



European Network for
Rural Development

EN

PROJECTS BROCHURE

The European Agricultural
Fund for Rural Development

RURAL INSPIRATION AWARDS 2021

<https://enrd.ec.europa.eu>

Funded by the



European Network for Rural Development

The European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) is the hub that connects rural development stakeholders throughout the European Union (EU). The ENRD contributes to the effective implementation of Member States' Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) by generating and sharing knowledge, as well as through facilitating information exchange and cooperation across rural Europe.

Each Member State has established a National Rural Network (NRN) that brings together the organisations and administrations involved in rural development. At EU level, the ENRD supports the networking of these NRNs, national administrations and European organisations.

Find out more on the *ENRD website* (<https://enrd.ec.europa.eu>).

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/publications/search>

⁽²⁾ https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice_en

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Introduction

Since 2019, ENRD's Rural Inspiration Awards (RIA)⁽¹⁾ have been celebrating projects that use funding from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) to contribute to rural development policy objectives. The RIA competition aims to increase the visibility of EAFRD-funded projects and to promote knowledge transfer and networking among rural development stakeholders.

The RIA 2021, 'Our Rural Future', celebrated EAFRD-funded initiatives that may contribute to inspire the future development path for rural areas to be set out in the forthcoming Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas.⁽²⁾

The Vision is being developed to enable rural areas to make the most of their potential and support them in facing up to their own specific set of issues, from demographic change to connectivity, the risk of poverty, and limited access to services. The process of developing the Vision is expected to lead to the publication of a European Commission Communication foreseen for end June 2021. Its preparation involves various Commission services, working in close consultation with people living in rural areas, as well as local and regional authorities.

The ENRD has been supporting the active participation of rural stakeholders in developing the Vision, in particular through a Thematic Group on the Long Term Rural Vision – #rural2040⁽³⁾ and the Rural Vision Week event (22-26 March 2021).⁽⁴⁾ In addition, the 2021 edition of the ENRD's Rural Inspiration Awards highlighted EAFRD-funded projects that signal a step change in approach or have the potential for wide transferability within rural communities, and may help

inspire the Vision or are already delivering on some of its expected key themes.

For this RIA edition, the ENRD Contact Point received 125 entries from 22 Member States.⁽⁵⁾ The Support Units of the National Rural Networks (NRNs) worked hard to identify excellent projects and submit detailed information and additional material.

The RIA 2021 competition included four thematic categories:

- **Green Futures:** projects or initiatives addressing or mitigating climate change, demonstrating sustainability, and contributing to the green recovery in rural areas. These should signal or demonstrate a step change or a more widely transferrable approach;
- **Digital Futures:** projects which demonstrate a sustainable approach that advances the benefits of digitalisation in farming and rural communities. These may address improving digital and broadband infrastructures, the provision of digital services, the uptake of new technology or the improvement of digital skills or knowledge;
- **Resilient Futures:** projects which contribute to strengthening the resilience of Rural Europe.

(1) https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/rural-inspiration-awards_en

(2) https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/new-push-european-democracy/long-term-vision-rural-areas_en

(3) https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/enrd-thematic-work/long-term-rural-vision_en

(4) https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/rural2040-vision-week_en – see also Rural Connections 2-2021, https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/publications/search_en?f%5B0%5D=im_field_enrd_publication_type%3A20483

(5) Each NSU could submit up to eight projects for the competition.



This category covered a wide range of community, value chain and business initiatives, including the broader definition of sustainable and future-proof projects; and

- Socially Inclusive Futures: projects which address diverse aspects that contribute to the inclusiveness of rural society with particular attention to gender, generational renewal, disability and seniors.

The entries were first screened by the ENRD Contact Point with external support, resulting in a shortlist of 20 finalists. These were then evaluated by an expert jury which included representatives from a mix of different stakeholder organisations and the EU Institutions: Copa-Cogeca – Committee of Professional Agricultural Organisations and General Confederation of Agricultural Cooperatives, CEJA – European Council of Young Farmers, CEMR – Council of European Municipalities and Regions, the European Commission – Directorate General for Agricultural and Rural Development and the ENRD Contact Point.

In both steps, projects were assessed against the following criteria:

- Direct benefits, i.e. the potential or actual economic, environmental/climate and societal improvements generated by the initiative;
- Networking value, i.e. the cooperation of different stakeholders and/or the creation of new networking/cooperation opportunities as a result of the initiative;

- Transferability potential, i.e. the potential or actual replication of an initiative in other European areas facing similar issues;
- Synergies with EU policies and funding tools other than the EAFRD, contribution to fulfilling the objectives of other EU policies and legislation and/or to more than one EU Rural Development policy objective;
- Innovation, i.e. the use of a brand-new technology, methodology or approach created from scratch by the initiative or never applied before at EU, national, regional or local level; and
- Inspirational/visionary aspect, a criterion based on the experts' experience in rural development.

In parallel to the technical evaluation by the jury, the general public could express its preferences on the 20 finalists through the ENRD website. The Popular Vote category was promoted through a social media campaign involving the ENRD and the NRNs concerned, and attracted over 10 000 votes.

The five winners were announced by the European Commissioner for Agriculture, Janusz Wojciechowski, during a virtual award ceremony on 25 March 2021,⁽⁶⁾ in the framework of the Rural Vision Week.⁽⁷⁾

The next pages provide further details about each RIA 2021 finalist and highlights their contribution to a Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas as inclusive, sustainable places where nobody feels left behind.

The ENRD Contact Point Team

(6) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SQp7ZgOHknA>

(7) https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/rural2040-vision-week_en

1. Green Futures

This RIA 2021 category recognises the importance of the EAFRD to support projects addressing climate change, demonstrating sustainability, and contributing to a green recovery in the post-COVID-19 era.

Achieving a green future is key to any future Vision for Europe's rural areas.⁽¹⁾ This goes hand-in-hand with the objectives of the European Green Deal (EGD),⁽²⁾ which calls for Europe to be “the world's first climate-neutral continent by 2050”, as well as the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030⁽³⁾ and the Farm to Fork Strategy.⁽⁴⁾ Green futures also mean rural areas using 100% clean and affordable energy, a circular economy, sustainable and smart mobility, a cleaner environment, thriving ecosystems, and sustainable food systems.

The five projects in this RIA 2021 category show how Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) can help deliver on environmental and climate aims while also being economically beneficial. These farming and forestry actions also contribute to the Vision for rural areas, and meet EGD aims by helping stop biodiversity decline and combatting climate change.

In rural Poland, the wonderfully named ‘Angelic Gardens’ project aims to create – from scratch – oases of biodiversity in farms and gardens (page 5).

The EIP-AGRI Operational Group ‘Green future MUNTER’ in Germany developed a management template for farmers, municipalities and nature conservationists to implement increased environmental protection along with crop production and livestock farming (page 6).

Key commitments and targets of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 include a 50% cut in pesticide use⁽⁵⁾, increased agro-forestry measures, and soil fertility protection. The Strategy also aims to plant at least three billion additional trees by 2030 under an upcoming Forest Strategy. RDPs have a role to play in pursuing such goals.

On page 7 you can read about a project using EAFRD funding to restore Slovenian forests damaged by natural disasters and improve their viability.

RDPs can contribute to achieving more sustainable food systems, in line with the Farm to Fork Strategy's aim to make at least 25% of the EU's agricultural land organic by 2030.

The ‘Green transfer’ project in Estonia (page 8) aims to improve the competitiveness of organic farming and increase local organic food consumption through training and awareness raising activities.

‘Green futures’ also aim to improve the social and economic interests of rural areas in view of making them more attractive for younger generations.

The ‘Resource Wise Visions’ (ReWI) project in Finland (page 9) has inspired young people to examine entrepreneurship from a circular economy perspective and has opened up many opportunities, creating 40 new circular economy enterprises.

- (1) https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/enrd-thematic-work/long-term-rural-vision_en
- (2) https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en
- (3) https://ec.europa.eu/environment/strategy/biodiversity-strategy-2030_en
- (4) https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal/actions-being-taken-eu/farm-fork_en
- (5) As part of the Farm to Fork Strategy.



Angelic Gardens flourish in Poland

EAFRD support is used to create oases of biodiversity in Polish farms and gardens, with high quality 'step by step' educational material and easy internet communication.



In December 2014, the Kasperski family moved from Warsaw to create an organic farm with a garden on a plot of land of 2.3 ha in Budachowo, a small village in western Poland. The family wanted to demonstrate that even without agricultural education it was possible to start a farm from scratch in a small village, on poor soil, on a short timescale. They applied for support under Measure 11 Organic Farming of the Polish RDP and started the Angelic Gardens project, which seeks to provide the highest quality food for a family in an environmentally friendly way and encourage others to do the same.

The family also created CAMY, an ecological design studio, to develop the idea and design of the farm. The Regional Agricultural Advisory Centre provided support and advice. Later, a Natura 2000 meadow and other agricultural plots for agroforestry and wild herb cultivation were added.

The main element of the project is a home garden of 0.5 ha, based on permaculture principles and with over 600 species of plants. Biodiversity in the garden is very high.

"The ecological garden is not only my pantry, pharmacy, drugstore and place of rest, but also an oasis and an ark for wild plants and animals."

Kamila Kasperska,
Project owner

Unique knowledge of organic garden cultivation and crop processing has been preserved and can be passed on to future generations.

