 for Traunviertler Alpenvorland, this project idea would never have emerged. I had written on a flip chart: 'Immigration as an opportunity – People: give a second home'. Siegfried Kristöfl said: 'Immigration and home – we must make this into a LEADER project'."

Hildegund Morgan
Head of Integration Centre, Caritas Paraplü, Steyr

From 2015 the number of refugees in Austria grew significantly, which further increased the urgency for engagement in the project. The partners felt that instead of merely connecting refugees and migrants with local residents, it was increasingly imperative to help them put down roots in their new homeland. More interaction between communities was required.

New cultural initiatives

The project coordinators have invited members of selected associations and societies in four different villages to put together teams of local residents who would develop cultural projects involving refugees and migrants. The coordinators are coaching these teams to prepare them for various activities. The process and results are being documented and filmed.

The project is also encouraging local volunteers working in libraries, support groups or local heritage clubs to work together with migrants. The hope is that by working together, villagers and newcomers get to know one another through shared interests and, ideally, some of the newcomers may remain committed to the initiative even after the end of the project.



© Daniela Weissensteiner, European Union, 2016

The common activity builds understanding and creates new friendships.

"The project helps a lot to integrate refugees quickly to the local communities. For me, although [it] is more of a cultural project than a project for employment opportunities, it is the most important first step on the chain for developing employment opportunities."

Christian Schilcher
'Traunviertler Alpenvorland' LAG Manager

The first initiative facilitated by 'Heimat.sharing' was a creative group in the village of Garsten run by the 'Goldhaubengruppe' in the Steyr-Land district. 'Goldhauben' are gold-embroidered headwear/bonnets traditionally worn by ladies on special occasions. The tradition of making these bonnets has been revived in the past 50 years in Upper Austria.

As part of the Heimat.sharing project, the 'Goldhaubengruppe Steyr-Land' initiated a weekly creative group, sewing and cross-stitching fashion accessories, such as handbags, shoes and jewellery. Migrants who have lived in the area for some years as well as newly arrived asylum seekers have been specially invited to join this group. The weekly workshops are regularly attended by about six to eight migrants or asylum seekers and six to eight members of the 'Goldhauben' group, as well as other locals.

The common goal of the activity is to create beautiful accessories for an exhibition at the Garstner Christmas market in December 2016. So far, the group has been working on various products: three different types of handbags – sewn, embroidered and woven; sandals; necklaces; and pottery.

Societal benefits

Through the common activities, locals and immigrants meet, learn about one another, enjoy each other's company and come to rely on one another. Immigrants bring fresh energy with new ideas and experiences; locals see the newcomers in a new and different light.

By using elements of culture in an open, inviting way, the project aims to gently integrate newcomers into their new home and culture. The immigrants can also significantly improve their language skills in such an environment. Many more workshops and events are planned for the near future.

The strength and success of all these initiatives cannot be measured in absolute terms, but only in the effect they have on the hearts and minds of those involved.

"Tuesday [is] my best day. I go to my family. My family, this is the group in Garsten, where we sew together."

Rania Mohammed Kara
Immigrant and 'Goldhauben' crafter

"The atmosphere here is truly amazing. I'm so happy here. At first, I was totally sceptical. I thought, how would we communicate? But that was never a problem. This is quite wonderful!"

Sabine Well
Local resident and 'Goldhauben' crafter

Project Name	'Heimat.sharing' (Homeland.Sharing')
Type of beneficiary	Local Action Group
Period	2016-2018
Project funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total cost: €73200 • EAFRD contribution: €46848 • National contribution: €11712
Further info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.leader-alpenvorland.at • www.paraplue-steyr.at
Contact	schilcher@leader-alpenvorland.at



© Daniela Weissensteiner, European Union, 2016

The creative working group makes products such as shoes to be sold later at market.

An artistic response in Lesvos, Greece

The Greek project ‘Culture as a Lever for Sustainable Development’ became a platform where participating artists and local society discussed and tried to present an understanding of the unfolding refugee crisis on the island of Lesvos.

This inter-territorial cooperation project between Greek islands was part of the activities of the network ‘Nisson Periplous’ (‘Sailing around the islands’), which brings together 11 local development agencies, all of which act as LEADER Local Action Groups (LAGs). The network aims to stimulate sustainable local development by exploiting local know-how, traditions, architecture, gastronomy, art, etc.

“The most important lesson learned was about the importance of networking in times of crisis such as this. It generates new ideas and it gives comfort and hope because, as we all say, there is strength in numbers.”

Anastasios M. Perimenis
Director of ‘ETAL SA’

Arts meets migration

In May 2015, the project partner ‘ETAL SA’ – the Lesvos local development agency – organised the ‘Greek Islands Art Spring’ festival in Lesvos. Alongside, 39 representatives from the 11 island LAGs participated in a conference on ‘Culture as a lever for sustainable development’.

The festival brought together 145 artists specialising in different art forms. A series of events included exhibitions, workshops, book presentations and two masterclasses.

When the project activities coincided with a major influx of refugees, the events and workshops quickly became a forum to address the unfolding drama. For many local participants the events recalled their own ancestral history of displacement from Asia Minor in 1922.

