



Regional cooperation project + Business + Employment

Eleven LAGs joined forces to boost rural employment.

ERDF-funded projects

Location: Valladolid, Spain

Programming period: 2014-2020

Priority: P6 - Social inclusion and local development

Focus Area: Local development

Measures: M19 - LEADER CLLD

Funding:

Total budget	545 366.50 (EUR)
ERDF	436 293.20 (EUR)
National/Regional	109 073.30 (EUR)
Private/Own funds	0 (EUR)

Timeframe: 2018 to 2021

Project promoter: 11 LAGs : AGALSA, CEDER Merindades, Asociación Cuatro Valles, Montaña de Riaño, Poeda, CODINSE, HONORSE-Tierra de Pinares, Asociación Segovia Sur, ADRI Páramos y Valles Palentinos, ADECOCIR, and Colectivo para el Desarrollo Rural de Tierra de Campos

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Thanks to the jobs portal that was created, the beneficiaries (companies, job seekers, and service providers) connect directly with each other and receive important information about opportunities and activities.

Project results

Quantitative benefits in the period from 2018 to 2020 included:

- The creation of a comprehensive employment web platform bringing together more than 5 000 registered job seekers and over 10 000 companies, managing more than 1 500 job offers.
- Around 700 companies were supported in efficient digital transformation.
- More than 1 500 young people have increased their awareness of entrepreneurial culture and job opportunities. Young people acquired key tools (CANVAS tool) for their search for employment and their search for work when self-employed.
- Of all the people employed thanks to the platform, more than 200 were young people.
- More than 300 people were supported by Learning Spaces. These included learning topics such as digital marketing and skills in active job search 2.0.

Summary

In this collaborative project, 11 LAGs developed a joint strategy to provide a more effective response to the needs of jobseekers and businesses in Castilla y León (Spain). The project integrated all sectors but, given the geographical situation, the primary sector (agri-food) and the service sector were more dominant than others. The project designed a new mechanism to bring the job market closer to those looking for jobs aiming to retain people in the rural area and thereby reduce unemployment.

The aim was to harmonise access to information, guidance and training across the participating territories so that the take-up of existing employment and self-employment opportunities would improve. Social inclusion, equal opportunities and socio-economic sustainability were key principles of the project.



Qualitative benefits included:

- Increased economic dynamism and a growing labour market.
- Improved motivation and attitude.
- Improved job seeking skills.
- Increased connectivity between the labour force and employers' needs.
- Development of new digital and communication skills via online and in-person training.

Key lessons and recommendations

- The coordinated work and close collaboration among the 11 Local Action Groups (LAGs) boosted the transfer of knowledge and experience.
- Training all of the beneficiaries (SMEs and the self-employed, workers, entrepreneurs and local entities) is important.
- The implementation of a methodology based on cooperation between the 11 LAGs led to excellent results.
- The employment platform offers real solutions to complex processes such as rural depopulation.
- It is important to continue promoting strategic alliances between the different economic sectors and local agents.
- It would be beneficial to run a follow-up project and complement its activities with those of other local and regional organisations.

Context

The initial project idea came from an evaluation study which pinpointed a number of inter-related and serious challenges affecting the rural area in Castilla y León, Spain. These included high unemployment, lack of economic and business activities, depopulation and a general weakening of the socio-economic fabric of the area, combined with a lack of information and guidance on how to find employment or to find out about self-employment options.

This was compounded by a lack of entrepreneurial culture and a low ability to adapt to change, leading many young people and women to leave their villages in search of job opportunities elsewhere - mostly in cities. Even the LAGs of these rural territories were increasingly approached by people asking for employment.

Based on this evident need to improve access to information about existing job offers and to increase the levels of self-employment and entrepreneurship, the project idea was to create a new

mechanism - an online platform - to deliver relevant information, advice and guidance. The target audience included job seekers as well as local companies in search of staff, who could reach potential employees more effectively.

To increase the scale and effectiveness of such a new, internet-based tool, it made sense for the LAGs to collaborate with each other. The idea of a collaborative rural employment platform was born in 2018.



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Objectives

The main aim of the project was to develop a joint strategy between the 11 LAGs focusing on stimulating and promoting the rural labour market via improved provision of information, advice and guidance for the unemployed, entrepreneurs and companies.

