

## SWEDEN

# LEADER

### Location

LAG Skånes Ess, Kristianstad municipality

### Programming period

2014 – 2020

### Priority

P6 – Social inclusion & local development

### Measure

M19 – LEADER/CLLD

### Funding (EUR)

Total budget 106 555

EAFRD 53 277

National/Regional 18 115

Local 35 163

### Project duration

2016 – 2018

### Project promoter

Skånemedia AB

### Contact

[lukas.ernryd@kristianstadsblad.se](mailto:lukas.ernryd@kristianstadsblad.se)

### Website

[www.kristianstadsblad.se/lokalkorrespondenterna](http://www.kristianstadsblad.se/lokalkorrespondenterna)

With the objective of increasing the visibility of small rural communities, a Swedish newspaper offered training and mentoring in journalism to local citizens interested in becoming local correspondents.

## Summary

A trend in local journalism in Sweden has been to centralise news reporting at a main editorial office. A local newspaper wanted to address this trend by establishing cooperation with local correspondents from villages in the municipality and give visibility to the daily life of small rural communities.

A series of initial meetings were organised to present the project to five villages and identify local people who would be interested in becoming correspondents for their community. These people then received training and mentoring on journalism from professional reporters. The reporters supervised and supported the local correspondents, both as individuals but also through regular group meetings to share their new knowledge and experiences. The promoter of the project is the media company Skånemedia AB.



## Results

To date, 430 published articles have been written by the local reporters.

The newspaper has 109 000 unique readers every day. As an example on how popular they are, the articles written by the local reporters have been viewed 49 450 times during the period 2018-11-01 to 2018-12-07.

The newly acquired skills in writing and photography inspired some of the participants to develop their own businesses.

The project increased the visibility of, and awareness about, rural areas.

It also established a platform for rural news and rural perspectives. The local reporters still write about their communities - with guidance from the newspaper - on a voluntary basis, even though the project has ended.

## Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ The project leader plays a key role, assisting and organising the correspondents around the municipality, this role will continue after the funding. It is important for the project leader to be flexible, give personal feedback and have frequent short talks with the local correspondents.
- ❑ Valuing local engagement is also key. Even though many of the local correspondents were not financially incentivised, paying contributors for their work is a way of showing their work is valued.
- ❑ The local correspondents have an incentive to write the stories. They want to portray their community and that is why the stories are found. The local correspondents are the ones who should choose the topics for the articles.

### Context

The Swedish media landscape has changed significantly over the last decade. One of these changes has been the decreased media coverage of rural areas. Rural areas have become blind spots - meaning that rural stories and the perspective of people who live in the countryside remain largely unknown - and this is an issue for democracy.

With rural areas no longer featuring in the mainstream media, social media has stepped in as an alternative source of information. However, the news transmitted through these channels is often unclear, badly edited or of questionable origin and credibility.

The municipality of Kristianstad, southern Sweden, is one such area that had become invisible to the well-established media. In this municipality a newspaper called 'Kristianstadsbladet' is published which, due to economic limitations could not fully cover all the areas of the municipality. Through this project, the newspaper looked for ways to provide full local and regional news coverage; drawing on its long tradition in responsible and ethical journalistic work as a guarantee of the trustworthiness of the news provided.

### Objectives

The project's objective was to provide reliable news coverage and visibility to its area by engaging local people who wanted to act as correspondents for their communities. The idea of engaging local people to write about their own community is based on the fact that they tend to be far better informed about everyday local news than an external or broad area correspondent might be.

### Activities

The project included three different categories of activities; organising initial meetings with people who were interested in acting as local correspondents, delivering a series of training days to them and establishing an organic working process between the newspaper and the local correspondents.

The project started in September 2016 and by October, five start-up meetings were held in five different villages in the municipality. The meetings, which were open to everyone, aimed to make the project visible and to find local individuals and representatives of associations who might be interested in writing articles about their community. The meetings were organised by the project leader, who is a journalist at the newspaper

Kristianstadsbladet, and they resulted in the establishment of a network of contacts between the newspaper and those interested in doing journalistic work.



An educational day was organised in January 2017 for about 30 people. Participants were trained in journalism, writing and press ethics by the project leader and by a teacher in journalism from the University of Lund. In May, a second educational day was held, this time concerning photojournalism (led by a retired photographer).

At this point, the local reporters started their work and the cooperation with the newspaper evolved organically. The project leader was constantly in contact with the 20 correspondents and supervised their work. Often, the project leader supported the local correspondents individually, because he realised that quick individual feedback is very effective. In addition to this regular meetings with all correspondents were organised every three months, in order to share experiences and knowledge.

Every week, articles written by the local reporters were published in the newspaper, on the newspaper's website and on a Facebook page that was set up for the project. The project also made four special appendixes, one for each village, with specific stories and news. Five villages participated in the project, two of them decided to make their appendix together as they had so much in common.

### Main Results

#### Economic benefits:

The newly acquired skills in writing and photography inspired some of the participants to develop their own businesses.

#### Social benefits :

To date, 430 articles have been written by the local reporters and published either in the newspaper, or on the newspaper's website.

The newspaper has 109 000 unique readers every day. As an example on how popular they are, the articles written by the local reporters were viewed 49 450 times during the period 01-11-2018 to 07-12-2018.

The project has established a platform for rural news and rural perspectives. The local reporters still write about their communities - with guidance from the newspaper - on a voluntary basis, even though the project has ended.

### Networking value:

The cooperation between the newspaper and the local reporters created a network that benefits the newspaper, the participants of the project and the whole community. Thanks to the project, the newspaper now has eyes and ears in rural areas, which means that the media coverage has improved.



Before the project started the project leader visited The Guardian in London. One reporter from The Guardian talked about how newspapers have entered a new era. Earlier a newspaper could write the news from an ivory tower and publish news for a thankful crowd. The newspaper was a one-way channel. Now the times have changed. The readers nowadays have their own sources and give quick feedback when something is incorrect in the newspaper. The readers are fact reviewers and contribute with information themselves. Established media have become dependent on its users and in a new way.

The project is a way to meet the readers and citizens who possess knowledge which Kristianstadsbladet does not have. Now when the project has finished new relationships between readers/citizens and the newspaper have been established. This is an input of knowledge which Kristianstadsbladet does not have and cannot be without.



*"The people who live out there know what they want to read. We are dependent on their ears and eyes. We can only survive by living in symbiosis with our readers"*

Lukas Ernryd, Kristianstadsbladet  
reporter and project leader.

© Kristianstadsbladet,  
Lasse Ottosson

### Transferability :

The problem of decreasing media coverage in rural areas is not only a Swedish issue. The project leader has been contacted by two other newspapers in Sweden and by one non-profit organisation in Wales who are interested in doing something similar.

### Synergies with other EU policies :

No other sources of EU-funding have been used for this project.

The project indirectly contributes to other EU-policies. The project provided basic training in journalism to local people and might have encouraged them to do further training in that field, thus contributing the Europe 2020 strategy for education.

Another aim of the Europe 2020 strategy is to get more people into work. The skills acquired by the participants encouraged some of them to develop their own businesses.

### Additional sources of information

[www.facebook.com/lokalkorrarna/](https://www.facebook.com/lokalkorrarna/)

[www.kristianstadsbladet.se/lokalkorrespondenterna](http://www.kristianstadsbladet.se/lokalkorrespondenterna)

\*This project has been categorised under 'LEADER' by the nominating National Rural Network