

FINLAND

Implementing cooperation projects

Location

Austria – Finland - Sweden

Programming period

2014 - 2020

Priority

P6 - Promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas

Measure

M19 – LEADER/CLLD

Funding (EUR)

Total budget 600 000

EAFRD 252 000

National/Regional 348 000

Project duration

2016 – 2019

Project promoter

Leader Aisapari ry

Contact

Ms Eeva Arpala

eeva.arpala@aisapari.net

tel. +358 40 830 6541

Website

n/a

A Finnish NGO used EAFRD funding in a transnational project to exchange and develop best practices for integrating immigrants and refugees in rural areas.

Summary

Increasing numbers of immigrants are arriving to Europe from areas of conflict. Rural areas, particularly those with declining populations, have an opportunity to integrate refugees. International networks are needed to exchange best practices, advice and support in developing new integration projects for immigrants.



A Finnish NGO used EAFRD funding to lead a transnational project including international study trips to learn from good practices, the creation of platforms to exchange information, workshops and publication of the examples of best cases.

Results

The most important result so far has been better understanding of the migrants' integration challenges.

A joint publication of good immigrant integration practices from each of the partner regions.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ It was very important to devote enough time to the creation of the transnational partnership.
- ❑ All countries signing the partnership agreement have major issues with the integration of immigrants but see an opportunity for rural development.

Context

Increasing numbers of immigrants are arriving from areas of conflict and disaster to Europe. Rural areas, particularly those with declining populations, have an opportunity to integrate refugees. This process should include job creation, investment in housing, services and infrastructure. These aims were part of the manifesto agreed by the European Rural Parliament in Austria in November 2015.

The Identification and Exchange of Good Practices is a Transnational Co-operation project (under the Cooperation Measure of the respective National Rural Development Programmes) between 16 partners in Finland, Austria, Germany and Sweden. It aims to stimulate an exchange of good practices related to the integration of immigrants in rural areas within their respective regions. The project hopes to help newcomers with various backgrounds integrate in rural territories of the EU.

Objectives

1. Exchanging best practices on integrating immigrants and engaging them in using the LEADER-method.
2. Identifying ways to generate added value for the rural territories based on immigration.
3. Establishing a transnational network of 'local integration actors' between partner regions and offering these actors an opportunity to learn from each other.
4. Visits to existing integration projects (offering something unique or innovative in terms of organisation, interaction with the local community or other good practices to be transferred) in each partner country.
5. Enhancing local residents' and authorities' knowledge about immigrants and the benefits of immigration and integration.
6. Discussing existing integration projects and planning and implementation of new local projects.
7. Working for greater gender equality in all activities and to make immigrants and refugees the actors and drivers of community-led local development.

Activities

1. Identification of relevant integration actors and stakeholders in each partner country and territory, including the public, private and third sector.
2. Platforms for exchanging good practices (internet

page, social media tools, discussion groups etc).

3. Study trips for relevant integration actors and exchanges of good practice (one study trip per six months). Visits include different integration projects in each partner country, thematic workshops and seminars. The themes of study trips are: Sweden: self-employment, Germany: (to be decided later), Austria: local volunteers for integration actions, practical integration of refugees into the labour-market, Finland: municipal integration coordinator model, refugee centre public participation methods, clusters of projects for integration.
4. Organising local, inter-territorial and international meetings and workshops between target groups.
5. Joint Publication of good practice cases collected from each country and partner territory.
6. Reporting based on the RDP rules in each country.



Main Results

The three-year project started after three transnational partner meetings and signing a partnership agreement in November 2016,.

The most important result so far is better understanding of the migrants' integration challenges in the EU's rural territories at the level of Leader Local Action Groups (as noticed during visits of the partnership meetings in Austria, Finland and Sweden).

The first study trip will be carried out in Austria in March 2017, with the main theme of employment. A tangible outcome of the project will be a joint publication of good immigrant integration practices from each of the partner regions.

Key lessons

It was very important to devote enough time to the creation of the transnational partnership.

All countries that were signing the partnership agreement have major issues with migrant integration, but also see it as an opportunity for rural development.