In 2017, the project started cooperating with scientific and research centres, the Lubuskie Centre for Agrotechnical Innovation and Implementation in Kalsk and the Centre for Renewable Energy in Sulechów. 'Innovation voucher' funds supported 'energy-saving raised borders', which received the 'Lubuska Innovation Award' for an innovative start-up. In December 2020, patents for implementing these new organic farming methods were issued.

Since 2017, CAMY has been organising garden shows and workshops on the farm which have involved 450 people, including local government, schools and kindergartens. The farm has a 'Lubuskie Pearl of Tourism 2018' certificate from the Lubuskie Tourist Organisation LOTUR.



© Anielskie Ogrody

This EAFRD-funded project creates oases of biodiversity in Polish farms and gardens.

In December 2020, the Internet Academy of Angelic Gardens was launched. To date, 170 people have taken part in these multimedia courses which teach organic garden cultivation and crop processing, from grain to table and show other aspects of ecology in life, the home and business.

Angelic Gardens has also received funds from the Regional Operational Programme – Lubuskie 2020 for helping to create small ecological family farms from scratch.

Educational films, press and internet publications have highlighted the benefits of the project. Its Facebook page has 12 000 followers, demonstrating a broad interest in helping biodiversity and producing organic food for individual families.

Project Name	Angelic Gardens / Anielskie Ogrody
Type of beneficiary	Ecological farm
Period	2014 – 2021
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total budget: € 103 700 • EAFRD contribution: € 6 200 • National / Regional contribution: € 5 500 • Private / Own contribution: € 66 000 • Other: € 26 000
RDP Measure	M11 – Organic farming
Further info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/angelic-gardens-anielskie-ogrody-poland_en • http://www.anielskieogrody.pl
Contact	eko@anielskieogrody.pl

A Green Future for rural Germany

An EIP-AGRI Operational Group integrates water, soil and flood protection with action on climate, biodiversity and animal welfare.

© Green Future MUNTER



This project aims to address the risks of flooding while also creating a more diverse landscape.

Agriculture and nature conservation do not always work well together, including where intensively farmed fields cause soil erosion by water, especially on steep slopes. This can then affect villages in valleys that are also heavily affected by floods. Flooding has been a recurring issue in Rheinland-Palatinate (western Germany) and the EU Floods Directive⁽⁶⁾ is particularly relevant for the area. The Institute for Applied Material Flow Management (IfaS)⁽⁷⁾ recognised that focusing on the issue of flooding alone as a single goal could hinder other objectives.

IfaS used funding from Measure 16 – Cooperation of the regional RDP to set up an EIP-AGRI Operational Group (OG), the Green Future MUNTER. Its aim is to address the risks of flooding while also creating a more diverse landscape. The OG developed a management template for farmers and communities to increase environmental protection along with nature conservation, crop production and livestock farming.

The group provides information on integrating and combining flood prevention, nature protection and crop production to communities, farmers and policymakers. Exchanges of expertise and cooperation have led to solutions that accommodate the interests of farmers, municipalities, water managers, nature conservationists and authorities. For the first time in this region, these multiple stakeholders worked out new multi-use concepts and implemented them together.

“Pragmatic cooperation creates viable and feasible compromises for communities, citizens and farmers.”

Axel Schönbeck,
Farmer

At four locations in Rheinland-Palatinate, farmers, local communities and IfaS planned and implemented new forms of flood prevention. Local conditions affecting flood risk, including water bodies, soil, precipitation and topography were analysed and the water-runoff was calculated. In addition, the associated positive

and negative economic effects of this on businesses were analysed.

“Multi-use concepts combine agriculture, water management and ecology with climate protection and adaptation to climate change.”

Hans Pfeffer,
Farmer

One farmer and his local community are creating a bioenergy village. Strips of trees grown for short-rotation wood production on grassland will reduce water erosion. When harvested, the wood will be used for a district heating system in the village.

To reduce potential damage from heavy rain, another farmer planted a perennial flowering plant, *Silphia*, instead of an annual maize crop. The roots, shoots and leaves significantly decrease the risk of erosion while the crop also provides fuel for his biogas plant.

On two other locations farmers planted trees on marginal land to reduce flooding. One will provide wood for heating a local retirement home, the other produces fruit and nuts.

“No one else can manage our cultural landscape as efficiently and cost-effectively as farmers and foresters.”

Jörg Böhmer,
IfaS

As a result of cooperation under the project, the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture of Rheinland-Palatinate are encouraging similar flood risk reduction efforts across the area.

Project Name	Green Future MUNTER
Type of beneficiary	EIP-AGRI Operational Group
Period	2016 – 2021
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total budget: € 358 264 • EAFRD contribution: € 258 748 • National / Regional contribution: € 99 516
RDP Measure	M16 – Cooperation
Further info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/green-future-munter-germany_en • https://munter.stoffstrom.org
Contact	f.wagener@umwelt-campus.de

(6) https://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/flood_risk/

(7) <https://www.stoffstrom.org/?lang=en>

Restoring Slovenian forests

A pan-Slovenian project supported by the EAFRD is combatting the consequences of natural disasters that have affected forests across the country in the last six years.

Some 60% of Slovenian forests, or 37 000 ha, require complete restoration as a consequence of climate change-related damages (including from glaze ice, extreme wind and pests). Over 800 Slovenian forest owners and the Slovenia Forest Service established a project to restore damaged forests thanks to funding from the Slovenian RDP under Measure 8 – Investments in forest areas, which enables areas under the greatest pressure to adapt to climate change.

The project helped create stable and quality forest stands to combat the negative consequences of natural disasters such as soil erosion and increased frequency of diseases and pests. This will also support all forest functions, economic, ecological and social. The project is based on principles devised under LIFE (LIFE Artemis, LIFE GENMON and LIFE Systemic)⁽⁸⁾ and Interreg forestry projects, in which the Slovenia Forest Service was involved.

Most forests are being restored naturally, while 5 to 10% need new replanting with forest tree saplings. During the 2014–2020 RDP programming period, public funds were used to restore over 1 100 ha of damaged forests and to plant over three million saplings of 19 forest tree varieties. Almost 60 kilometres of fences protect these saplings against game damage and 130 000 were protected with casings (protective ‘guard tubes’ to stop gnawing of trees by game) or poles. Saplings in 1 750 ha were protected with deterrent coatings and a further 2 000 ha of rejuvenated forests were also maintained. Removing fallen trees produced 36 000 m³ of damaged wood for reuse.

© Zavod za gozdove Slovenije



Project actions included planting over three million saplings of 19 forest tree varieties.

The restoration process was designed using the principles of sustainable forest management. This meant ensuring the genetic origin of planting material to reduce the carbon footprint of forest production.

In addition, the project accelerated the development of forest tree nurseries by using indigenous tree saplings grown in substrate. The production of local variety saplings increased from 0.5 million in 2013 to almost two million in 2020.

The project has brought together government authorities including the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food (MKGP), the Agency for Agricultural Markets and Rural Development (ARSKTRP) as well as forest owners and other forest production chain stakeholders. Designing the project involved the above stakeholders plus the tax authorities, research institutions and forest managers.

Regular monitoring was set up to verify the results, which has enabled gaining new experience and knowledge. Sustainable principles in forest management and a multipurpose approach to forestry as well as the plan for restoring damaged forests are transferable to similar areas in the EU.

Project Name	Restoring forests damaged by natural disasters and improving the viability of forests
Type of beneficiary	Forest owners' association; public institutions
Period	2016 – 2020
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total budget: € 7 345 293 • EAFRD contribution: € 4 647 741 • National / Regional contribution: € 1 549 247 • Private / Own contributions: € 1 148 305
RDP Measure	M8 – Investments in forest areas
Further info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/restoring-forests-damaged-natural-disasters-and-improving-viability-forests_en • http://www.program-podezelja.si/sl/
Contact	zgs.tajnistvo@zgs.si

(8) <https://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/project/Projects/index.cfm?fuseaction=home.getProjects&themeID=86&projectList>

Green Knowledge Transfer in Estonia

A long-term programme of knowledge transfer used EAFRD support to increase the competitiveness of local organic farming and organic food consumption.

Organic farming is expanding very rapidly in Estonia. Before 2015, potential organic producers had limited training options. Therefore, the Ministry of Rural Affairs initiated a programme for 2016–2020, which was supported under Measure 1 – Knowledge transfer and information actions of the Estonian RDP. The programme covered the whole organic farming value chain from organic plant and animal production, through processing and catering to marketing.

The project offered training, study groups, field trips, demonstration events and conferences, printed and digital information material and a quarterly magazine, all free of charge. In addition to learning and knowledge sharing, all activities offered participants the chance to meet, discuss and network.

The programme was supervised by a broad-based Council of producers, processors, advisors, officials, and research and development organisations. These included the Estonian University of Life Sciences (EULS – the lead partner), the Estonian Organic Farming Foundation, the Centre for Ecological Engineering, the Estonian Crop Research Institute and the Organic Research Centre of EULS.

An average of 25 people per day participated in 300 days of activities covering all 15 Estonian counties. Half the activities were organised on farms and in research stations.

Important knowledge-transfer components were 174 training days and demonstration visits with local and international experts. These covered plant production, animal husbandry, processing, marketing, catering and cooperation.

Demonstration trials and 30 field days introduced farmers to agro-technology and varieties of cereal, berry and fruit production as well as alternative weed management.

