

'Holzland€ash' youth fund

A LEADER project enables young people to develop their own rural development project ideas and receive funds to implement them.

EAFRD-funded projects

Location: Saale-Holzland region, Germany
Programming period: 2014-2020
Priority: P6 – Social inclusion and local development
Focus Area: Local development
Measures: M19 – LEADER CLLD

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|-----------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Funding: | Total budget | 50 604 (EUR) |
| | | (three projects) |
| | EAFRD | 34 158 (EUR) |
| | National/Regional | 3 795 (EUR) |
| | Private | 12 651 (EUR) |

Timeframe: 21/04/2016 - 01/11/2023
 (three projects)

Project promoter: Regionale Aktionsgruppe
 Saale-Holzland e.V.

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Summary

The number of young people living in many rural areas is declining significantly, as is their associated voting power and the viability of service provision. The Saale-Holzland region is struggling to retain its young people who feel that society around them is ageing and that they have fewer opportunities to shape their region and realise their own ideas. As is typical of many rural areas in Europe, young people increasingly choose to leave. To give them more ways to get involved, the LEADER Local Action Group (LAG) Saale-Holzland created a student workshop where young people can develop their own project ideas for their rural area. A permanent youth advisory council was created to serve as a representative body for the concerns of children and young people and to manage the Holzland€ash fund, which it uses to finance selected youth projects with up to EUR 1 000 each.



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Project results

- › Thirty-one projects have already been successfully funded since 2016, some of them with 'Denk bunt - Thüringer Landesprogramm für Demokratie, Toleranz und Weltoffenheit' (Think in colour - Thuringian state programme for democracy, tolerance, and globalisation) as part of the 'Demokratie leben!' federal programme, and some with additional LEADER funds.

Key lessons and recommendations

- › A small amount of CAP funding can make a big difference. When we incentivise young people, they can be inspired to do a lot of project work themselves, as well as seek additional assistance.
- › It was interesting to note how self-critical young people are when evaluating their own projects - they take a very realistic approach. Participants sometimes do think in utopian terms in the student workshop, but realistic, feasible projects ultimately grow from these ideas.
- › The project team learned that structures must remain flexible and open since collaboration with young people is highly dynamic.





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Context

The number of young people living in rural areas is declining significantly, as is their voting power. The Saale-Holzland region is suffering from the consequences of demographic change and is impacted by a trend of young people moving away from the area. Youth participation is an important part of the equation when trying to ensure that rural life is attractive for everyone, now and in the future.

What conditions would young people like to see to convince them to remain in the region? How can children's and young people's voices be heard to overcome their perceived risk of shrinking influence at governance level? How can regional development be child- and youth-friendly? What can children and young people do to make life in the region more attractive, exciting and eventful for themselves and others in the future? These are the questions the Saale-Holzland LAG began asking early on in their process of promoting locally-led rural development. The group then created opportunities for children and young people to get involved through an annual student workshop and a student competition. These allowed pupils to create their own image of the future (in the form of a kids' and young peoples' mission statement), talk to experts from the region and contribute to a range of successful approaches and projects.

As part of creating the local development strategy in 2015, the idea to launch a LEADER youth advisory council and LEADER youth fund was developed, to further promote involvement by children and young people and to actively integrate youth within regional development.

Objectives

By recognising that young peoples' needs play a role in local decisions and improving the quality of their lives, the project aimed to foster loyalty among young people to their home area and (ideally) generate interest amongst them in returning after their initial training or education outside of it.

The aim of this project was for young people to take on responsibility, contribute and help shape solutions through participatory programmes. Participation would teach young people about the democratic process and foster understanding between generations and cultures.