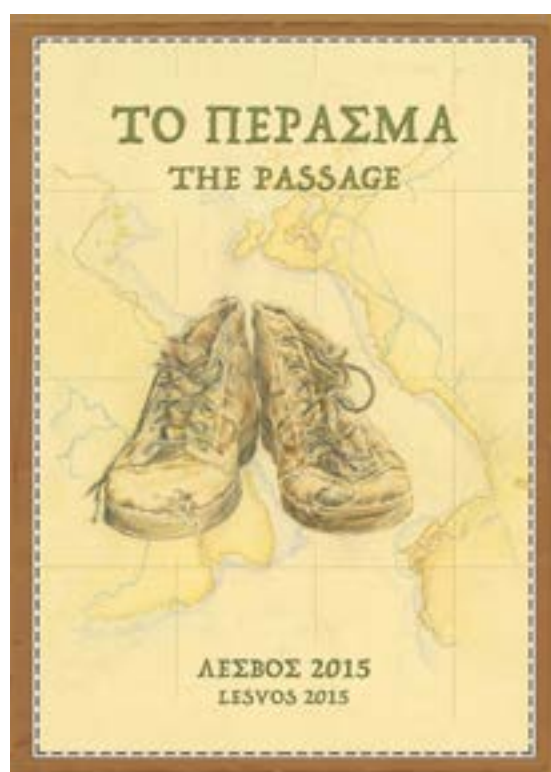
“Migrants had been arriving on the island for several years, but this was beyond anyone’s imagination: 7 000 – 8 000 refugees were arriving on the island every day...”

Anastasios M. Perimenis
Director of ‘ETAL SA’
Humanising the refugee crisis

The result was a series of highly sensitive works of art inspired by the crisis, war and related social issues. Many of these are presented in three albums produced by ‘ETAL SA’: a graphic novel titled ‘The Seagulls’; an album of artwork titled ‘Insularity – Study in a Place’; and a depiction of the local situation of the refugee crisis in an artwork album titled ‘The Passage’.

These albums were used to highlight the human reality of the migrants’ situation and to raise awareness of their dramatic situation. They ask the audience to connect with the lives being affected, change attitudes to the unfolding crisis and encourage a more positive, humane response.

Project Name	‘Culture as a Lever for Sustainable Development’
Type of beneficiary	Local Action Group
Period	May-June 2015
Project funding	Total cost: ~€ 75 000 EAFRD contribution: ~€ 64 000 Private contribution: ~€ 11 000
Further info	www.youtube.com/watch?v=KDM_YukKE3Q&feature=youtu.be
Contact	amperimenis@etal-sa.gr



A book of illustrations portrays the rootlessness experienced by refugees fleeing from conflict.

2. Skills and the labour market

Opportunities to become economically self-sufficient are crucial to successful integration into society in the medium to long term, as well as to personal dignity. Skills development, work placements and business-development support can all be valuable depending on each individual's profile.

Access to work for new arrivals is key for their integration and can also generate important new energy in the local economy. The positive effects can be particularly pronounced in rural areas experiencing greater population ageing and decline, and closures of local services.

Building on existing skills and experience is the best way to ensure immigrants can make the most positive contribution to the labour market and society. But even for highly skilled immigrants, this will require some adaptation to their new context, notably in terms of language skills.

"[T]wo thirds of highly educated third country migrants work in low or medium skilled occupations or simply fail to find employment."

European Commission
'A New Skills Agenda for Europe, Skills and Integration of Migrants' ⁽¹⁾

Skills and training

Although considerable differences exist between Member States in terms of immigrants' right to work, projects can play a vital role by reinforcing skills and experience that will facilitate eventual labour market entry.

A project from Sweden (p.20) developed a seven-month training programme for immigrants focused on employable skills in gardening and agriculture. The course also enables language learning and the beneficiary supports the trainees with job applications and contacts with employers.

The project presented from Italy (p.14) provided a combined training for immigrants and unemployed locals in horticulture and agriculture. Several trainees then went on to benefit from a work placement in local organisations. Another outcome has been a new association focused on migrant integration.

(1) <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=15616&langId=en>

Workplace integration

Even with the right skills, support is still essential for immigrants to access work. Obstacles can include a lack of recognition of existing skills, language barriers, a lack of knowledge of the local employment system and cultural misunderstanding between employers and new arrivals.

A project case from Sweden (p.16) showed how a sustainable social enterprise could be created using the specialist cooking skills of migrants, based on the traditions and practices from their countries of origin.

A project from the UK (p.18) provided support to potential new business start-ups by migrants. The approach, based on mentoring and peer-to-peer support, is a free, community-led service that recognises that for some new arrivals, entrepreneurship can be the best option.

The projects highlight that successful integration into the labour market requires personalised approaches that recognise and build on existing skills and capacities. Support itineraries can involve a training element, voluntary work, placements, direct employment and/or support with setting up a business.



Work training and placements in rural Italy

The 'Terre e Comuni' (Land and Municipalities) project provided training and work placements to young unemployed immigrants and local people in Frosinone, central Italy. It has resulted in a new association working in close cooperation with the local asylum centre to provide new opportunities to young immigrants.

'Terre e Comuni' was a LEADER project carried out between February and July 2015 by the LAG 'Lazio Part of the Abruzzo National Park' (VERLA), Central Italy. It fitted into a wider project led by the social enterprise 'Borghi Artistici' (in Rome), which set up a social network of Italian stakeholders and immigrants, supported by the European Social Fund (ESF) since 2014.

Work placements

The project activities saw the initial training, for 100 hours, of 46 unemployed young people in the area of 'VERLA' LAG. Of these, 27 were Italian and 19 immigrants from various African countries, including Gambia, Mali and Nigeria.