Farmers particularly appreciated the four organic farming conferences and 18 study groups. Some of them met with a tutor four times a year to discuss practical production.

In addition, six local study trips enabled producers to visit other organic farms to view sheep and beef production, processing and agro-tourism. There were also international visits to farms specialising in plant production (in the United Kingdom), poultry (in Germany) and vegetable production (in Denmark).



© Estonian University of Life Sciences

An average of 25 people per day participated in 300 days of project activities across Estonia.

“Sharing skills and experiences, communication and networking are fundamental for sustainable development, especially for sustainable organic food production.”

Elen Peetsmann,
Programme manager

Farmers gained knowledge by learning from each other and by having access to up-to-date research. Scientists received direct feedback on their needs and expectations to help them plan future scientific cooperation with practitioners.

The programme also benefitted Estonian administration officials, as networking provided valuable input to support policy-making for further developing the continuously expanding organic sector.

Project Name	Green Knowledge Transfer
Type of beneficiary	University (lead partner)
Period	2016 – 2020
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total budget: € 709 757 • EAFRD contribution: € 631 684 • National / Regional contribution: € 78 073
RDP Measure	M01 – Knowledge transfer and information actions
Further info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/green-knowledge-transfer-estonia_en • http://www.maheklubi.ee
Contact	elen.peetsmann@emu.ee

Wise Visions for rural Finland

A Finnish project inspires young people to examine circular economy entrepreneurship and start businesses.

Young people are interested in the circular economy but face difficulties in putting this interest into practice.

ReWi (Resource Wise) Visions is a prime example of the power of a project using the LEADER method that combines circular economy expertise, entrepreneur networks and association activities with inspiring youth activities.

The project promotes circular economy entrepreneurship among young people, integrating the circular economy into traditional youth work and lifelong learning. It particularly encourages professionals working with young people to learn more about the circular economy and encourages professionals working with the circular economy to take the perspectives of young people into account.

ReWi Visions is the result of a successful cooperation between JAPA – Jyväskylä Sustainable Development Association and LEADER-funded youth association Jyvässeudun 4H, in the Jyväskylä region (southern Finland). Support comes from Measure 7 – Farm and business development of the Mainland Finland RDP.

The activities aim to offer a comprehensive toolbox for coaching circular economy talent. Youth exchanges, international communication, promoting youth circular economy entrepreneurship with business courses and youth club activities are supplemented by manuals and videos.

Impressively, 40 companies with circular economy themes have already been established by young people through the project.

“Entrepreneurship and sustainable development – the perfect match!”

Aki Puustinen,

Headmaster of the Muurame upper secondary school

This successful cooperation between the two implementing organisations will expand further as activities progress. Despite the COVID-19 situation, international cooperation has continued and a pilot was launched to test activities where entrepreneurs mentor young people.

The project is transferrable internationally, with high interest already shown in other EU and non-EU regions and countries. A LAG in the Netherlands is interested in the methods for attracting young peoples' participation. A project visit to Wales included a presentation of the project manual with an example of inclusive data

collection. The project was also presented at the European LEADER Conference LINC 2019.⁽⁹⁾

“The week [in Wales] taught me a lot of things. I became confident interacting in both English and my mother tongue. Of course, I learned about the circular economy, sustainable development and entrepreneurship and the culture of Wales. I must say that I also learned a great deal about Central Finland. I noticed that people can understand each other in spite of different backgrounds. I did not expect in advance how great an experience the project would turn out.”

A young participant

In addition to support from EAFRD, and other national and regional sources, funding for youth exchanges was received from the Erasmus+ programme. The circular economy theme is directly related to the European Green Deal and the Farm to Fork strategy.



© Jyväskylän kestävä kehitys JAPA ry

This project promotes circular economy entrepreneurship among Finnish youth.

Project Name	ReWi Visions (Resource Wise Visions)
Type of beneficiary	NGOs
Period	2019 – 2021
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total budget: € 111 057 • EAFRD contribution: € 41 979 • National / Regional contribution: € 57 972 • Private / Own contributions: € 11 106
RDP Measure	M07 – Basic services and village renewal
Further info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/rewi-visions-resource-wise-visions-finland_en • http://www.japary.fi
Contact	anna.sarkinen@jyvaskyla.fi

(9) <http://www.info-linc.eu>

2. Digital Futures

Projects in this RIA 2021 category demonstrate how RDPs help connect rural areas to the wider world efficiently via digital and broadband infrastructure, digital services and digital skills. These initiatives also offer digital solutions for climate risk mitigation and show how digitalisation can make rural life more attractive.

The COVID-19 pandemic has emphasised how important digitalisation is to daily life – particularly in rural areas. A good internet connection is essential if rural communities are to flourish.

Modern digital technologies offer new opportunities for rural businesses and can enhance the provision of services, from online health advice and education to local energy production.

Access to fast broadband (30 Mbps download speed) reached 86% in Europe overall in 2019. Only 59% of rural communities attained this level, albeit this is significantly more than the 47% rate recorded in 2017.⁽¹⁾

Rural innovation hubs play an important role in building sustainable digital ecosystems in rural areas.

Finland's 'Digitally visiting' project (page 11) has pioneered digital skill development in Central Finland. Local digital support successfully builds residents' digital skills, especially in remote rural regions. The project encourages rural dwellers' use of electronic services to facilitate daily living.

In Wallonia (Belgium), rural residents and organisations will be able to use the 'BiomMap' digital mapping tool to monitor and quantify the existing ecological network's features (page 12), contributing to biodiversity analysis.

Digitalisation is also essential in addressing specific environmental challenges such as improving water quality or bee health. Initiatives are more successful if technology is people-centred and farmers have trust in digital technologies.

The 'Farmers measure water' project in the Netherlands (page 13) combines state-of-the-art sensing techniques with a participatory monitoring process between farmers and water authorities, which also improved mutual understanding.

Latvia's 'BeeKing' project (page 14) aims to enhance honeybee colonies' well-being through a digital app that helps beekeepers manage and monitor bee colonies.

RDPs can help rural Europe follow the general trend, increased by the pandemic, towards online shopping – with an eye on supporting local producers.

Through the 'HofladenBOX' online marketplace, some 60 small suppliers in a German district have developed their online offer, with impressive market results (page 15).

(1) <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/digital-economy-and-society-index-desi>



Pioneering digital skills in Central Finland

EAFRD support is making rural living in Central Finland more appealing for residents by improving their digital skills and enabling wider participation.

Central Finland is rural, with an aging population and reduced public services that are increasingly provided online. Digital literacy is already a prerequisite for maintaining the ability to function independently in society, but digital exclusion particularly threatens the elderly as well as some working people and the young.

Combining national and regional resources with funding under Measure 7 – Basic services and village renewal of the Finnish Mainland RDP, the project 'Digitally visiting' strengthened the digital skills of rural residents in Central Finland. Project activities included training for all levels, from using a mouse to creating a virtual village house. Residents were shown how to use electronic health applications, games and to make their village activities visible with videos. There were also digital service days and longer-term digital peer support was set up.

Led by the Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences the project improved the use of online services, strengthened village communities, developed joint activities and facilitated local assistance. The project activities were individually planned with each village. Individual help was available if needed and participants could use their own device or borrow a computer on the day.

There were around 100 training, service or tutor training days. Events with cooperation partners also helped more than 2 700 rural residents and stakeholders benefit directly, with even more benefitting indirectly.

A pro-digitalisation attitude fostered the residents' willingness to try new digital services which in turn improved their well-being. New digital tools and communication channels have made it possible to maintain contact and continue activities during the current exceptional times. The village videos, often produced by young people, have received thousands of views on YouTube and Facebook, helping to improve village visibility and make life in the countryside feel more attractive.

The project also developed local tutoring, where digitally competent villagers helped and instructed other residents. Some of this tutoring took place at the local branches of the Finnish Heart Association (a non-profit organisation working across Finland's 16 regions). Everyone was encouraged to take part, regardless of their level of digital skills. Libraries were used as a venue and cooperation partner because they



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This project offered individual support to improve participants' digital skills.

are open to all and their activities include providing digital support.

The Digitally Visiting project was a pioneer in developing digital support and skills in the region. The activities and cooperation networks of the project created new project ideas, independent digital support in the villages and at least one new project (Digitally Active Central Finland).

The project cooperated with the Finnish Heart Association, Alzheimer Society of Finland, Finnish Pensioners' Federation in Central Finland, villages, libraries, municipalities, other projects associations and other local actors.

This inspired new operational and project ideas as well as the courage to try new activities, bringing additional autonomy and a new lease of life to living in Central Finland.

Project Name	Digitally visiting
Type of beneficiary	NGOs
Period	2019 – 2021
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total budget: € 300 000 • EAFRD contribution: € 126 000 • National / Regional contribution: € 153 472 • Private / Own contributions: € 20 528
RDP Measure	M07 – Basic services and village renewal
Further info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/digitally-visiting-finland_en • http://www.jamk.fi/digistikylassa
Contact	susanna.nurmeksela@jamk.fi

Mapping and improving the ecological network in rural Belgium

A LEADER project in Wallonia (Belgium) is creating an application to collaboratively map the Wasseiges ecological network.

Biodiversity loss is a Europe-wide concern. Public authorities and local citizens in Wallonia are looking to improve the way biodiversity is considered in production processes and land use. The Walloon region is currently carrying out a study on its ecological network, i.e. all the interactions within an ecosystem.