This was to be accomplished at various levels, including:

- Creation and administration of a rural employment internet platform for the management and dissemination of opportunities and activities.
- Creation of 11 Regional Entrepreneurial Training Spaces.
- Provision of technical assistance to business projects likely to offer employment opportunities.
- Equipping people with the necessary skills to be able to identify, choose and/or redirect to viable training and employment alternatives, in line with their potential, their employment needs and their life circumstances.
- Efficient and effective project management and monitoring.



Activities

The project was implemented over a period of three years.

The first phase included the set-up of all relevant project structures that would be implemented throughout the duration of the project, including all management, coordination and evaluation processes and monitoring procedures. Furthermore, a mechanism for the identification and dissemination of good practices in cooperation was also established.

The second phase focused on the training of trainers in relevant topics and the provision of information about the content, access and administration of the service provision. The topics included entrepreneurship and business advice. Other sessions focused on the use of the socio-occupational guidance platform, the methodology of socio-labour guidance actions and the use of the labour market integration platform. Assistance was provided for content creation for the project's platform and its management.



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The third phase focused on the actual work with unemployed people and with companies. The activities matched job seekers with job opportunities, including by providing technical assistance for disabled people. A digital newsletter on employment and entrepreneurship was developed and the project was promoted and communicated to the target audiences, including via awareness raising events to help strengthen the entrepreneurial culture. Advice and personalised support to companies and entrepreneurs was provided and a labour orientation process for the active search for employment was implemented.

This was followed by the promotion of 'cooperation spaces' for companies and business associations. This involved holding information meetings about legal aspects of employment, aid and subsidies and other common topics. The innovative web platform includes a comprehensive range of employment services, allowing people direct access to job offers, a database of business resources available for sale, rent or transfer, employment news, courses, grants and subsidies, and job vacancies. Training and personalised advice included support in the field of self-employment (feasibility studies, business plans, personalised advice and financial aid) to create, diversify or restructure businesses.

During the completion phase, joint strategies for active employment and entrepreneurship programmes were promoted and agreements and conventions with organisations to work in coordination were finalised.

The key stakeholders of the project were the 11 LAGs, unemployed people, entrepreneurs and companies.

Main results

In quantitative terms, the project created one comprehensive platform of employment and entrepreneurship services, bringing together more than 5 000 registered job seekers, more than 10 000 companies and managing more than 1 500 job offers.

Around 700 companies gained know-how in digital transformation. More than 1 500 young people have an increased awareness of entrepreneurialism and job opportunities. Participants acquired relevant tools and key skills in how to search for employment. Of all people employed through the platform, more than 200 were young people. Additionally, learning spaces for more than 300 people were created.

In qualitative terms, the project increased the economic dynamism of the labour market.

The participating companies can now present their job opportunities in a more informative and appealing manner (highlighting innovation, teleworking, collaborative working etc.) to improve their competitiveness.

It was also noted that young people had a more pro-active attitude in searching for employment and that they felt more motivated and encouraged through the support.

The project helped job seekers, including women, to learn how to prepare CVs, cover letters, job interviews, and to increase their presence on social networks and to consider self-employment.

The project also offered networking opportunities for young people, women, vulnerable groups, businesses, entrepreneurs and local organisations. The dissemination of information, social networking, conferences and publications also helped to raise overall awareness about the job portal.

The jobs' portal is an innovative technological tool to connect the labour force with employers.

New digital and communication skills were acquired by all stakeholders.

Key lessons and recommendations

- The added value of this initiative was based on dealing with common problems in rural areas in a coordinated and collaborative manner between the 11 LAGs. This boosted the transfer of knowledge and experience in reducing rural depopulation.
- Training all beneficiaries (SMEs, self-employed, workers, entrepreneurs and local entities) is important to combat a weakening of the economic and social sectors and to improve access to information.
- A methodology based on cooperation between LAGs led to excellent results and synergies such as the creation of the innovative and effective tool.
- The employment platform offers real solutions to complex processes such as rural depopulation by promoting citizen participation and entrepreneurship, generating opportunities for women and young people.
- It is important to continue promoting strategic alliances between the different economic sectors and local agents.
- It would be beneficial to run a follow-up project and complement its activities with those of other local and regional organisations.

Additional information:

Regional cooperation project's website: <https://empleorural.es>

