

A digital excursion to the Sörmland coast

LEADER project promotes coastal tourist route in Sweden.

EAFRD-funded projects

Location: Sörmland coast, Sweden

Programming period: 2014-2020

Priority: P6 - Social inclusion & local development

Focus Area: 6A - Diversification & job creation

Measures: M19 - LEADER/CLLD

Funding: Total budget 1 259 700.00 (SEK)

EAFRD 379 850.00 (SEK)

National/Regional 379 850.00 (SEK)

Other 500 000.00 (SEK)

Timeframe: 2018 to 2020

Project promoter: Utflyktsvägen - Föreningen
Gröna Kusten

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- > The membership of Gröna Kusten has increased from 16 to 120 members.
- > Sörmland municipalities are now collaborating more often than before the 'Excursion Route' initiative.

Key lessons and recommendations

- > Voluntary efforts by the association lowered project costs.
- > Succession planning for rural development groups is essential for their sustainability.

Context

In 2005, the idea was born to create a non-profit association bringing together local companies and actors to promote the Sörmland coast-line in south west Stockholm, Sweden. It was hoped that by creating the Gröna Kusten (Green Coast) association and by implementing relevant actions, more visitors and customers could be attracted and spend more time in the area.

The association's first initiatives included 100 new road signs enticing motorists to follow an 'Utflyktsvägen' (Excursion Route) that guided them to different sites of interest along the Sörmland coast-line between Södertälje and Norrköping. In 2009, the signs were fully funded by the relevant municipalities and the local nature park.

Summary

Sweden's Gröna Kusten voluntary organisation, comprising tourism providers and other local services, used LEADER support to modernise the promotion of a coastal tourist route via a website and magazine.

Project results

The main successes of the project include:

- > The number of companies and actors interested in advertising and being listed on the website and in the magazine is increasing every year.
- > A new, user-friendly web platform that is accessible across different devices, including computers, smart phones and tablets. It incorporates an interactive map and a new link to a podcast promoting the region across different topics.
- > The platform contains links to the webpage of every Gröna Kusten member. All listed actors have their own logins and can easily update information by themselves.



At the same time, a basic website was created providing information about the different local actors and businesses, such as cafés, hotels, beaches, art studios and nature reserves in the area.

Starting with a membership of 16 companies, the Gröna Kusten association grew steadily year by year. However, despite the relative proximity of many of the visitor locations to the E4 motorway, many actors from the association still felt that too few motorists were attracted to come off the road to visit the sites along the Excursion Route.

Objectives

In 2018, a LEADER project was designed to attract more visitors to the Excursion Route through a much improved, informative and more contemporary website and the production of a magazine through which the different actors and sites would be promoted more effectively.

The objectives were to:

- Create a more contemporary, more digitised and user-friendly web platform for the target audiences. The platform was to conform better to the requirements and expectations of today's visitors.
- Increase the diversity of the members of the association through the production of a magazine as well as the new website aiming to include smaller actors, commercial as well as non-commercial operators.
- Increase the accessibility of the platform and attract more visitors to the area, particularly from the surrounding region of Stockholm. These day trips would help extend the tourist season.
- Optimise the benefits for the members and partners of the association overall.

Activities

The main project activities involved:

- An external company updated the existing website. This included developing aspects such as the user-friendliness and accessibility of the website via different devices; improving

linkages to other services and platforms; and enhancing the navigation, interactivity and manageability of the website for visitors and promoters.

- In collaboration with the Sörmland Academy, LEADER 'Sörmlandskusten' and the Keep Up Agency, the 'Excursion Route' project produced a podcast that is linked to the project's website focusing on various interesting themes about the Sörmland coast.
- Together with its members, the Gröna Kusten association developed a magazine to be published each year listing all companies and sites along the Excursion Route. The idea was to only charge a small fee for the placements of companies' advertisements so that smaller actors could also get involved and be part of the overall project.

Main results

- The number of companies and actors interested in advertising and being listed on the website and in the magazine is increasing every year.
- The new web platform is now user-friendly and accessible across different devices, including computers, smart phones and tablets. It incorporates an interactive map, which helps visitors to navigate easily between the different sites along the Excursion Route. A new link to a podcast on Spotify adds information and is promoting the region via a selected range of interesting topics about the Sörmland coast.
- The platform contains links to every actor's separate webpage and all listed actors have their own logins and can easily update information themselves without hiring expert support.
- The magazine currently lists 120 companies and actors that are also members of the Green Coast association.
- Up to 90 000 physical copies of the magazine were printed annually. It is also accessible on the website.
- Municipalities in the area are now collaborating more often in relation to the 'Excursion Route' initiative.



Key lessons and recommendations

- The main strengths of the project were the members of the Gröna Kusten association who have supported the initiative from the start. Their commitment extended to volunteering their time and efforts and working in different capacities on a *pro bono* basis. This has not only lowered the costs of running the association, but also reduced the costs of distributing the magazine.
- So far, the association runs entirely on a non-profit basis and relies on the commitment of its staff and members. This could potentially become challenging in future when key individuals will retire and new, similarly committed people need to be found.

“Actors want to continue participating year after year, which indicates that the project is going well.”

Lars-Gunnar Thor

Additional information:

n/a



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