The BiomMap project is funded under Measure 19 – LEADER/CLLD of the Walloon RDP and is led by the LEADER LAG Meuse@Campagnes. The project is developing a digital tool BiomMap – an open, user friendly resource for municipalities, associations and citizens who want to help map the local ecological network in the territory of Wasseiges (central Belgium). BiomMap aims to improve the ecological network across 5% of the Wasseiges territory.

There are multiple current data sources, but these are not always easy to access or use. The project collected good practices in data management from stakeholders and identified possibilities for collaboration and support as well as potential partners to ensure sustainability for the project. Stakeholders also helped build an inventory of user needs and define functionalities for the tool.

With BiomMap, rural stakeholders will be able identify, monitor and quantify ecological network features and highlight characteristics, gaps and potential for improvement. Biodiversity diagnosis will be more precise and constantly fed by contributions from the field.

The project will train volunteers, mobilise professionals, highlight good practices and build a community. The digital tool will provide cartographic and quantitative information on the ecological network at different geographic layers within a zone.

Along with publicising networking actions and general advice on biodiversity, this will help local authorities and individuals manage the ecological network in their territory.

The BiomMap project is largely based on crowdsourcing and engaging citizens, farmers and hunters, with some of them already helping to restore natural processes and species equilibrium.

From the launch of the project, institutional, scientific and associative partners were brought together to implement data exchange protocols and build a tool that meets their professional requirements. At the same time, the tool will be sufficiently simple and user-friendly to facilitate the widest possible citizen participation.



© GAL Meuse@Campagnes

This project will allow rural stakeholders to identify, monitor and quantify features of ecological networks.

At the end of the project, Wasseiges will be able to count on a local community, with a broad range of stakeholders, all mobilised around biodiversity and using the BiomMap tool. This collaborative mapping should improve pollination, decontamination, soil enrichment, carbon storage and soil protection, all benefits for biodiversity.

“The ecological network becomes everyone’s business.”
Spokesperson,
 Wasseiges Municipality

In early 2023, an action plan for measures to promote ecological networking will be disseminated across the Wasseiges municipality and to other Walloon municipalities.

The tool will be open source and the codes will be accessible via the web, so any local authority, region or country can use and adapt it to their needs. Several Belgian LAGs are already looking to do so.

Project Name	BiomMap
Type of beneficiary	Local Action Group
Period	2019 – 2021
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total budget: € 35 000 • EAFRD contribution: € 12 500 • National / Regional contribution: € 22 500
RDP Measure	M19 – LEADER/CLLD
Further info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/biommap-belgium-wallonia_en • http://www.meusecampagnes.be/biommap
Contact	Agnes.demarneffe@wasseiges.be

Dutch farmers monitoring water

An EIP-AGRI Operational Group combined state-of-the-art sensing with participatory monitoring by farmers and water authorities to enhance water quality.

Water management in Dutch coastal areas has become increasingly complex due to the effects of climate change and land subsidence. The source of pollutants such as chloride, nutrients and pesticides can only be traced in the smallest branches of a water system, while government observation points are mostly limited to the main branches and key parameters.

Addressing these challenges requires measures optimised to local conditions along with close cooperation between stakeholders. Identifying the best management strategies requires more local data and implementing measures affecting farm management requires a cooperative approach.

In 2018, three northern coastal provinces, three water authorities and the farmers' representative organisation LTO Noord joined forces to set up an EIP-AGRI Operational Group using funding under Measure 16 – Cooperation of the Dutch RDP. The project partners combined government water management bodies and more than 80 farmers in pilot agricultural regions with varying challenges, businesses and water management issues.

In this two-year project, farmers and water authorities participated in monitoring salt concentration in surface water and in shallow groundwater in agricultural soils. The aim was to better understand the urgency for local measures, including on individual fields.

The farmers gathered data on salinity and groundwater-levels by measuring electrical conductivity at different depths.⁽²⁾ Pilot-groups shared data via a live dashboard and met regularly to learn about how the local system functioned, inspiring broad-based solutions.



© Acacia Water BV

Over 100 farmers measured salination of surface waters, resulting in more than 20 000 measurements.

Over 100 farmers measured salination of surface waters in different branches of the water-system, resulting in more than 20 000 measurements. These highlighted spatial and temporal patterns that guided possible ways to optimise fresh water flushing.

Over 50 farmers measured hourly groundwater levels, giving useful information on how quickly water levels react to rainfall and drought and how much surface water levels affect groundwater levels in peatland.

To measure electrical conductivity at the surface, the farmers used a handheld device, the AquaMobile, connected with an app via Bluetooth and a pole, the AquaPin, with sensors at varying depths. There was also an electrical conductivity sensor and a pressure sensor for groundwater levels.

An online dashboard to present data was continuously improved enabling quick and easy interpretation. Individual farmers became equal partners with water authorities as they gained access to data. Furthermore, models using weather forecasts were developed to quickly generate predictions for surface water quality, groundwater levels and soil moisture.

The project has ended, however most pilot locations continue monitoring and the initiative has been extended to other regions and participants. At the same time, the online dashboard will be further improved. Problems with water management differ, but the process of jointly collecting, learning from and acting on data can be applied across other regions.

Project Name	Farmers measure water
Type of beneficiary	EIP-AGRI Operational Group
Period	2018 – 2020
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total budget: € 1 500 000 • EAFRD contribution: € 150 000 • National / Regional contribution: € 350 000 • Private / Own contributions: € 500 000 • Other: € 500 000
RDP Measure	M16 – Cooperation
Further info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/farmers-measure-water-netherlands_en • https://www.acaciawater.com/pg-28008-7-104660/pagina/home.html
Contact	jouke.velstra@acaciawater.com

(2) Electrical conductivity is a measure of salt concentrations in surface water and in shallow groundwater in agricultural soils.

Helping beekeepers in Latvia and beyond

A multilingual digital tool for beekeepers funded by LEADER is enhancing the well-being of bees and improving honey production.

Beekeepers often record colony inspections on paper or by marks on hives which can be inconvenient and time-consuming to process later. This also makes it hard to benefit from wider experience within the beekeeping community.

Thanks to support from Measure 19 – LEADER/CLLD of the Latvian RDP, the project ‘Bee King’ enhances the well-being of bee colonies, assists with inventory management and enables beekeepers to collaborate and share their knowledge.

This small-scale, innovative technology project involved multiple stakeholders to create a readily scalable, user-friendly tool for beekeepers to keep efficient records of bee colonies and plan management tasks.

A challenge for the project was that beekeepers often have gloves and sticky fingers which makes using digital tools difficult. A requirement was that data entry and accessing information should take less than 15 seconds, the speed of using paper records. The project solved these issues with speech to text recognition, Near Field Communication tags⁽³⁾ and intelligent forms.

More than 500 beekeepers use the BeeKing app to plan and track bee colony health, queen bee status, food availability, harvest, varroa mite treatment and many other important aspects of beekeeping. The app also helps apiary record keeping which is needed for organic certification.

Structuring beekeeping records in a common way allows users to easily compare results across seasons and select the best colonies for future breeding. Beekeepers can use the BeeKing app in families or teams, accessing the same information from multiple mobile phones. Along with a user forum the app is convenient to share ideas and knowledge. Also, a portal was created for reviews and planning from a PC.

To promote the well-being of bees, a free Starter Plan for up to five colonies allows people to try digital beekeeping on a small scale before investing in the app.

The project was carried out in collaboration with two main stakeholders: a Latvian beekeepers association (industry partner) and the Rural development partnership of the Riga region⁽⁴⁾ with focus on LEADER activities and local networking.

The BeeKing app started on a small and local scale but now, in addition to Latvian, it is available in English, German and Swedish. This helps its further use in other Nordic and central European countries, expanding collaboration for the beekeeping community.



© Bee King

The BeeKing app started on a small and local scale in Latvia but is now expanding to other countries.

Project Name	Bee King
Type of beneficiary	Private company
Period	2019 – 2020
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total budget: € 20 700 • EAFRD contribution: € 14 490 • Private / Own contributions: € 6 210
RDP Measure	M19 – LEADER/CLLD
Further info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/bee-king-latvia_en • https://beeking.eu/en/
Contact	info@beeking.eu

(3) Near Field Communication (NFC) is a protocol that helps two devices communicate wirelessly when they are placed right next to each other.
 (4) LAG Lauku Attīstības Partnerība and Sigulda municipality.

Online marketplace for small rural suppliers in Germany

HofladenBOX is an online marketplace for local people to buy local products from farmers in the LEADER region of Fürth district.



Small local food producers often have difficulty in placing and identifying their products' local origin in supermarkets, or securing reasonable prices for their products. Selling directly, for example through a farm shop, is not always a realistic alternative due to the additional resources it requires. This situation can negatively affect the local economy as well as biodiversity, since farms can find themselves forced to grow mainstream products for which there is higher demand, rather than say local varieties.

Birgit Wegner and Mareike Schalk wanted to regularly buy regional food, especially from small producers, but it was difficult with the little time they had after work.

In 2016 these two women contacted a local farmers' association and the Fürth district administration office to see if farmers were interested in selling to customers directly. A survey of about one thousand potential customers clarified the potential demand.

A local IT company developed an online marketplace, which allows every farmer, butcher and baker in the region to advertise their products independently. At the same time, Wegner and Schalk set up an agricultural barn as a repackaging station. A test with 20 pilot customers and 12 farmers checked the user-friendliness and processes of the idea. Funding under Measure 19 – LEADER/CLLD of the Bavarian RDP enabled them to buy a delivery vehicle and hire the first employees beyond Wegner and Schalk, who manage the project.