Following the training, ten of the participants were then selected to spend one month either in a local association ('Myosotis'), or at the LAG premises. Of these, half were Italians and half were immigrants.

"Even a tiny effort like ours had a tangible impact... From a human point of view, it was indeed a remarkable experience."

Tiziana Rufo
Manager, 'VERLA' LAG

Those working with Myosotis participated in gardening activities and/or the building of infrastructure. New installations included a bird watching structure and a traditional 'boucou' (barn) from Mali.

The project participants produced an assessment of best practices to easing the involvement of immigrants in the local economic and social context. They also generated a census of vacant land in five municipalities on the LAG territory that could potentially be allocated to unemployed people for their use.

The project developed a working relationship with a nearby refugee centre, 'Atina-Sora'. One of the



Young Italians and immigrants followed a course of agricultural training together.

outcomes of this collaboration was a database of the background and skills of 40 of the immigrants staying in the centre.

In addition, the LAG promoted various initiatives to raise locals' awareness of the situation facing refugees. Having been initially concerned that local administrators and residents would be prejudiced against refugees and asylum seekers, the LAG found that they proved sympathetic with the project once they gained a better understanding of the immigrants' condition.

"We learnt that we are too often afraid of what we do not know: when we start relating to other people the initial fears fade away..."

Tiziana Rufo
Manager, 'VERLA' LAG

sold throughout Italy – 1 500 tomato plants were planted in May 2016;

- the launch of a catering service at local scale to provide small and medium-sized private events with multi-ethnic cuisine prepared by immigrants jointly with unemployed people. In its first month of activity, it proved a success with more than 15 requests for the service;
- the kick-off of several cultural activities, which are proving very effective in integrating immigrants in the local rural context (e.g. photo exhibitions and courses).

"Our project proved very successful, mainly due to the LAG's strong experience and support"

Silvia Di Passio
President, Rise Hub association

Long-term results

As a consequence of the 'Terre e Comuni' project activities, a new association – 'Rise Hub' – was established soon after the project's end, in October 2015. Rise Hub is composed of 13 members. Two of the five immigrants that participated in the second phase of the initial project are now active members of this association.

"The project helped immigrants to change their perspective: when they first arrived here they were looking to move to another place. Now, they are starting to consider what opportunities can be found in the countryside."

Silvia Di Passio
President, Rise Hub association

Project Name	'Terre & Comuni' ('Land and Municipalities')
Type of beneficiary	'VERLA' LAG (Alvito-Lazio, Italy)
Period	February-July 2015
Project funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total budget: €56 000 • EAFRD contribution: €6 000 • ESF contribution: €50 000
Further info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.galverla.eu • www.risehub.org
Contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tiziana Rufo (LAG VERLA): galverla@gmail.com • Silvia di Passio (Rise Hub association): info@risehub.org

Rise Hub is a laboratory for social innovation at local scale: it aims at spreading a culture of solidarity and integration, and at enhancing local cultural identities.

The association has continued the positive relation with the asylum centre 'Atina-Sora', improving its capacity to go beyond the essential, primary reception of immigrants, and enabling it to pursue a real integration of these people in the rural context nearby.

Another indicator of the positive impact of the project is that the social enterprise Borghi Artistici is currently raising its social capital to sustain new initiatives, and that the Rise Hub association will soon engage in new, bigger projects.

Recent progress in the area, jointly launched or supported by the 'VERLA' LAG and the Rise Hub association include:

- the set-up of micro-credit lending to refugees to facilitate their access to small farming activities;
- the start of the 'Tomato project', which mixes unemployed local young people and immigrants in establishing fresh tomato production to be



Several immigrants have become engaged in the Rise Hub association that has resulted from the project.

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Integration through cooking in Sweden

The 'Provins Mat' project used the hidden cooking skills of female immigrants to create a successful enterprise with six employees in the municipality of Botkyrka in Sweden. The support received under the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) was crucial during the starting process.

The municipality of Botkyrka outside Stockholm has one of Sweden's highest percentages of first- and second-generation immigrants.

The 'Provins Mat' ('Province Food') project in Botkyrka was the idea of Josefin Uhnborn, a political scientist who was working as a job coach for female immigrants in Stockholm.

"The idea was born out of frustration with the difficulties with my work. The women I met had one thing in common: they were all far from the labour market."

Josefin Uhnborn
Founder and CEO, 'Provins Mat' Ltd

Through involvement in various non-profit activities, Ms Uhnborn had been in contact with social innovation and social entrepreneurship. She saw there was great potential to create something successful and sustainable within these concepts.

One of the challenges was to find and develop a sustainable business concept. The immigrant women formed a very heterogeneous group with different skills and levels of education. A theme that could unite them was food and so the idea of a private company in the food industry was born.

"As the women often talked about their cooking, it was quite natural to focus on that. I had also encountered companies of this kind in the USA, so I knew that similar concepts had been tested and had been proven to work."

Josefin Uhnborn
Founder and CEO, 'Provins Mat' Ltd

A new social enterprise

'Provins Mat' created a catering business in late 2011 with start-up support from the EAFRD. It recruited its cooks through the local employment service, but also tried to get in touch with people who could not be reached through formal channels.

The priority was to find women who were energetic and able to cook interesting and exciting food. It was not a requirement that the women had any qualifications or professional experience in the food industry. The business was based on the culinary traditions of the women's different homelands.

