

GERMANY

Local development

Location

Oberkirchen

Programming period

2014 – 2020

Priority

Social inclusion & local
Development

Measure

M07 – Basic services &
village renewal

Funding (EUR)

Total budget 33 327
EAFRD 12 850
National/Regional 5 480
Private 14 997

Project duration

2017 – 2019

Project promoter

Heimat- und Verkehrsverein
Weiselberg e.V.

Contact

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Website

www.oberkirchen-saarland.de/bei-uns-ist-was-los/projekte/cafe-edelstein/

In order to strengthen and expand the function of a community café as a focal point of the village community, the outdoor area of the old school hosting the café was rebuilt and designed in such a way that community events can be held outdoors.

Summary

At the end of 2017 a mineralogical museum, located in the old school in the district Oberkirchen, was converted into a village meeting point named ‘Café Edelstein’. Two rooms were renovated and the café area became a meeting point that flourished and was popular among the locals.



Soon the need arose to create a usable facility in the outdoor area, so that the café could also offer outdoor events in good weather. Both the indoor and outdoor areas provide groups with the opportunity to have a central meeting point for regular events at all seasons.

Results

The Café Edelstein has become the central point for communication of the population in Oberkirchen.

In the newly created outdoor area, in times of good weather and in cooperation with local companies (caterers, restaurants, clubs, etc.), barbecue evenings, or other culinary activities are offered every Tuesday.

Other clubs, groups and companies use the café daily. Supplementary joint offers are created.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ Central meeting and communication points are an important element of lively rural villages and should be available for the population at any time of year. This necessarily includes a functioning and attractive outdoor space.
- ❑ One important lesson is to involve more people, or associations in such projects. It is a key success factor to bundle any existing resources at all levels. This allows to collectively make things possible that otherwise individual associations, companies, private individuals and communities would not be able to create on their own.

Context

In all smaller towns in the Saarland region, conditions have changed in recent years. In the past, there were many associations that were able to function on their own with sufficient members and often with their own premises. However, clubs are becoming smaller and often cannot cover the general need of the population to have a central meeting place in their town to carry out events of a larger or smaller nature, without being bound to a club. Even local restaurants are usually not able to compensate these gaps, so small towns are slowly ‘bleeding out’ culturally.

In Freisen-Oberkirchen the situation was also like that. The old school which was a landmark building of the village and provided housing to several local associations, closed down a few years ago. The school also hosted the Mineralogical Association, which presented gemstones found in the region in its Mineralogical Museum. The mineralogical museum was a small regional museum with only a few hundred visitors a year.

In this context, the idea was born to further develop the mineralogical museum into Café Edelstein into a village meeting place. The strong demand from the population showed that with the Café Edelstein, the gap in the village offer could be closed. In the course of time, the indoor offer of Café Edelstein was supplemented by a weekly outdoor barbecue, which was attended by up to 150 people every Tuesday in the summer months. However, the existing infrastructure in the outdoor area of the school was not suitable to meet the functional and design requirements of such community events.

Objectives

The objective of this project was to further strengthen and expand Café Edelstein as a focal point of the village community. To this end, the outdoor area of the school needed to be rebuilt and designed in such a way that attractive community events could also be held outdoors.

Activities

The development of the Café Edelstein took place in several steps. In 2017, the local association Weiselberg e.V. developed the mineralogical museum into a café. The

name Café Edelstein was derived from the minerals on display (e.g. agates and jasper).



In order to make the place attractive, the café was set up not only offering guests coffee and cake, but also an extraordinary atmosphere decorated with its precious stones. The development of the café began in the middle of 2017. Forty chairs and 10 tables were loaned free of charge. A small room in the museum was turned into an office for the head of the village. In another room, a beamer and a screen were set up in order to support lectures, or Internet courses. The kitchen was equipped with a professional dishwasher and two refrigerators for drinks and cakes. On 30/12/2017, the Café Edelstein was presented to the population and was very well received by the local population.

Little by little the number of events held there increased. So-called "culinary events" were organised, in which an external caterer was assigned the grilling due to the lack of a large kitchen. When the weather was fine, all guests were always drawn outside into the fresh air, even if there were still no proper seating and tables set up. Hence, it became clear that in addition to furnishing the three interior rooms, setting up a usable outdoor area at Café Edelstein would be needed to meet this recognisable need of the population.

The redesign of the outdoor area included financing of earthwork and paving, acquiring good-quality furniture for seating groups, constructing a small storage building, gardening and setting up the lighting, as well as developing barrier-free access. Since the exterior of the Café Edelstein had to be "extraordinary" and "strikingly different" (like the interior with its gemstone showcases) and to clearly distinguish itself from other offers in the region, visually striking "barbecue swings" from Estonia were purchased. These could be used in any weather and would also bring a certain "fun effect" - especially for children and their parents.

Main Results

In the newly created outdoor area, in times of good weather and in cooperation with local companies (including caterers, restaurants and clubs) beautiful barbecue evenings, or other culinary activities are offered every Tuesday.

The Café Edelstein has become the central point for community gatherings of the population in Oberkirchen. On Sunday afternoons people meet for coffee and cake. On Tuesdays evenings they are brought together for barbecues - and that is now possible outside in any weather. For example, in the winter during “Good purpose EXTREM-barbecues” (Gudd-Zweck-EXTREM-GRILLEN), guests can eat either wear their ski suits and eat at the roofed swings outside, or they can serve themselves from grill prepared outdoors and eat in the warm interior.

During the week, other villages and groups come and use the facility. The room with the beamer is also used for lectures. Lectures realised so far covered issues like energy consulting/medical lectures/company presentations.

Key lessons

Central meeting and communication points are an important element of lively rural villages, especially in areas without spaces such as a village inn. Such meeting and communication points should be available for the population at any time of year. This necessarily includes a functioning and attractive outdoor space.

One important lesson is to involve more people or associations in such projects. It is a key success factor to bundle any existing resources at all levels. Acting collectively makes things possible that individual associations, companies, private individuals and communities would not be able to create on their own. The key word seems to be "SHARE". Refugees who were also accommodated in the school were involved in all the activities and their preparation. This act strongly promoted their integration into the village community.

A positive surprise was the spontaneous acceptance of the entire offer by the population. This was due to the fact that this new offer made it possible to compensate for the market's collapsing offers.

Costs can also be planned very well if there is good cooperation among the project partners.



Additional sources of information

www.oberkirchen-saarland.de/bei-uns-ist-was-los/termine/termin-uebersicht/