The project HofladenBOX was launched in March 2018 and was advertised in the local press and online, with radio and television reports also boosting its visibility.

HofladenBOX handles the technical solution, logistics and marketing while bringing farmers and end users closer together. Customers have full transparency about the producers of the food they buy and can contact them directly for information.

Suppliers often carpool to get their products to the repackaging station twice a week. The HofladenBOX team packs the products in refrigerated reusable boxes and delivers them twice a week, either to customers' homes or to one of 40 pick-up stations.

Around 60 companies offering over 1 500 products now participate in HofladenBOX. More than 3 000 customers have registered, and up to 600 orders are received



This project was launched by two customers interested in local food.

© HofladenBOX

weekly. In 2020, food worth approximately € 1 million was sold through the marketplace, temporarily increasing fivefold in spring 2020 during the first COVID-19 peak.

For many farmers, HofladenBOX has become an important distribution channel, helping maintain jobs in regional agriculture. It also makes a major contribution to biodiversity, since HofladenBOX also receives requests for old apple or potato varieties and bread made from special grains, for example.

Customer feedback praises the products' quality and freshness, due to reduced transportation and warehousing. The added value of local produce remains in the region and HofladenBOX now has about 20 employees, depending on the season.

Project Name	The HofladenBOX
Type of beneficiary	Private company
Period	2017 – 2021
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total budget: € 90 000 • EAFRD contribution: € 23 000 • Private / Own contributions: € 67 000
RDP Measure	M19 – LEADER/CLLD
Further info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/hofladenbox-germany_en • http://www.hofladenbox.de
Contact	mareike.schalk@hofladenbox.de

3. Resilient Futures

Rural resilience can be defined as the capacity of a rural region to adapt to changing external circumstances while maintaining satisfactory living standards for its inhabitants.⁽¹⁾ This RIA 2021 category recognises community, local supply chain and business projects contributing to strengthening rural Europe's resilience.

The ongoing pandemic has made the need to reach a more resilient rural future clear. Possible responses already seen include more remote working, increased local product consumption and take up of e-health and education.

Rural areas should develop their own strategies for improving resilience, distinct from those fit for urban areas, and focus firmly on sustainability. Investing in key infrastructure and local capacities for transport and provisions is essential.

The 'Local village shop' project supplies small village shops in the Spessart region (Germany) with quality regional products. A long-term goal is to enhance the shops' environmental sustainability (page 17).

Rural areas should capitalise on the distinctive components of rural well-being. Planning for resilience requires recognising the assets, rather than the potential problems, of living in the countryside: from the availability of bio-waste to opportunities for smarter mobility for people and goods.

The 'Pilot project on circular bioeconomy' in Spain enabled a living lab that focuses on organic farming to collect bio-waste from neighbours and transform it into compost to fertilise their crops, generating environmental, economic and social benefits (page 18).

In rural Germany, an RDP-funded project set up a cargo bike delivery service benefiting local people, local shops and the environment (page 19).

This RIA 2021 category also highlights that RDP-funded sustainable, socially inclusive schemes can foster a 'pride of place' among the inhabitants as well as increase recognition and appreciation by tourists. These elements can also contribute to resilience.

Rokua Geopark in Finland was granted UNESCO Global Geopark status. National and local institutions, associations and individuals have worked together to develop the region and construct a sustainable nature tourism destination (page 20).

The 'Slow Trips – European Slow Travel Experiences' projects unites partners from six EU Member States to market innovative, eco-friendly tourism products. The aim is to attract new target groups dissatisfied with superficial sightseeing (page 21).

(1) See the 'Zooming in' presentation at the ENRD LEADER Thematic Lab 'Designing LEADER for resilience', https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/enrd-leader-thematic-lab-designing-leader-resilience-and-sustainability_en



Delivering local products by cargo bike in rural Germany

In north-west Germany, a cargo bike delivery service supported by LEADER benefits local people, local retailers and the environment.

Dieter Kater's coffee-roasting company and other local businesses wanted to reduce their ecological footprint and become carbon neutral. Together with LAG Steinfurter Land and Steinfurt Marketing and Tourism (SMarT), Dieter started a cargo bike delivery service project in May 2017. This was initially designed as a pilot project for one year to also emphasise the advantages of local retail, flexibility, speed, trust, regionality and direct contact with customers.

"My father regularly delivered baked goods by bike or handcart in his day. So, when Dieter Kater approached me, I enthusiastically agreed."

Berthold Probst,
Pastry shop owner

Customers can order goods by e-mail, telephone, or a municipal internet portal and twice a week these are delivered with an electric cargo bike. The project has enabled less-mobile consumers to shop locally, with a social and ecological contribution to local added value.

The cargo bike has enjoyed ever-increasing demand with 15 retailers joining the scheme. It has also contributed to people's awareness of the importance of sustainable mobility and their choice of where to shop.

SMarT offered organisational support through a new online portal, while funding was provided through Measure 19 – LEADER/CLLD of the North Rhine-Westphalia RDP, with the LAG Steinfurter Land as the project's lead partner. Among the first vendors were Café Konditorei Probst, Vinothek Steinfurt and Palstring GmbH & Co.KG.

The local bicycle shop, DNL mobiel, built a cargo bike with an electrically assisted drive, which is recharged from Kater's photovoltaic system.

The Kater company employed as the delivery person, an cyclist who had local knowledge and was able to set up the bike. At the start, the service was offered twice a week for three to four hours.

In 2018, the project was extended for another year. Local authorities, companies and senior citizen facilities were once again encouraged to use the service.

The project was presented at the Markt der Regionen in Münster and at joint LEADER events across Germany. It was also selected for the nationwide "gemeinsam stark sein" (be strong together) competition of the German Rural Network. This has led, among other things, to



© LAG Steinfurter Land

The cargo bike model specially designed for this German project is now also being used by the Post Office in the bordering Dutch region.

a delivery service by cargo bike starting up in the neighbouring LEADER area of Baumberge.

Dieter Kater presented the project to neighbouring municipalities. These now have similar delivery services and a local drinks retailer, originally involved in the project, now has its own bike.

The cargo bike model, which was specially designed for the delivery service, is now also being used by the Post Office on the Dutch side of the border.

Project Name	Delivery service by cargo bike in Burgsteinfurt
Type of beneficiary	Local Action Group
Period	2017 – 2019
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total budget: € 15 300 • EAFRD contribution: € 7 900 • National / Regional contribution: € 2 000 • Private / Own contributions: € 5 400
RDP Measure	M19 – LEADER/CLLD
Further info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/delivery-service-cargo-bike-burgsteinfurt-germany_en • http://www.die-steinfurter.de/LieferserviceLastenrad
Contact	carsten.rech@kreis-steinfurt.de

Growing the circular bioeconomy in Spain

A non-profit organic business supported by the EAFRD transforms bio-waste from its neighbours into compost with environmental, economic and social benefits.



In Mediterranean areas with little livestock farming, organic fertilisers are often expensive and in short supply. This has limited the development of organic agriculture. Josenea, a social organic farming enterprise active in northern Spain, joined forces with the Public University of Navarra (UPNA) and two micro-enterprises (Luar Ingurumena and Maestro Compostador) to design and develop a simple and low-cost decentralised organic waste management system.

Funding under Measure 16 – Cooperation of the Navarra RDP enabled the project to research local bio-waste collection and composting and provide training on bio waste management systems.

The new low-cost system piloted by the project processes more than 300 tonnes a year of bio-waste into 100 tonnes of organic fertiliser, which is used on-site to grow organic medicinal plants. The process reduces costs for Josenea, has diversified the business activity and generated three new jobs, while also contributing to carbon sequestration and reduced GHG emissions.

More than 6 000 kg of bio-waste (including pruning waste from trees and shrubs) is collected twice a week from larger companies in the area in containers of up to 100 litres.

The bio-waste is mixed in dynamic composting containers on a concrete floor at the Josenea facility in Lumbier, using a machine manufactured by a local business.

Research by the University of Navarra led to changes in the process and the compost now reaches maturity in a few weeks with no leaching or odour problems. The compost is suitable for organic farming and increases the soil’s organic matter content.

Navarra Waste Consortium and the Government of Navarra authorised the waste collection and treatment. Waste management in the area has improved contributing to the European Waste Framework Directive objectives, as well as reducing the cost and environmental impact of transporting waste to centralised facilities.

The project increased the confidence and involvement of citizens in managing their organic waste. It has also contributed to improving the capability of bio-waste managers and the confidence of policy-makers to explore decentralised waste management. Waste management

technicians are trained on small-scale composting facilities and Josenea is a ‘living laboratory’ of a decentralised waste management process. In addition there are ‘learning by doing’ training courses for facility operators, and university courses for technicians and students. There are also summer courses and meetings specifically designed for local citizens and schools.



© Josenea/Upna

This project increased the confidence and involvement of citizens in managing their organic waste.

The project has been presented at scientific and technical meetings in Brussels, Madrid, Bolivia and Costa Rica. An intensive visiting programme has hosted policy-makers from different countries, including Chile and China, interested in a composting process that only requires local low-cost equipment. This means it is easily replicable and would allow small municipalities to contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals and help the circular economy grow.