"The EAFRD support was very valuable for us. The money meant that we got that extra time to test the idea. By the time we took the step out on the market I knew that the idea was working, that we would be able to produce, sell and get a profitable business."

Josefin Uhnborn
Founder and CEO, 'Provins Mat' Ltd

The social enterprise started with two employees, a woman from Iraq and a woman from Pakistan. The business also prioritised local food producers as much as possible.

Customers soon discovered the exciting new food company and requests rapidly grew in numbers. As demand grew, more women were employed. At its peak, it had six women employed full or part time, in addition to the manager and a production manager.

In 2013, 'Provins Mat' was established as a private limited company offering catering to both individuals and enterprises. It also found suitable permanent premises after renting different kitchens during the first two years of the project.

The sustainability challenge

Josefin Uhnborn's focus was on innovation and demonstrating the community benefits gained from the company. She did not want to run the business herself long term and looked for partners to take it over.

Unfortunately, she was not able to find a person or organisation to take over the company. She believes



© Josefin Uhnborn

Josefin Uhnborn created a social enterprise employing the cooking skills of immigrant women.



© Erik Olsson

Women from countries including Pakistan and Iraq were able to use their culinary traditions to drive a new social enterprise.

the initiative was too new and unknown for companies in the food sector. At the same time, it was outside of the typical scope of activities of many social organisations. “We ended up in a gap because we were not a traditional food company and not a regular social activity,” she argues.

Although the company closed in 2015, Ms Uhnbom is very positive about the model she demonstrated. ‘Provins Mat’ created a number of real jobs for foreign-born women, thousands of customers got to meet exciting new cuisines and she herself had a positive learning experience.

“I’m really proud of what I did. I saw a challenge and found a solution by using these women’s competence and professional pride. The concept worked, no doubt, creating real jobs. My hope for the future is that more people in the business sector realise that we need more companies that work with sustainability, if we are to succeed in getting people into work.”

Josefin Uhnbom
Founder and CEO, ‘Provins Mat’ Ltd

Project Name	‘Provins Mat’ ('Province Food')
Type of beneficiary	Private individual
Period	2011-2013
Project funding	EAFRD contribution: € 36 051
Further info	http://matlandet.se/365/josefin-uhnbo-m-fran-provins-blev-forsta-jan-moback-stipendiat/
Contact	josefin@uhnbo-m.com

New-business support for migrants in rural Scotland

'GrowBiz' has provided a network of personal and business support for new enterprises in rural Perthshire, Scotland through mentoring, peer support groups and one-on-one advice. The free community-led service is helping individuals from all backgrounds, creating a vibrant rural community and new opportunities for businesses to collaborate.

'GrowBiz' was founded in 2007 to provide local support to entrepreneurs in Perthshire in Scotland, who were often unable to access traditional business advice due to family, health, time or distance constraints. The service is personal, local and flexible, giving help at a time and place to suit the individual.

The creation of a network of businesses has provided opportunities for collaboration, new contacts and self-sustaining support groups. The service has been particularly successful for helping women and migrants.

Creating a strong local network

The initial network was based on a volunteer board of up to ten people from the community and a local Enterprise Coordinator who provides the first contact to help individuals in one-on-one meetings to identify what they need to get started with their business. This might be talking through a project, getting

started with business planning or identifying ideas for training and development.

The service developed peer-support meetings, helping individuals meet others who are setting up or running their own businesses in a friendly informal session. The meetings involve roundtable discussions to brainstorm ways of solving a problem and to meet others with whom to collaborate. Meetings are also organised for specific groups such as women in business or tourism enterprises.

The model expanded to include a wider network of volunteers called 'GrowBiz Xchange', a group from a range of professional backgrounds, wishing to share their skills and help others achieve their goals. This network can also provide practical solutions to problems faced by clients such as finding premises for their business or knowledge of different types of funding.

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GrowBiz is a free, community-led entrepreneurship-support service in rural Scotland.

Helping migrants take root

Many migrants attracted to the area of Eastern and Highland Perthshire to work, particularly in the agriculture sector, are keen to stay after the expiry of their contracts but they are often in search of viable employment options, contacts and advice.

“People in rural communities appreciate support which is locally-based, using local people with relevant knowledge and contacts. They also appreciate an inclusive approach, where everyone in the community feels they can use the services”.

Jackie Brierton

‘GrowBiz’ Enterprise Coordinator

‘GrowBiz’ collaborated with the ‘Minority Communities Hub’ project, a network of support and advice for people from minority backgrounds. The hub provided interpreting or translation support for migrant workers approaching ‘GrowBiz’ for guidance in setting up businesses. ‘GrowBiz’ works with around 120 individuals or groups a year, of which between 10% and 15% are migrants to the area.

‘GrowBiz’ currently works with ten clients, either establishing new businesses or growing existing ones. Businesses include outdoor activities, cleaning, interpreting, crafts, a biodynamic garden, as well as photography.

The network of support from the local community can provide migrants with the confidence, information and contacts they need to start their own business. Such individuals are often keen to give back to the community by providing help such as translation or advice to others wishing to begin their own start-ups.

Long-lasting success

‘GrowBiz’ has helped over 500 individuals, small companies and social enterprises, creating more than 100 new businesses and over 200 jobs in the Eastern and Highland areas of Perthshire. The model has also proven sustainable with fewer than 5% of the businesses that received support ceasing their trade over the last four years.

During this process, there have been many other positive impacts on individuals and the community as a whole. These include boosting self-confidence and business planning skills, as well as increased collaboration and volunteering initiatives within the community.

