



**EAFRD-funded projects**

# Tartu County Youth Foundation

## “Tartu County Active and Entrepreneurial Youth“



Socially Inclusive and Innovative Futures.

The 2018 LEADER project ‘Tartu County Active and Entrepreneurial Youth’ strengthened the work of the Tartu County Youth Foundation, which was created in 2010 to provide youngsters (aged 12 to 26) with funds for implementing their initiative and ideas.

The project offers young people a unique opportunity to independently apply for support to initiate and implement activities that are important and necessary for them and their communities.

To foster youth participation and entrepreneurship, the new umbrella project developed work packages, idea contests and evaluation activities based on a ‘youth-to-youth’ approach.

The project is an example of long-term implementation of a funding system aimed at young people, which is developed together with youngsters, giving them decision-making rights and responsibility.



© Tartu County Youth Foundation

### Location

Tartu County (Estonia)

### Programming period

2014 - 2020

### Priority

P6 - Social Inclusion and Economic Development

### Measure

M19 - LEADER/CLLD

### Funding (EUR)

Total budget 42 000

EAFRD 26 880

National/Regional 6 720

Private 8 400

### Project duration

2018 - 2021

### Project promoter

NGO Tartu County Development Association (LAG)

### Contact

[linda@tas.ee](mailto:linda@tas.ee)

### Website

[www.tas.ee](http://www.tas.ee)

## Results

The project funded 35 small-scale youth projects which involved over 1,000 young people in total, exceeding an initial goal of 600. The small-scale projects have improved the quality of life and attractiveness of Tartu County for residents of all ages.

Young people also established connections with peers across different municipalities, improved their entrepreneurial skills and, through project writing, realised the many opportunities rural areas have to offer.

As a result of the project, a Tartu County-wide youth network has been created. Young people have been involved in various projects through joint activities and have taken part in information days and feedback seminars.

Rural communities in the Netherlands, Northern Ireland and Finland have shown great interest in implementing a similar model.

## Lessons & Recommendations

The lesson from the Tartu County Youth Foundation and its LEADER project is that self-teaching (i.e. the youth-to-youth method) is a very sustainable and fruitful method as it allows youngsters to have a voice and decision-making responsibilities over each application for a community-oriented project. Also, giving the local youth “a fishing hook rather than a fish” means that temporary and quick solutions are not the priority. Instead, forward-looking, self-improvement and continuity are the aspects youngsters will hopefully learn and obtain during the project’s processes. Therefore, the recommendation is to include and work closely with young people when they are the target group.

### ENRD Contact Point

Rue de la Loi, 38 Boîte n.4 - 1040

Brussels, Belgium

Tel. +32 2 801 38 00

Email: [info@enrd.eu](mailto:info@enrd.eu)

Website: [enrd.ec.europa.eu](http://enrd.ec.europa.eu)

## Context

The involvement of young people and direct support for their initiative is an important strategy objective for the Tartu County Development Association (TAS). Young people, with their bold, smart, and novel ideas, can contribute to establishing and maintaining vibrant and active communities and to improving the living conditions in the area. However, youth involvement in decision-making processes in Tartu County was scarce.

As it is incredibly difficult for young people to apply directly for LEADER funds to implement their own initiatives, in 2010 TAS, in cooperation with Tartu County Youth Council, created the Tartu County Youth Foundation. This umbrella project provided youngsters (aged 12 to 26) with a unique opportunity to independently apply for support from the Foundation to initiate and implement activities that are important and necessary for them and their communities, ranging from environmental education to furnishing youth centres and buying equipment for playgrounds. The Foundation deals with the administrative requirements and documentation for the local paying agency, eliminating the bureaucratic barriers to accessing funding for young people.

Tartu County Youth Foundation has already funded about 155 small-scale initiatives by young people that support personal development, youth entrepreneurship and enrich their living environment.

In 2018, the Youth Foundation launched an umbrella project under the LEADER Measure with the title of 'Tartu County Active and Entrepreneurial Youth'. Coordinators and applicants include the Tartu County Development Association, Tartu County Youth Council, Tartu Business Advisory Services and Tartu County Youth Workers Association (the cooperation network).

## Objectives

The 'Tartu County Active and Entrepreneurial Youth' project was created to achieve greater connections between youngsters and their hometowns and communities, building on the experience of the Tartu County Youth Foundation.

The project aimed to offer young participants their first opportunity to write, lead and report on projects so that they could develop and implement novel and creative ideas for their home regions, also addressing the lack of innovative products and services in the region.