Project Name	Pilot Project on Circular Bioeconomy
Type of beneficiary	Private company; University
Period	2018 – 2019
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total budget: € 197 963 • EAFRD contribution: € 101 341 • National / Regional contribution: € 54 568 • Private / Own contributions: € 42 054
RDP Measure	M16 – Cooperation
Further info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/re-thinking-management-organic-waste_en • http://www.josenea.bio/sostenibilidad/
Contact	jesuscia@josenea.com

Making German local shops and local producers more resilient

In rural Germany, LEADER connected village shopkeepers and local producers. Selling regional agricultural products locally saves transport and boosts the appreciation for local agriculture.

The Spessart LEADER area in central Germany includes more than 100 villages but only 15 village shops. Many of these are at risk from demographic change, including losing trade from people who commute to larger cities for work and shop there.

Village shops help serve the needs of less mobile people such as senior citizens and are a meeting place for village communities. For the region's village shops to survive, local shopping had to be made attractive and local demand encouraged in a targeted manner.

Working with local marketing and trade experts, the Local Action Group LAG SPESSARTregional e.V. established a network of village shopkeepers and local producers. Co-funding came from Measure 19 – LEADER/CLLD of the Bavarian RDP.

The Regio.Dorf.Laden network was launched in 2016. Private company Regio.Marketing GmbH and the Hanau-Gelnhausen-Schlüchtern Chamber of Commerce and Industry were partners in the process.

The project strengthened the economic efficiency and sustainability of village shops by bringing together groups that previously worked independently and less efficiently. The village shops developed into retailers for quality regional products and their appeal increased.

The shopkeepers also received professional advice on selection, marketing, customer contact, shelf design and displaying goods on their premises. Through targeted advertising and labelling, customers know at first glance they are buying a product from the region.

The village shops can now order from a catalogue of regional products and the network has developed a joint 'product of the month'. This is collectively purchased, making it economically viable for producers.

The network has also developed a simple digital tool to plan efficient delivery routes, reducing CO² emissions.

To date, the network includes 10 village shops and around 20 producers, butchers and bakeries. Shopkeepers have enhanced their regional product range and learned about in-store promotion and product placement.

"We need the fantastic products of local producers to survive. Here in the store, customers get advice on every single product, they can sample, and they trust us that the goods are produced properly. Especially at a time when there is a great deal of uncertainty, we notice that customers are consciously coming to us."

Simone Bienosseck,
Shopkeeper

Around 23 full-time jobs in the village shops in the Spessart region have been preserved and four shops have secured their succession.

The project has shown that a regional product range plays a key role in increasing sales in village shops. Local shops selling local products strengthen their economic viability, with additional social and environmental benefits.

© LAG SPESSARTregional e.V.



The project increased the sustainability of village shops, which also serve as a meeting place for village communities.

Project Name	Local Village Shop
Type of beneficiary	Local Action Group
Period	2016 – 2020
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total budget: € 137 000 • EAFRD contribution: € 10812 • Private / Own contributions: € 26632 • Others: € 99556
RDP Measure	M19 – LEADER/CLLD
Further info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/local-village-shop-germany_en • http://www.spessartregional.de/regio-dorf-laden/
Contact	jennert@spessartregional.de

Sustainable development in a Finnish geopark

EAFRD funding contributed to bringing local authorities, people and businesses together to get UNESCO Geopark status and strengthened their relationship to nature, local identity and pride.

© Lauhanvuori - Hämeen kangas Geopark ry



The project strengthened residents' local identity and pride in their region.

UNESCO Global Geoparks are single, unified geographical areas where sites and landscapes of international geological significance are managed with a holistic concept of protection, education and sustainable development.⁽²⁾ Geoparks combine conservation with sustainable development while involving local communities, in a bottom-up approach.

Lauhanvuori-Hämeen kangas region, in south-west Finland, was accredited as a UNESCO Geopark in 2020. However, the vitality of the originally fragmented region needed strengthening and the potential for businesses and livelihoods improved.

The Geopark accreditation process was an opportunity for residents to participate in developing their environment, improve cooperation and strengthen networking. To achieve this, a project was set up combining national funding and EAFRD support under Measure 7 – Basic services and village renewal of the Mainland Finland RDP.

The Lauhanvuori-Hämeen kangas Geopark area is on the border of three provinces and nine sparsely populated municipalities. The project ensured cooperation between the municipalities, environmental service company Metsähallitus, Natural Resources Institute Finland, private companies, NGOs, educational institutions and residents.

The project combined local needs, EU rural development objectives and UNESCO criteria into concrete activities. It sought to strengthen business activities in the region, increase local awareness and appreciation of the region and to involve local residents.

Regional tourism companies were particularly involved in developing an operational plan for such a nature tourism destination. A particular focus was on well-being, health and food also emphasising the

geological story of the region, especially the wetlands. Higher education institutions have developed digital guidance for visitors based on location data.

Geopark activity days and sessions for children and young people have improved their environmental awareness, while the sustainable development of the Geopark has been promoted through seminars and other events for municipalities and regional residents. This has also helped strengthen the residents' local identity and pride in their region.

The Lhgeopark.fi website in Finnish and English highlights the park's attractions and tourism services. Certified companies can show the Sustainable Travel Finland sign and use the GEOfood logo on local products to highlight sustainability and tradition.

Visits to the Geopark websites increased from around 4 000 visitors in 2018 to 24 000 in 2020. Views of the Geopark's YouTube channel increased from 700 views in 2018 to around 19 000 and visitors to the Geopark's nature locations nearly doubled.

People from very different backgrounds have been involved, including students as well as adults with difficulties in finding work. The project has provided work experience for five young people, one new company has been created and there are several new services for Geopark visitors to enjoy.

The project has shared activities and best practices with national and international projects.

Project Name	Sustainable development in Geopark
Type of beneficiary	NGO
Period	2019 – 2021
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total budget: € 397 828 • EAFRD contribution: € 167 088 • National / Regional contribution: € 190 957 • Private / Own contributions: € 39 783
RDP Measure	M07 – Basic services and village renewal
Further info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/sustainable-development-geopark-finland_en • https://lhgeopark.fi
Contact	terttu.hermansson@lhgeopark.fi

(2) <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/environment/earth-sciences/unesco-global-geoparks/>

Slow trip experiences in rural Austria (and beyond)

A LEADER transnational cooperation project brings together nine European regions to market participative and sustainable tourism for experiencing everyday local culture.

Slow Trips – European Slow Travel Experiences unites partners from six EU Member States to market tourism products for ‘off the beaten track’ places to share everyday local culture. Authenticity is key as opposed to ‘staged’ events for tourists. Travellers learn from hosts and vice versa. Trips are designed with the utmost respect for the environment.

“Allowing yourself to be ‘entertained’ takes a back seat to experiencing everyday culture where it’s at home.”

Wolfgang Berger,
LAG Zeitkultur Oststeirisches Kernland

This transnational cooperation project is led by LAG Zeitkultur Oststeirisches Kernland and used funding from Measure 19 – LEADER/CLLD of the Austrian RDP. Project partners are LAGs from Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg and Sweden.

Drawing on an unconventional definition of ‘slow travel’, the project redefines the tourist experience, emphasising substance rather than appearance. The project involves idea-finding, piloting and promoting products across nine European destinations.

“Slow Trips is a new way of travelling. It stands for travel inspired by a sense of serendipity or happy coincidence, alternating between a feeling of adventure and shelter.”

Henrik Thomke,
LAG Nedre Dalälven, Sweden

These products are experiences that range from the unconventional to the highly eccentric. Narratives draw on each region’s cultural and historical heritage and may emphasise geocaching or nostalgic places such as ports, train stations and corner stores.

“We call it ‘localhood’. This responds to our longing for authenticity, grounding and a feeling of being at home away from home.”

Jacques Fons,
LAG Atert-Wark, Luxembourg

As lead partner, LAG Zeitkultur Oststeirisches Kernland contributes professional communication skills and ensures consistency across the project. Transnational project management is the task of ARGE Cult Trips & Slow Travel in cooperation with Tourismusregionalverband Oststeiermark.

The Slow Trips bilingual website presents multiple products and supports bookings with a common Slow Trips identity to aid recognition. This helps internationalise rural businesses, enhancing their revenue. At least 15 new tourism products in each region draw on cultural and historical heritage to present the region in unconventional ways.

Journalists, bloggers and micro-influencers were invited on virtual and physical press trips. Tourism associations communicate and market regional Slow Trips as core environment-friendly products.

The project has already shown its transferability, as Slow Trips products across Europe are structured similarly, despite substantial local or regional variability. Resilience is enhanced through new uses of local resources such as folk culture, landscape and building traditions, highlighting local specialties and hidden treasures.

“The ranks of dedicated Slow Trips fans include explorers, active creatives, cultural purists and slow-culture explorers.”

Henrieta Miliauskienė,
LAG Alytus Region, Lithuania

Drawing on the trend for experiences rather than services or products, Slow Trips shows participants how to enjoy the ‘unity in diversity’ of regions across Europe.

Project Name	Slow Trips
Type of beneficiary	Local Action Group
Period	2018 – 2022
Funding ⁽³⁾	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total budget: € 120 000 • EAFRD contribution: € 76 800 • National / Regional contribution: € 19 200 • Private / Own contributions: € 24 000
RDP Measure	M19 – LEADER/CLLD
Further info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/slow-trips-austria_en • https://www.slowtrips.eu
Contact	barbara.stumpf@zeitkultur.at

(3) Funding figures refer to the LAG Zeitkultur Oststeirisches Kernland only.