The creation of a self-sustaining network of businesses has given participants a sense of belonging to a wider community. The successful ‘GrowBiz’ model is now attracting interest from other rural areas in Scotland and around the UK.

Project Name	‘GrowBiz’
Type of beneficiary	Community-based Enterprise Support
Period	2009-2016
Project funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total budget: €627 050 • EAFRD contribution: €166 360 • National/regional co-financing: €268 735 • Private funds: €107 494 • Other sources: €84 459
Further info	www.growbiz.co.uk
Contact	coordinator@growbiz.co.uk



Edie from Albania has accessed GrowBiz peer support to help develop her business idea.

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Green enterprise introduction course in Sweden

A cooperative association in Sweden received support from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) to offer a tailored course aimed at immigrants. The introductory course improved their language skills and built on their experience of rural life to increase their prospects of finding work.

Designing a training course

The Swedish cooperative association 'Macken i Araby' obtained funding under the Rural Development Programme to set up a new training model for immigrants living in local rural areas.

It first established a steering group to explore how the training could be constructed. To help this process, the group assessed similar initiatives, in particular a two-year course that was set up in Östergötland, Sweden.

The group decided to provide a targeted seven-month training programme that would focus on practical skills to help the immigrants find work in rural Sweden. The next phase was to find a location for the course: the local agricultural secondary school in Ingelstad, which is in the countryside just south of Växjö, was chosen.

"Our point of reference was the demand for labour in the countryside, which was mainly for animal keepers and clearance work in the forest."

Karin Borgenvall
Training programme manager

'Macken i Araby' has continued to support the trainees beyond the duration of the training programme. In particular, it has helped with job applications and introductions, putting the trainees into contact with companies and providing networking opportunities.

Such efforts led to the full-time employment of one of the trainees – who had previous experience in animal husbandry – on a farm and temporary jobs for several others.

Project Name	Introduction course for immigrants in green enterprise
Type of beneficiary	Cooperative association
Period	2010-2012
Project funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total cost: ~ €74 000 • EAFRD contribution: ~€11 500 • Other sources: ~€63 500
Further info	www.macken.coop

Improving job prospects

Eight immigrants received training in areas in which they had previous experience, covering agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry and gardening. The trainees were also interns at a range of agricultural companies for one or two days a week – a total of 37 days. The course also allowed them to learn Swedish in a practical way.

The association is continuing to offer training to immigrants. Lessons learned have included better targeting of the course to end in time for spring agricultural work.

"The school has previously had some hostility towards immigrants. These days we are greatly appreciated at the school and we're trying to find ways to increase the contact between the school's pupils and ours."

Karin Borgenvall
Training programme manager



The seven-month training course targeted employable skills in agriculture.

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3. Coordinated responses

Full integration means addressing the breadth of an individual's personal, social and economic life. Coordinated responses can help ensure that the provision of increased inter-cultural understanding, economic self-sufficiency and access to services are joined up.

Real integration is a multifaceted process, which goes beyond inter-cultural understanding or access to the labour market and involves housing, education, health, social services, as well as personal, political and cultural life. Obstacles in any one of these areas can have knock-on effects on others.

Coordinated responses and pathways to integration for new immigrants need to start by identifying their individual needs and the multiple obstacles they face. Targeted interventions and activities can then be matched with available resources and additional support mobilised where needed.

With this vision, all the projects in this final section of the brochure try to take a holistic approach, identifying migrants' multiple needs and developing approaches to address them. The most successful include coordination elements to ensure that interventions are as joined up and complementary as possible.

Recognising the multifaceted nature of integration also means accepting that the competences and resources required for developing longer term solutions cross over many departments, organisations and groups. In many cases, projects involve someone standing up and taking on the coordination role – often a LEADER Local Action Group (LAG).

Bringing stakeholders together

A project presented from Austria (p.25) saw LAGs, NGOs and regional development associations join forces to prepare a coordinated response. They created working groups and 'competence teams' of professionals to improve cultural and employment responses for migrants.

A project in Germany (p.26) was inspired by an NGO activist and received LEADER support to inform and guide volunteers working with migrants across the territory. An online platform encourages exchange and support between a wide range of local actions.

Integration coordinators

The example from Finland (p.22) goes even further. The LAG provided a dedicated 'integration coordinator' for the municipality of Punkalaidun. This person is the main contact for immigrants throughout their time in the area. She supports and guides them in accessing any services they require, including schools, jobs and healthcare. She is always on hand to solve problems and support ongoing integration.

In a second project from Austria (p.28) a LAG took the role of supporting municipalities to respond to the influx of migrants. It provided project management and coordination support to the municipalities and also funds to harmonise efforts involving the police, NGOs, volunteers etc.

Successful approaches to the integration of migrants require multiple local solutions based on local needs. Without resorting to top-down public policy approaches, these projects show the value of coordinating and harmonising local activities and providing stakeholders with the support they need to make a positive difference.



Coordinating integration in rural Finland

The ‘Immigrants Villages’ LEADER project has promoted the integration of immigrants into Finnish society using a dedicated integration coordinator. The award-winning project has encouraged immigrants to stay in rural areas, increasing the vitality of the villages.

Starting in 2011, the rural municipality of Punkalaidun in western Finland implemented an ambitious integration project with the support of the ‘Joutsenten Reitti’ LEADER Local Action Group (LAG). This aimed to improve the integration possibilities for the many immigrants passing through a local refugee centre.