According to the project partners, the project could increase young people's self-confidence and give them a feeling of success, encouraging them to apply for and implement larger and more responsible projects in the future. By familiarising themselves with project writing, evaluation committee work and project coordination, youngsters would realise it is possible to be an entrepreneurial young person in a rural area.

In addition, youth activation aimed to strengthen the cooperation networks of both youth and youth-related associations, including intra-county cooperation among youth. The project's goal was to involve 600 young people.

## Activities

The umbrella LEADER project 'Tartu County Active and Entrepreneurial Youth' developed work packages, idea contests and evaluation processes.

**Work packages:** working procedures, including application conditions and instructions for the evaluation committee, were created and are regularly reviewed based on the needs and feedback from the youth. In parallel, an evaluation committee was set up, involving eight members from the four founding partners as well as Home Side of Tartu County, the Association of Municipalities of Tartu County and two young volunteers (ages 16–26).

**Idea contests:** the project partners organised eight idea contests during the project period (1 April 2019, 1 October 2019, 5 February 2020, 5 May 2020, 5 October 2020, 5 February 2021, 5 April 2021, and 4 June 2021). The activities and application conditions for the idea contests were developed in cooperation with young people. The idea contests were communicated through different news outlets, project partners' website homepages, mailing lists, etc. In addition, every idea contest included support, counselling activities and advice to improve the small-scale youth projects before the final evaluation. After project applicants had implemented the suggested changes, the projects were finally submitted to be assessed and ranked.

**Evaluation:** the evaluation committee got together and ranked the projects, deciding on those that would eventually receive funding. The selected projects then had four months to finalise their activities. The project leaders had to provide a summary of their project activities, impacts and results, and submit the data to the Youth Foundation coordinators.

The Tartu County Youth Foundation works with a youth-to-youth method which was applied in the project: young people (aged 12–26) can apply for funding for their own projects, but they also participate in the design and evaluation process of other projects. In addition, the Youth Foundation is largely coordinated by Tartu County Youth Council, itself a youth organisation which represents the youth of Tartu County, stands up for their interests, gives them a platform to voice their opinions, protects their rights and promotes the youth work of local governments. The Tartu County Youth Council was the main supervisor and consultant for youngsters throughout the project.

## Main results

The 'Tartu County Active and Entrepreneurial Youth' project has funded 35 small-scale youth projects since 2018, which involved over 1 000 young people in total, far exceeding the initial goal of 600.

The Youth Foundation provides an irreplaceable opportunity for local youth to independently apply for funding to initiate and implement activities that are important and necessary for them and their communities. Young people had more opportunities to make important changes in their communities, establish connections with peers across different municipalities and improve their entrepreneurial skills. Writing and coordinating projects helped them realise the many opportunities rural areas have to offer and will be an asset for their future.

The youth projects fostered cooperation between neighbouring municipalities and between different age groups. They improved the quality of life and attractiveness of Tartu County for residents of all ages.

The project created a Tartu County-wide youth network. Young people have been involved in various projects through joint activities and have taken part in information days and feedback seminars.

The Youth Foundation has been a good example for other counties and the Netherlands, Northern Ireland and Finland have shown great interest in implementing a similar model.

The project is an example of a smart, sustainable, long-term financing model aimed at young people, which is developed in cooperation with youngsters and gives them decision-making rights and responsibilities. It is an early example of an umbrella project under the LEADER Measure which channels financial resources to youngsters implementing and initiating their projects.

## Key lessons

The 'Tartu County Active and Entrepreneurial Youth' project's key lessons were as follows:

1. Youngsters need mentoring during the application, implementation and finalising phases; however, mentors should only act in an advisory role, not as the main initiator or driving force.
2. Documentation rules and requirements need to be clearly communicated to young applicants as it is not possible to deal with certain documents after the project activities have been carried out.
3. Different stakeholders, project partners and volunteer evaluation team members need motivation through different benefits and services in exchange for their time and efforts, i.e. study trips, thank-you events, etc.
4. There should be more funds directed towards youth (especially youth in rural areas) as this enlivens and keeps the communities dynamic. It also provides youngsters with the means to actually make a bigger difference.
5. "Instead of offering a fish, give a person a fishing hook".

---

### Additional sources of information

<https://entk.ee>

This project has been categorised under 'Socially inclusive & innovative futures' by the nominating National Rural Network