

Op på Cyklen! / Up on the bike!

Feeling inspired by rural youth - learning from their involvement in rural projects.

EAFRD-funded projects

Location: Skarriidsøgade, Denmark

Programming period: 2014-2020

Priority: P6 - Social inclusion and local development

Focus Area: Local development

Measures: M19 - LEADER CLLD

Funding: Total budget 100 650 (EUR)

EAFRD 33 550 (EUR)

National/regional 67 100 (EUR)

Timeframe: 01.2021 to 12.2022

Project promoter: LAG Midt-Nordvestsjælland

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- The pilot project developed three cycling routes and constructed one physical shelter along the longest route. A stock of 30 bicycles was purchased and is available to be used by young people.

OP PÅ CYKLEN

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Key lessons and recommendations

- While the project had no direct economic impact, working jointly with young people provided the LAG with new, creative ideas for project development. Engaging directly with young people is a method that every LAG and relevant organisations should learn to embrace.
- When supporting young people in projects and sharing the decision-making process in rural development with them, they are more likely to resettle in rural districts as adults later in life (according to survey findings of the project).

Context

Experience showed that, on the rare occasions when young people bring forward ideas to organisations in charge of rural development, the proposals are often challenging either due to the highly specific topic of the topic or due to their strong emphasis on physical investments. However, more importantly, organisations such as Local Action Groups (LAGs) usually find it hard to engage with young people in rural development projects. Insights about young people's views and experiences of living in rural areas and how to encourage them to participate in rural development projects are usually hard to find. Therefore, when the LAG Midt-Nordvestsjælland in Denmark was contacted by a young person with a good and passionate idea seeking to move education and schooling outdoors and away from the traditional indoor classroom setting, it did not take LAG members long to feel inspired and to develop the proposal into an actual project.

The LAG Midt-Nordvestsjælland covers the rural districts of Mid-Nordwest Zealand, including the five municipalities of Lejre, Holbæk, Sorø, Odsherred and Kalundborg.

Summary

A youngster approached the Local Action Group (LAG) Midt-Nordvestsjælland in north-western Zealand, Denmark, about the idea of moving education and schooling outdoors and away from the traditional indoor classroom setting. This was an opportunity for the LAG to work jointly with and for young people, making use of their creative thinking skills. The project financed a study which explored how small, traditional rural towns could make life for young people more exciting and beneficial for them. Building on the findings of the study and combining it with the initial idea of the young people, the pilot project 'Op på Cyklen!' (Up on the Bike!), was designed to encourage young people to experience and learn about nature while being outdoors and physically active.

Project results

- The study identified important topics that related to the original project idea and expanded on the aspirations, views and needs of young people in the rural area. The study also found that many children in the rural area neither owned a bicycle nor had they learned how to cycle. In addition, the study noted that, for many children, it was important to have equal access to bikes and to eliminate social inequality.



Objectives

The project entitled 'Op på Cyklen!' (Up on the Bike!) was designed to encourage children and young people (mostly 11- to 15-year-olds) to experience and learn about local environments while being outdoors and physically active. The project was managed by the LAG focusing on how small, traditional rural towns can make life for young people more exciting and beneficial for them. In addition, the project had the important underlying aim for the LAG of gaining experience of working together with and for young people.

Activities

The project activities included a study and a pilot project.

- Conducting the study. The study examined the needs and wishes of young people and how they could be integrated and aligned with the aspirations of the local development strategy.
- Implementing the pilot project. The pilot project incorporated the following three main activities:
 - Purchasing 30 bicycles: The bicycles were provided free of charge if users were within the target group of the project. The project also made available bicycle helmets and safety vests etc. to provide equal access and opportunity for all.
 - Designing a set of three cycling routes and expeditions - All three routes vary in distance and points of departure, and the designed expeditions all combine learning, cooperative task-solving and physical exercises. The longest route is 15 km, the other two are approx. five km long.
 - Constructing a shelter. The project included the construction of a shelter site along the longest cycling route that can accommodate an entire school class (20-30 children).

Main results

- Overall, considerable benefit was obtained from supporting the young people in making rural areas more attractive. The LAG gained experience as to how it can provide youngsters with support and a sense of responsibility for their local area and environment.
- The study identified important topics that related to the original project idea brought forward by the youth. This included:
 - The means and methods of learning and teaching in Danish public schools.
 - The relevance of developing pride for ones' rural area and natural environment.
 - The need for a greater focus on social relations outside public schools.

- In addition, the study found that many children in the rural area neither owned a bicycle nor had they learned how to cycle. For those who did know how to cycle, they did not feel safe. There were numerous reasons for this but it was mostly because the parents deemed it too dangerous due to the lack of road safety measures. In addition, the study showed that children in smaller rural towns did not get the same training in road safety due to a lack of the necessary training facilities. In addition, the study noted that, for many children, it was important to have equal access to bikes and to eliminate social inequality.
- The bicycles were provided free of charge if users were within the target group of the project.

Key lessons and recommendations

- While the project had no direct economic impact, working jointly with young people provided the LAG with new, creative ideas for project development. It showed that young people have substantial capabilities for thinking innovatively. Therefore, engaging directly with young people is a method that every LAG and relevant organisation should learn to embrace.
- In addition, when supporting young people and their project ideas and thereby sharing the decision-making process in rural development of their areas with them, it is much more likely that they will resettle in rural districts as adults later on in life (according to the survey findings of the project).



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