The principal motivations behind the project were twofold. Firstly, out of solidarity towards people who have had to leave their homes and start anew often to avoid war or conflict. Secondly, Punkalaidun has experienced population decline and ageing in recent years and local agricultural businesses and SMEs have often needed seasonal labour.

An integration coordinator

The municipality of Punkalaidun hired an integration coordinator to act as the first contact person and point of reference for migrants and refugees in the area. The integration coordinator, Maarit Tiittanen, helps solving the everyday problems facing the new arrivals. She is also a bridge-builder between the newcomers and local citizens, including local services and employers.

“The toughest aspect has been building up mutual trust and respect.”

Maarit Tiittanen

Integration coordinator, Punkalaidun

Ms Tiittanen is part of the welcoming team when a refugee first arrives in the community. She often picks up the newcomers at the airport and she remains as their main contact for the entire time they are in Punkalaidun. She involves the local community from



Integration coordinator Maarit Tiittanen gets to know every family she supports.

the start, encouraging them to donate used furniture, clothes and anything that might be needed for the new family to settle in.

A key element is helping them to access the municipal and other public services that they need, such as schools, jobs and health care. The needs of each individual and family are different, so the role of the coordinator is essential in providing the specific help and guidance required.

Cultural integration

Cultural and linguistic understanding is one of the first priorities for successful integration. The integration coordinator organises language lessons which are a prerequisite for many forms of activity, from basic social interaction to professional training. Cultural awareness education is also provided to explain social practices and customs in Finland.

The integration coordinator connects the immigrants with local residents through clubs and activities according to the interests and profile of each individual or family. This can include sports clubs, village development associations, churches, businesses and other public, private and third sector operators.

“It is important to bring different cultures together and break those possible cultural barriers. We have had multicultural festivals like thanksgiving, concerts and a fishing day with the entire village.”

Maarit Tiittanen

Integration coordinator, Punkalaidun

A variety of events were organised with local stakeholders, including blueberry picking, a fishing day, playing football and a Christmas party. Additional activities designed to support better integration have included everything from clothes distribution days, family clubs, homework clubs, handicraft clubs and clubs for mothers and children.

Workplace integration

Long-term integration is best supported by access to paid employment. To facilitate this, the skills and practical knowledge of the newcomer are assessed to find a suitable sector in which training can be done.

Partnerships were developed with local businesses. This included the provision of € 10 000 in co-funding contribution from 29 local businesses



© Maarit Tiittanen

Language classes can be important elements of successful integration.

and associations. However, the real value of the cooperation is in providing opportunities for workplace trainings and paid employment and the development of supportive relationships. “If we need something, we phone each other,” highlights Ms Tiittanen.

The first contact between a refugee and a company takes place during a training phase. This is organised together with the employment office. This initial ‘trial’ period can enable the immigrant to develop new skills, improve their language abilities and to see if he or she is the right person for the job in a longer term.

“My job is to act as the contact person between the refugee and the employment office, and I also accompany the person to his/her new company.”

Maarit Tiittanen
Integration coordinator, Punkalaidun

This process has provided a traineeship or school place for 80 refugees in Punkalaidun. Furthermore, it has resulted in permanent jobs for six new arrivals. If the training phase does not lead to a permanent job, Ms Tiittanen is there to accompany the person to the next opportunity.

The collaboration with several local companies, restaurants and farms has provided additional advantages. In one concrete example, the plastic manufacturer Vanttilan Muovi hired the father

of one immigrant family from Burma. They soon realised that the family was paying high rent for their housing. The company supported the family to buy a house of their own.

The change in circumstances of this family is striking. They had spent four years in a refugee camp in Thailand before coming to Finland, with no running water or electricity. “Today, they have a proper home. It is a modest home by Finnish standards, but perfect for this family,” stresses Ms Tiittanen.

“Once the training phase is over and if, unfortunately, it doesn’t lead to a permanent job, we think of the next step, whether another training in another sector/company or studying. My aim is to keep them active.”

Maarit Tiittanen
Integration coordinator, Punkalaidun

Recognition and follow-up

After four years of implementation, the integration scheme has received a number of awards, including a certificate of honour at the Satakunta Rural Gala in autumn 2014. The ‘Joutsenten Reitti’ LAG chose it as their ‘LEADER project of the year’ in 2013 due to its improved ‘internationalisation of Punkalaidun’ and ‘breaking the barriers of prejudice between cultures at grassroots level’.

The refugees have had a very positive impact on the local economy. The Finnish state pays for most of their service needs, providing a small daily subsistence allowance. Although, this allowance is not high, it has enabled the refugees to buy their essentials locally, increasing the sales of local shops. Those who have found paid work can make an even greater contribution.

“Before, reception centre residents left Punkalaidun as soon as they could and moved into cities, but now, thanks to the integration efforts, some of them stay, become entrepreneurs and work here. Refugees have brought new energy to the area, in both social and economic terms.”

Petri Rinne
 Manager of ‘Joutsenten Reitti’ LAG

The LEADER project has provided the integration coordinator with an excellent basis to continue her outstanding work. Furthermore, one of the main objectives of the ‘Joutsenten Reitti’ LAG now is to share the knowledge and experience accumulated in the past years, particularly through the opportunities for inter-territorial and transnational LEADER cooperation. “We are open to potential partners,” highlights Petri Rinne.