Activities

Three LEADER funded projects were implemented in support of this initiative:

PROJECT 2016-18

- The founding of a LEADER youth advisory council and LEADER youth fund to promote engagement among children and young people, as well as active involvement in regional development. Both tools were implemented in 2016 as part of the LEADER project 'Holzland€ash youth fund', supporting the implementation of the overarching project: 'Taking part - co-determination and co-management by children and young people'. Since then, children and young people between 12 and 27 years of age have been able to carry out their own rural development projects.
- Developing and testing a project assessment and approval process. If the project reaches the defined minimum number of points, then project sponsors can implement their ideas up to EUR 500, or up to EUR 1 000 for particularly good projects.
- Developing a logo for 'Holzland€ash', setting up a website, and delivering a brainstorming and public relations planning workshop under the leadership of an advertising agency.
- Supporting and carrying out eight youth initiatives through Holzland€ash (2017, all financed by LEADER). Developing an advertising campaign 'Landkind/Stadtei' (country kid/city kid) and organising the annual student workshop (SWS) which included eight design sessions for ideas development.
- Carrying out five projects by young people in 2018. The youth advisory council took advantage of many opportunities to network and contribute to other regional and national boards.



PROJECT 2019-21

- > Implementing three projects in 2019. Two young people who are very active on the youth advisory council led their own workshop on youth involvement. They attracted new members to the youth advisory council.
- > Organising meetings via video conference in 2020. Three projects were implemented despite the pandemic.
- > Implementing three projects in 2019. The youth advisory council regularly presents opportunities for young people to get involved in the Saale-Holzland region at events, encouraging participants to take part in the youth advisory council and to take advantage of the Holzland€ash youth fund.

PROJECT 2022-23

- > Implementing five projects in 2022. For the first time, the youth advisory council took a trip to the Holzland€ash youth projects in the region and put on the 'HLC-Cup' (recreational volleyball tournament) for the second time.
- > Creating an explanatory video to advertise the student workshop. A challenge cup was awarded to the winner from the public for the first time at the SWS.



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Main results

Results per year:

- > Between seven to ten young people participated in the youth advisory board.
- > Between 70-100 children and young people participated in the student workshop (during the coronavirus pandemic: only 40 persons).
- > 15 schools were invited.
- > Nine projects were developed.
- > EUR 500-1 000 of LEADER funds spent per initiative in support of an average of four projects per year. Each involves at least five young people.
- > Up to ten youth advisory council meetings per year.
- > Two public relations workshops organised.
- > One recreational/hands-on event organised by the youth advisory council as a rural networking 'get to know you' event.
- > Present at a minimum of four regional events/year (Nickelsdorf children's festival, student workshop, Eisenberg participation picnic, Children and Youth Day of Action, Hermsdorf participatory forum, Stadtröda cooperation conference and LEADER Day of Action).
- > Young people involved in at least four regional boards (LAG executive board, BgA LAP, JHA, JB Strategy management group) and one nationwide board (umbrella association).



Key lessons and recommendations

- > For a wide-scale initiative, it is helpful to involve the municipalities. Because this is a LAG-led project, the team was able to access an established network of municipalities and regional partners from business and social institutions.
- > The early focus on win-win effects for everyone involved also fostered sustainability.
- > The project team learned that structures must remain flexible and open since collaboration with young people is highly dynamic.
- > It was interesting to note how self-critical young people are when evaluating their own projects – they take a very realistic approach. Participants sometimes do think in utopian terms in the student workshop, but realistic, feasible projects ultimately grow from these ideas.
- > A small amount of CAP funding can make a big difference. When we incentivise young people, they can be inspired to do a lot of project work themselves, as well as seek additional assistance.
- > Professional support and ensuring continuous contact through mobility and/or digitisation are important.
- > Taking young people and their concerns seriously, and then fostering real and ongoing involvement are essential.
- > It is also very important to create common experiences and positive perceptions!

“I’m on the youth advisory council because it’s fun to have my voice heard at such a young age. It’s also fun to see how our region is developing. This benefits us as well. We help young people to make their region what they want it to be. And we are the voice of young people, for instance, through the youth aid committee”.

Julius (age 15)

Additional information:

www.rag-sh.de

www.holzlandcash.de

www.myeshaka.de