4. Socially Inclusive Futures

Social inclusion is a long-term process that aims to make all groups of people in a community feel valued and important. It requires responding to diverse needs in society and supporting and integrating vulnerable groups, while giving them opportunities to fully participate in their community. This RIA 2021 category recognises projects on themes ranging from healthcare to housing and promoting the inclusiveness of rural societies.

To achieve dynamic, inclusive rural areas it is essential to tackle challenges such as a lack of sustainable business activities and inadequate services, which push rural residents to move to cities to find jobs or a perceived better quality of life, in turn generating depopulation.

Young people, women, migrants, the elderly and disabled are particularly at risk of poverty and social exclusion. RDPs can support projects that offer tailor-made solutions to the specific challenges faced by these groups in rural areas.

Education is key to achieving social inclusion. This RIA 2021 category includes examples of projects that foster intergenerational dialogue and the transfer of knowledge across generations, to the benefit of the whole community.

LEADER helped set up 'Super Senior', the only intergenerational school support service in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg (page 23).

Vocational training is important to create opportunities for young rural inhabitants and enhance their well-being. RDPs can help by supporting the set-up of high-quality premises and effective knowledge transfer.

On page 24 you can read about a 'Mobile workroom' set up to help disadvantaged adolescents in rural Austria. A mobile container was converted into a learning and meeting space to encourage contact between local businesses and young people and improve job opportunities.

The 'Andalusian Shepherds School' in Spain (page 25) is a training project for people who want to work in pastoral or extensive livestock farming based on the transfer of traditional and innovative knowledge across generations.

The EAFRD also supports activities like social farming where agriculture counters the isolation of vulnerable groups. A partnership approach with constant communication between key stakeholders – farmers, teachers and local government – is key to success.

Austria's 'Green Care' family farm projects offer social services close to home in rural areas. They increase quality of life, secure and create jobs and help preserve small-scale agriculture and forestry (page 26).

The lack of infrastructure is a major challenge for rural citizens. To counter isolation, RDP-funded projects can offer better mobility and public transport as well as making local services more accessible.

EAFRD funding is helping solve problems of mobility and access to public services in an isolated French region. An electric car-sharing service provides a non-polluting vehicle at an affordable cost, while encouraging carpooling and strengthening social ties (page 27).



Super Seniors in Luxembourg

A non-profit association uses LEADER support to connect different generations in 'caring for the community' by providing intergenerational school support.

Nowadays, lots of older people are approaching retirement age while still having great dynamism and energy. Many have acquired extensive knowledge during their working life which can be passed down to younger generations.

At the same time, children can increasingly encounter difficulties with learning, often lacking organisation and self-confidence. Someone from outside may help them avoid tensions around homework. Other children need support in a specific subject that parents cannot provide, through a lack of skills, time or sometimes interest.

The Super Senior project brings these two worlds together to create an intergenerational school support service, where all parties have the incentive to find benefits and satisfaction.

The local association MEC – Mouvement pour l'Égalité des Chances pour Tous (Equal Opportunities For All Movement) worked with LAG Region Mëllerdall to encourage and enable seniors to provide voluntary help with homework to children in Luxembourg primary schools.

Agreements with several municipal administrations along with financing under RDP Measure 19 – LEADER/ CLLD covered the operating and staff costs. This enabled recruiting to start with a leaflet addressed to seniors sent to all households in the Mullerthal region. Applicants were tested in French, German and mathematics, the main subjects in Luxembourg primary schools. Interviews with a specialised recruitment coach assessed the motivation of each candidate and training covered childhood psychology and an explanation of school basics. This process provides a guarantee of quality for parents.

School problems are reviewed in detail with the parents, student, senior and the association to determine the days, hours and frequency for the sessions, which take place at the children's homes in the presence of an adult from their family.

Currently 16 seniors support a group of 40 children, normally for 10 sessions, renewable twice. However, the system is flexible and can be adapted on a case by case basis. A session costs 10 euros, most of which covers the seniors' travel expenses while a small part is reserved for a final gift for diligent students.

Supervisory meetings at the headquarters of MEC asbl take place every two months between seniors and the association to exchange experiences. This creates a

group cohesion and a team spirit within the service. Some participants even become friends.

Super Senior is invaluable in terms of sharing knowledge and improving social cohesion. Seniors maintain their knowledge, feel valued and stay connected with a new generation. Children learn a lot, including patience, how to integrate lessons and how to gain a broader perspective on life. Parents benefit from reduced family tension, more time for non-scholastic activities and less childcare pressure. Teachers find that the service also helps children become more motivated.

The Super Senior service is available in 14 municipalities in the Mullerthal region covering more than 26 000 inhabitants. In 2021 it is expanding to nine municipalities in the Moselle region with over 30 000 more inhabitants.

Project Name	Super Senior
Type of beneficiary	NGO
Period	2018 – 2020
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total budget: €49 040 • EAFRD contribution: €25 893 • National / Regional contribution: €17 262 • Private / Own contributions: €5 885
RDP Measure	M19 – LEADER/CLLD
Further info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/super-senior-luxembourg_en • http://www.mecasbl.lu
Contact	aurelia.pattou@mecasbl.lu



This project created an intergenerational school support service in rural Luxembourg.

A mobile workroom fosters youth inclusion in Austria

LEADER support enabled the set-up of a learning and meeting space for underprivileged young people, thus improving job opportunities.

Transition into the working world presents a complex challenge for many young people since this is the first time an individual's skills are matched with opportunities on the jobs market. This challenge is even greater for underprivileged youth. In rural areas, commuting time further hinders access to educational and job opportunities.

In Eastern Styria (eastern Austria), the LAG Zeitkultur Oststeirisches Kernland and the Chance B association joined forces to set up a LEADER project (funded under Measure 19 of the Austrian RDP) that would address such challenges.

The project has converted an unused container into a spectacular learning and meeting space, designed to generate interest and establish contact between young people and companies. This 'mobile chance' encourages positive changes in disadvantaged adolescents and provides positive work and learning experiences that promote self-confidence and reveal hidden talents.

Equipment in the trailer includes a flexible work area with a bar and kitchen and a lounge area for individual meetings. The interior design encourages curiosity and participation. Small mobile work benches (workboxes) enable young people to explore up to 25 skilled trades (from carpentry to computer coding) hands-on. The flexible interior can be used for workshops and educational events, such as for career orientation, creative techniques or developing personal and job competences.

"The project constitutes a technological as well as social innovation: the technical-digitalised equipment in every trailer results in a mobile and flexible communication space for improved career orientation of adolescents in rural areas."

Wolfgang Berger,
LAG Zeitkultur Oststeirisches Kernland

The container is parked near places of residence to maximise participation. Young people can investigate their individual talents through practical exercises. The workspace introduces new technologies and highlights the substantial technological shift in all trades. The set up also helps introduce new job profiles without traditional gender stereotypes, so more young people can become familiar with technical professions.

Among the participating youth, those interested are offered internships with over 30 small, medium, and large firms within the Eastern Styria region.



© LAG Zeitkultur Oststeirisches Kernland

This project converted an unused container into a learning and meeting space for youth.

Business owners and associates receive training for working with young people in specialised workshops. The aim is to raise awareness among business owners of the strengths and developmental potential of these young people.

"Integrating adolescents with limited opportunities into the job market is now more important than ever!"

Erika Reisenegger,
Project manager

All 15 LAGs in Styria are in regular communication concerning career orientation. The project currently involves 40 schools as well as are the regional offices of the Austrian economic chamber and public employment service, school quality management, educational organisations and professional associations.

Project Name	Mobile workroom for disadvantaged adolescents
Type of beneficiary	Local Action Group; NGO
Period	2019 – 2021
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total budget: €80 000 EAFRD contribution: €51 200 National / Regional contribution: €12 800 Private / Own contributions: €16 000
RDP Measure	M19 – LEADER/CLLD
Further info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/mobile-workroom-disadvantaged-adolescents-austria_en http://www.zeitkultur.at
Contact	info@zeitkultur.at

Andalusian Shepherds School

A training project supported by the EAFRD in Spain addresses issues of depopulation and a lack of generational renewal in livestock farming through traditional and innovative knowledge transfer, together with environmental aspects.

In typical pastoral fashion, the Andalusian Shepherds School is itinerant. Launched in 2010, the School offers an annual 540-hour training course in pastoral livestock farming at a different location in Andalusia (southern Spain) every year.

The main reason for creating this project was to promote pastoral livestock as an employment opportunity for young people. This programme is an opportunity to alleviate depopulation in many Andalusian regions by offering rural jobs linked to traditional professions, where young people are becoming scarce. The project also brings social recognition to shepherding, guaranteeing the survival of a broad historical and cultural heritage. Andalusia also has an important genetic heritage with six goat, six sheep and seven cattle breeds unique to the area and the Andalusian Shepherds' School includes information about some of these in each course.

Shepherds and animals play a significant role in conserving the biodiversity of natural areas and 130 shepherds have been trained to give practical classes to students. Managers of protected areas, environmental agents and shepherds actively participate in the School.

The School has worked with over 60 public and private entities and more than 30 are involved every year. This ensures a broad range of up-to-date topics are covered, including animal health, production, business management, economics and marketing and digital tools. Training is combined with internships that result in 60 to 90% of students being involved in livestock activities.