A new project has recently been launched called ‘Immigrants in the everyday life of rural areas’. Also funded by the ‘Joutsenten Reitti’ LAG, the project aims to spread Punkalaidun’s integration practices

to the municipalities of Huittinen, Hämeenkyrö and Sastamala. The new project is also led by Maarit Tiittanen who is keen to spread the benefits of these practices that have proven to be positive for both immigrants and local communities.

Project name	‘Migrants to Villages’
Type of Beneficiary	LEADER Local Action Group
Period	2011-2014
Project funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total budget: €110600 • EAFRD contribution: €42000 • State & municipal contribution: €57540 • Private contribution: €11060
Further info	http://punkalaidun.fi/sivu.tmpl?sivu_id=9366
Contact	maarit.tiittanen@punkalaidun.fi

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Social events are used to bring communities and individuals together.

Building intercultural competence in Austria

The Austrian project 'RIKK' worked to develop regional, intercultural competences in the Vöcklabruck und Gmunden region. It provided a more unified approach to many complementary initiatives supporting better integration of immigrants.

The 'RIKK' project was a collaboration between associations for the regional development of Vöcklabruck and Gmunden, the Regional Caritas, the Local Action Groups (LAGs) 'Vöckla-Ager' and 'Traunstein Region', and the educational centre Maximilianhaus.

To prepare a coordinated response to the influx of new arrivals, the project partners started with a survey of the work and resources already devoted to 'intercultural' issues by SMEs, municipalities, social organisations, farms and other relevant organisations in the region.

"A great many private individuals and professional groups were already working with migrants in this region."

Silke Fahrer

Regional Manager of Labour and Social Affairs,
Project Coordinator

Working together, living together

'RIKK' established 'competence teams' involving representatives of particular professions to develop training opportunities for migrants and refugees.

In one example, a group of human resource managers formed a competence team to exchange experiences and help medium-sized companies deal with the complexities of a multicultural workforce.

The companies were able to learn from one another and benefit from each other's experiences. In addition, they assisted others to find skilled workers and apprentices. Having recognised the value of such dialogue, the Chamber of Commerce in Vöcklabruck started working closely with this exchange group.

"We have brought people with different interests and approaches in contact – which adds a new dimension to the discussion. Everyone in the region benefits from coexisting in intercultural harmony."

Wilhelm Seuffer-Wasserthal

Spokesman for Maximilianhaus and 'RIKK'

To provide greater opportunities for young migrants, the competence teams specifically reached out to youth workers and school teachers with advice to tailor their training.

'RIKK' also targeted improved language skills for migrants. It created a support group for teachers of German as a second language – using the existing

'DaZ Talks' model – to improve teaching of young migrants. It also provided a course on 'Interpreting in the municipal sector' in 2012.

Evolving attitudes

Efforts to raise awareness of the benefits of cultural diversity among the local population, included a public seminar on attitudes to immigration and regular lectures and workshops.

An 'Intercultural Gardens' working group brought local residents and migrants together to plan and create gardens in the towns of Gmunden, St. Georgen and Ebensee.

Schools and young people were specifically targeted. 'RIKK' launched a peer-to-peer education programme for secondary school pupils to exchange and learn about intercultural competences.

The 'RIKK' project came to an end in December 2015. However, a number of its initiatives and the regional networking platform will continue to provide information, build bridges and stimulate intercultural cooperation.

Project Name	'Regional, interkulturell, kompetent', RIKK ('Regional, Intercultural, Competent')
Type of beneficiary	LAGs, NGO, Education Centre
Period	2011-2013
Project funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total cost: €237 500 • EAFRD contribution: €51 163 • Other sources: €186 337
Further info	www.rikk.or.at
Contact	wilhelm.seufer@dioezese-linz.at

‘My community – make yourself at home’, Germany

The ‘Meine Gemeinde – Heimat für alle’ (‘My Community – make yourself at home’) project brought together local stakeholders into inclusion working groups using LEADER support. They developed a range of activities to promote migrant integration, tapping into the energy of more than 1 000 local volunteers.

Caritas call to action

In 2012, Caritas Kempten-Oberallgäu had a first meeting with representatives of various churches and municipalities to find practical ways to deal with the complex issue of inclusion at all levels of society. The vision was that all people should have the freedom to shape their life, participate in community activities, have equal opportunities and free access to social, political and cultural life, and work.

Caritas approached the LEADER Local Action Group (LAG), ‘Regionalentwicklung Oberallgäu e.V.’ to look for possible cooperation in 2013. Their ideas resonated with the work of the LAG, as it had already been active in developing innovative projects for the development of the area covering 27 municipalities.

“Every project needs someone who is taking responsibility and is making sure that the idea becomes a project. In this project this person was Dr. Armin Ruf of Caritas.”

Dr Sabine Weizenegger

‘Regionalentwicklung Oberallgäu’ LAG manager

As it turned out, the timing for cooperation could not have been more opportune. Summer 2013 saw the arrival of the first refugees associated with the current wave in Kempten-Oberallgäu. This process intensified the need to work together on how the local community could deal with the new arrivals. The result was the ‘Meine Gemeinde – Heimat für alle’ project.

Integration working groups

Within the LAG, municipal representatives, business and social partners have an equal say when it comes to deciding which actions have to be taken. An important aspect is citizen participation both on the decision and implementation levels. This encourages people to take responsibility for their community, but also greater political and social engagement in projects like ‘Meine Gemeinde’.

