

FINLAND

Local development

Location
Kauhava

Programming period
2014 – 2020

Priority
P6 – Social inclusion & local development

Measure
M07 – Basic services & village renewal

Funding (EUR)
Total budget 56 600
EAFRD 23 772
National/Regional 32 828

Project duration
2019 – 2021

Project promoter
LEADER Aisapari

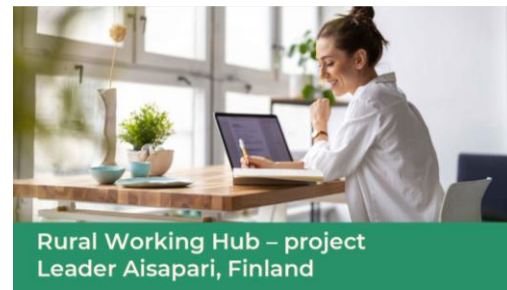
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Demonstrating the feasibility of rural working hubs in Finland and Ireland

Summary

This LEADER project helped launch a network of rural teleworking hubs in Finland's southern Ostrobothnia region and involved cooperation with Ireland's Longford County LAG. The CAP funding was used as start-up support for hubs as well as related branding and sharing best practices through online capacity building events and publications.



Results

- Eight new remote working hubs were launched in Finland.
- Best practices in working hub operating models were defined and shared transnationally. Nationwide collaboration was established with Finnish operators of working hub spaces.

Lessons & Recommendations

- Accurate understanding of demand for hub services will help safeguard the success of hub start-ups and their subsequent growth.
- Promotional offers and activities, such as a free first day and organising explanatory events, can help attract new hub clients.
- Tourism properties can be used as multi-functional working hubs for clients who mix business and leisure.

Context

Commuters comprise 30% of the workforce living in the LAG territory of Aisapari in Finland's south Ostrobothnia. Commutes of up to 80 km could be reduced by introducing local teleworking hubs. These would help reduce car dependency, tackle vehicle emissions, improve road safety, reduce road maintenance costs, provide tourism services, and offer opportunities to attract new residents or create new business in the region. Such hubs therefore form part of the LAG's local development strategy and can contribute to rural revitalisation.

Objective

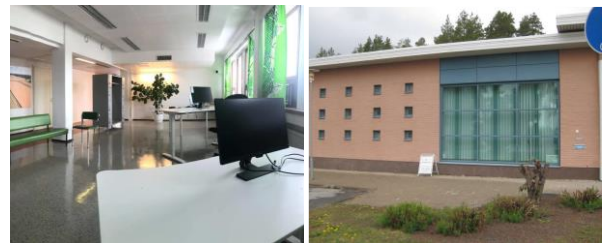
The aim of this cooperation project was to exchange knowledge and best practices on how to set up rural teleworking hubs.

Activities

The LAG Aisapari worked with Ireland's Longford County LAG on the project which employed coordinators to establish and run pilot hubs. The process involved first surveying demand for new hubs which confirmed interest among 60% of respondents. Hub locations were then identified and capacity building helped raise awareness about best practice approaches for hub management through guidelines, open days, study visits and other events. Topics covered by the knowledge sharing involved interior design of hubs, remote working statistics, reducing CO2 emissions through remote working, business models, and networking. Collaboration occurred with the company 'Crazy Town' which manages remote working spaces and business communities in urban centres in Finland. Different operating models of hubs were established including using a village house, a public library, an arts centre, and a hotel. A logo was also created to collectively brand the Finnish and Irish hubs.

Main results

- 11 branded remote working hubs are now operating in the Aisapari region. Eight of these received support from the project.
- Municipalities updated their plans to provide support for multi-locality work opportunities and invested in remote working commitments.
- Proposals for a national network of working hubs were developed to be supported by the Finnish Ministry of Economics and Labour.



Key lessons

- Hubs in rural areas should start with only a few working spaces and then increase their capacity according to demand.
- Promotional offers, such as free first day and organising events will encourage people to join a working hub.
- Tourist sites, hotels and cabin villages can be used as working hubs since people often like to combine work and holidays.
- Rural working hubs do not always need to have expensive equipment. Short-term teleworkers could use a meeting space in a village as a working hub, with limited modifications.

Additional sources of information

www.aisapari.net/kansainvalisyys/rural-working-hubs/