The School also offers activities with children and young people in schools and colleges across the region, as well as open days for local farmers and technicians.

Demand is three times the number of available places and keeps increasing. Most students are 18-30 years old, with a family tradition in livestock farming. In this traditionally male-dominated profession, the 129 students so far have included 30 women and an emphasis on gender equality continually raises the proportion of female students, which is expected to reach 50% of the total soon.

The project is directed by the Andalusian Institute for Agricultural Research and Training and is co-funded under Measure 1 – Knowledge transfer of the Andalusian RDP.



© Junta de Andalucía

The project's emphasis on gender equality continually raises the proportion of female students.

Strong impact in the mass media highlights recognition of the project at regional, national and international levels as a model of training for livestock farmers of the future. The project has also been presented at conferences in Spain, Italy, Morocco, Guatemala and Colombia.

A collaboration network has been created with initiatives linked to extensive livestock training in the Basque Country, Catalonia, the Canary Islands, Extremadura and Asturias. The project could be replicated in other European regions.

Project Name	Andalusian Shepherds School
Type of beneficiary	Public institution
Period	2010 – 2021
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total budget (annual): € 37 941 • EAFRD contribution (annual): € 34 147 • National / Regional contribution: € 3 794
RDP Measure	M1 – Knowledge transfer and information actions
Further info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/andalusian-shepherd-school-2017_en • https://escueladepastoresdeandalucia.es
Contact	franciscoa.ruiz@juntadeandalucia.es

Green Care in rural Austria

Focusing on interaction between people and nature, an EAFRD-funded project enables provision of diversified services by farmers, social agencies and institutions.



Orchards, vineyards, arable land, livestock and forestry enable farms to combine indoor and outdoor space, high-quality food production and direct contact with animals and plants. Farmers can use this experience along with their educational and social qualifications to join forces with social organisations, institutions and municipalities and bring social services to where they are needed.

In 2011 the Vienna Chamber of Agriculture used EAFRD support to set up the project 'Green Care – where people flourish'. The aim was to help farms offer social services, diversifying their sources of income while contributing to the social and economic development in rural areas. In 2014, the ARGE Green Care Austria association was founded with 23 stakeholders including representatives from Federal Ministries, the Public Employment Service and social economy institutions to cover the whole country. In 2015, the Green Care Austria association was founded as a nationwide competence network gathering all the nine Austrian Chambers of Agriculture. RDP Measure 16 – Cooperation is being used to support the project's activities between 2018 and 2023.

Innovative Green Care services help with care for the young and the elderly, as well as contacts with animals that enhance the well-being of people with physical and mental disability. Creating such social services where they are needed brings multiple benefits. These non-agricultural activities can also boost farm income and create new jobs in rural areas, including for people with disabilities. In addition, services use existing infrastructure and are closer to where they are needed, involving less travel.

"It's great that Green Care exists, especially for young people who might want to continue running the farm differently than the previous generation".

Participating farmer

Supporting family farms and their cooperation partners in implementing services starts with the initial project idea, clarifying legal basics, ensuring qualifications in cooperation with rural training institutes and forging partnerships. Support continues during implementation, quality certification and further development of marketing and quality criteria. Quality is assured through internal certification by Green Care Austria followed by accreditation by an external certification body.

"The certification gives our guests a certain security for a great quality offering!"

Green Care spokesperson

As of November 2020 there were 113 certified Green Care farms. So far, 12 Green Care services have been developed for education, health and social services on farms, including kindergartens, day centres for people with dementia as well as health promotion.

Central to the project is the direct cooperation between farms and institutions that include the Association of Municipalities, the LEADER network and the company Familie & Beruf GmbH, which supports the set-up and implementation of family-friendly policies and practices by enterprises, educational bodies and municipalities.

To further develop the Green Care concept, Green Care Austria promotes and supervises scientific studies and theses. It also checks the benefits Green Care projects bring to service users and their effects on farms.

"Three out of four Austrian farms are convinced by Green Care."

Market Institute for Agrarian Studies, Austria, 2019

The project has also established cooperation with the Chambers of Agriculture in Germany, as well as networking with the German Working Group for Social Agriculture to increase the interaction between people and nature, bringing social services to where they are needed.

Project Name	Green Care – Where people flourish
Type of beneficiary	NGO
Period	2018 – 2023
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total budget: € 1 968 602 • EAFRD contribution: € 987 639 • National / Regional contribution: € 980 963
RDP Measure	M16 – Cooperation
Further info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/green-care-where-people-flourish-austria_en • http://www.greencare-oe.at
Contact	nicole.prop@greencare-oe.at

Improving mobility in rural France

A car-sharing service set up with LEADER funding improved mobility and access to public services in a remote French area, while encouraging carpooling and strengthening social ties.

© Mairie de Villeroque-Termenès



This electric car-sharing project offers a cost-efficient and green solution to the challenge of rural mobility.

Villeroque-Termenès is a small village in southern France with 140 inhabitants. There are no major public services such as medical centres or large shops in the area and the closest bakery is 10 km away. Much of the population had difficulties in getting around, especially the elderly and young people with modest financial resources. Meanwhile, some local residents were interested in renewing their second family vehicle and wanted to purchase a common ownership electric car. The village also had an electrical charging point, but it was far from being fully used.

The whole village and the local authority joined in developing an electric car-sharing project, a cost-efficient and green transport solution to the challenge of rural mobility. Co-funding under Measure 19 – LEADER/CLLD of the Midi-Pyrénées RDP via the LAG Est-Audois helped buy a communal electric vehicle.

“The interest of the approach, I think, is that it did not start from above, but that it came from a demand that was forged in the territory.”

Former mayor of Villeroque-Termenès

Villagers can use this non-polluting transport for trips of up to 80 km, including access to supermarkets, DIY stores, specialised care and hospitals for tests as well as to visit family and friends. Carpooling and strengthened social ties are encouraged, including with tourists. A network of rural accommodation as well as local services and craftsmen is included in itineraries on the vehicle's GPS and is also available on connected equipment such as smartphones. This emphasises the advantages of local partnership.

Municipal services also use the vehicle. This has saved on the purchase of new cars. The municipality has entrusted reservation and payment management to an internet platform.

This project is an innovative bottom-up solution that helped improve public, social and solidarity services. The local authority took up a citizens' initiative on carpooling to also provide access to services for less mobile villagers.

In quantitative terms, the objectives of this initiative are already met. Today, the car is booked 10 half-days per week and travelling up to 30 000 km a year, with half the inhabitants benefitting from the service. In addition, this project has helped local employment with one person maintaining the car.

The vehicle is parked under a photovoltaic shade, which produces 3 to 4 full charges per day. Car-pooling and high use compensate for the ecological impact of the battery.

“Such a vehicle is a solution to travel expenses that everyone finds difficult to fund. And we managed to avoid the purchase of more vehicles in the village, so it makes more ecological sense.”

A villager

Project Name	Municipal electric cars-sharing service
Type of beneficiary	Local government
Period	2018 – 2021
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total budget: € 46 355 • EAFRD contribution: € 29 667 • National / Regional contribution: € 6 565 • Private contribution: € 10 123
RDP Measure	M19 – LEADER/CLLD
Further info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/municipal-electric-cars-sharing-service-france_en • http://www.autopartage.villeroque.fr
Contact	direction@gal-estaudois.fr

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Vibrant rural areas



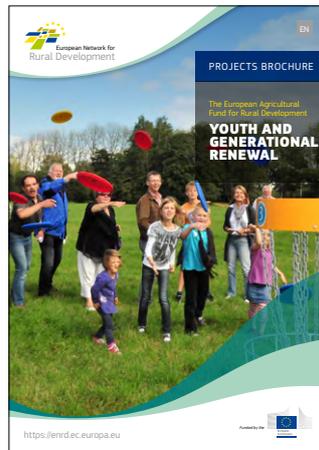
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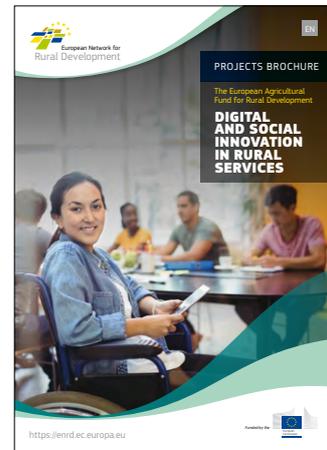
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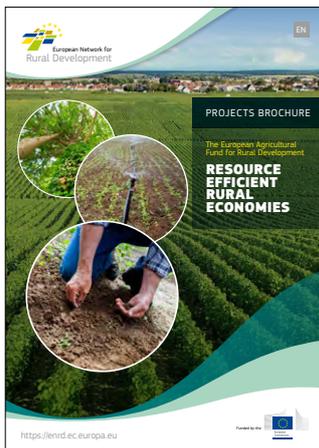
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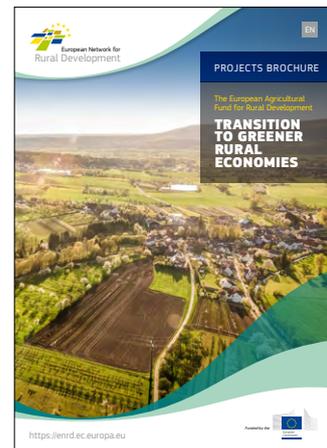
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