With guidance and consultancy support from the LAG, the project brought together existing boards, advisory committees and representatives of the



Many language courses are delivered across the territory to help immigrants to learn German.

local government into working groups for inclusion. These groups planned and coordinated different activities, acting as ‘steering groups’ for the inclusion process.

“We had several common activities between professionals and volunteers supported by LEADER. Most of the time, the total cost for this type of project is comparatively low, but still the funding is indispensable – and the effects are priceless.”

Dr Sabine Weizenegger
‘Regionalentwicklung Oberallgäu’ LAG manager

‘Meine Gemeinde’ mobilised more than 1 000 volunteers in Oberallgäu and 400 in Kempten to help with the inclusion activities. To carry out their tasks successfully, the working groups and municipalities provided the volunteers with guidance and information. Representatives of the local government played a key role in providing inter-municipal communication to connect people.

The project provided an online platform (‘Inklusionsmelder’ – inclusion detector) – to communicate existing services and examples of good practice. The platform offers information and details on the benefits of inclusion, as well as specific activities, job and training offers, and contact people.

A formal launch took place to attract media attention and inform a wider audience. The platform also became better known after presentation at a local trade fair and more people started to post their projects working with refugees and migrants.

Activities across the region

The project highlighted and promoted exchange on a wide range of integration activities in the region. Most of the initiatives involved groups, associations, churches and volunteers making an effort to reach out and include new arrivals in their activities. The range of activities included gardening, amateur theatre and football.

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Immigrants and locals come together through activities such as football.

“If a community is able to recognise, appreciate and use the benefits of diversity, society will become more knowledgeable and competent. Safety and quality of life will increase because inclusive cultures can deal better with threats.”

Dr Armin Ruf
Caritas, Project manager

Efforts were also made to meet specific needs. For example, a coordinator of the ‘Kleiderkammer’ collected and distributed clothes to refugees. In the beginning the clothes were given out for free, but it was found that it is better to charge a small fee. In this way, the refugees do not feel that they are receiving ‘charity’, but going shopping.

A notable feature was the number of initiatives focused on children and young people. This included language classes and volunteers helping migrant children with their homework – many older people volunteered for such tasks.

“The LAG Regionalentwicklung Oberallgäu has received new project ideas that can build on the project “Meine Gemeinde – Heimat für alle”. The funding of the project is over, but the task has just begun.”

Dr Sabine Weizenegger
‘Regionalentwicklung Oberallgäu’ LAG manager

Project Name	‘Meine Gemeinde – Heimat für Alle’ (‘My Community – a Home for All’)
Type of beneficiary	NGO Caritasverband Kempten-Oberallgäu e.V
Period	2013-2015
Project funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total cost: €56 558 • EAFRD contribution: €8 461 • Bavarian regional contribution: €12 265 • Other sources: €35 832
Further info	www.heimatfueralle.de
Contact	weizenegger@regionalentwicklung-oberallgaeu.de

Integration in municipalities of Austria

In the Elsbeere-Wienerwald region of Austria, the LEADER Local Action Group (LAG) is providing support to municipalities to respond to the influx of migrants and refugees. Efforts have covered raising awareness, fostering intercultural exchange and supporting access to services and employment.

Working together, stronger

The need for shelter for new arrivals in the Elsbeere-Wienerwald region of Austria has increased significantly. Local residents have offered rooms and even army barracks were converted. Municipalities recognised the need to take integration measures and formulate a unified approach.

The Elsbeere-Wienerwald LAG became involved, providing LEADER funding and project management support to help coordinate efforts working with volunteers, the police, the Red Cross and local colleges. More specifically, the LAG provided one to two officers per municipality to coordinate activities.

“The funding helps. It allows us to have a coordinating person who is trying to push things forward.”

Michael Gansch
Elsbeere-Wienerwald LAG manager

The project is providing language and road-traffic courses for migrants, and translating public information material into additional languages. Access to services has been recognised as a key element of successful integration and greater support is being offered to help guide migrants in finding permanent housing and entering the job market.

Improved relationships

The project is also targeting groups within local communities – such as students, youth organisations, and football clubs – to increase understanding of the reasons behind the migration wave. At the kick-off event, a public discussion was held which covered issues such as the current migration situation and the

role of women in the Islamic world. This has set the scene for further debate and outreach.

Specific efforts to bring local residents and migrants together as often as possible have included cultural and culinary events, a clothing bank and football clubs. Targeted ‘buddy initiatives’ aim to build relationships between new arrivals and local citizens.

“Our efforts should help migrants to start a new life in Austria by helping them with the language, and finding jobs and housing – but also to help local residents to open up and benefit from the migrants.”

Michael Gansch
Elsbeere-Wienerwald LAG manager

So far, the project has helped to reassure the local population, showing them that migrants are not a threat. Likewise, refugees and migrants are benefitting from easier access to information and training to make their life in Austria easier. Recently, a group of refugee volunteers helped alongside local residents in the annual river and town cleaning actions.

Project Name	Integration in municipalities
Type of beneficiary	Municipalities
Period	2016-2019
Project funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total cost € 113 600 • EAFRD contribution € 85 200 • Own contribution: € 28 400
Further info	www.elsbeere-wienerwald.at
Contact	gansch@elsbeere-wienerwald.at

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Easier access to information and training is supporting improved integration of refugees and migrants.

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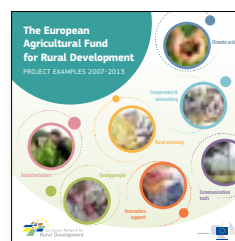
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