

Landemia - workable solutions to promote urban-rural migration

Boosting population growth in the rural area by establishing positive, collaborative, and holistic measures fostering multi-local living and teleworking.

EAFRD-funded projects

Location: South Ostrobothnia region, Finland

Programming period: 2014-2020

Priority: P6 - Social inclusion and local development

Focus Area: Local development

Measures: M07 - Basic services & village renewal

Funding: Total budget: 330 000 (EUR)

EAFRD: 138 600 (EUR)

National/Regional: 191 400 (EUR)

Timeframe: 01/03/2021 - 30/11/2023

Project promoter: Eteläpohjalaiset Kylät ry

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Summary

The collaborative Landemia project was launched during the COVID-19 pandemic, aiming to increase the attractiveness and vitality of the South Ostrobothnian rural area in Finland. The project concept was to attract new permanent residents to the villages by supporting multi-local living and teleworking. This involved identifying and removing obstacles to rural in-migration by developing new and positive approaches to support the integration process. Three models were developed:

- Village Patron model - supporting new residents through village patrons working to integrate newcomers into the community and familiarise them with the area.
- Municipality visits to the village - municipal officials and elected representatives visit the local villages, fostering open dialogue. Together with a LEADER funding expert, new development ideas for improving the area can be discussed.
- "Best things in my village" - inspiring locals to recognise and share local gems with others. This also increases their own appreciation of the region.

Project results

- The project promoted positive ideas about villages and created new collaboration opportunities for stakeholders.
- More than 334 000 people were reached through various communication channels.
- Seven workshops were held in the pilot municipalities, and 36 other events were organised. In total, 655 people participated.
- As a result of promoting teleworking, one village established a new teleworking space, another began to reform its shoreland use planning, and discussions were launched regarding young graduates and relevant training opportunities in rural municipalities.

Key lessons and recommendations

Engaging and committing various stakeholders requires ensuring that all different perspectives are considered.



Context

Aging and a declining population are problems affecting Finland, especially the countryside. These phenomena are also apparent in South Ostrobothnia, particularly in its smaller rural municipalities and villages, in which the population is aging and declining rapidly at an alarming rate. The continuously shrinking population raises concerns about the vitality and future of such small rural municipalities.

At the same time, according to a survey by Kantar TNS Agri (February 2023), almost a million Finnish people dream of moving to the countryside, but these dreams are seldom realised. However, rural municipalities and villages require new permanent, as well as part-time, residents to remain inhabited in future. The COVID-19 pandemic and changes in how people work have increased multi-local living and migration from urban to rural areas in Finland. The Landemia project was launched during the pandemic to create a means by which rural municipalities could seize the opportunities brought by these changes and to increase their attractiveness, vitality and, eventually, their population. The Eteläpohjalaiset Kylät village society from the South Ostrobothnia region sought funding for the project to secure the vitality and existence of villages in the future.



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Objectives

The main objectives of the project were to increase the attractiveness and vitality of the South Ostrobothnian countryside, to attract new permanent residents to the countryside, and to support multi-local living and flexible working. The project's aim was to increase knowledge about the obstacles to urban-rural migration and find solutions and good practices to mitigate them. Overall, the project was aimed at supporting rural areas and villages in identifying their pull and hold factors that help to increase resident satisfaction in these areas.

Activities

Project activities included:

- > Studying the pull and push factors related to urban-rural migration and multi-local living in relation to South Ostrobothnian municipalities and villages. This research was important to inform the creation of new tangible models that meet real needs. During the project, the Natural Resources Institute Finland (Luke) conducted five empirical surveys, focusing on place-of-residence choices, migration decisions, and willingness to migrate. The surveys were targeted at students, potential urban-rural migrants, and people who moved away from or to South Ostrobothnia.
- > Establishing a network of relevant partners that would use the survey information in regional development.
- > Collaborating with South Ostrobothnian municipalities, villages, and other partners, and creating tools / models to attract interest in rural areas and to facilitate the settling-in process of newcomers. These models were based on the project's research and analysis of the concrete needs and wishes of potential migrants, part-time residents, and local municipalities and villages.
- > Encouraging local people to observe existing local push and pull factors and to inspire them to further improve the vitality of their area. The village visits included a regional Leader representative, who provided information about village development and funding opportunities.
- > Developing different approaches to facilitate urban-rural migration and enhance the attractiveness and vitality of rural areas:
 - The “Best about my village” (Parasta mun kylässä). The project further sought to encourage local residents to recognise and share the gems of their local environment with the use of the service design tool.
 - The “village patron” (Kyläkummimalli) model was designed to help new villagers and part-time residents integrate into their new environment and community, whereby close cooperation between a municipality and its villages and residents was facilitated.
 - The “municipality visits the village” model (Kunta tulee kylään) enabled an open dialogue between a municipality and its villages with visits from municipal officials and elected representatives. The visits also encouraged villagers to develop the attractiveness of their area, and the new development ideas were reviewed with the accompanying Leader experts regarding available funding sources.



- Promoting, communicating, and sharing information throughout its duration through many channels. This included social media (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube), online articles, print media, television and word-of-mouth communication during events. The communication activities promoted the project goals and raised awareness about the project, the South Ostrobothnia region, and the local municipalities and villages.

The project involved the Natural Resources Institute Finland (Luke), the five pilot municipalities and their villages, other South Ostrobothnian municipalities and villages, the four South Ostrobothnian Leader groups, the Finnish Village Movement Association (Suomen Kylät SYTY), the Kylille III and other national, regional and local projects related to multi-local living and rural development, and the residents of the project areas.

Main results

- The project promoted teleworking in the countryside. As a result, Ilmajoki established a new teleworking space, Soini began to reform its shoreland use planning, and discussions were launched regarding young graduates and relevant training opportunities in rural municipalities.
- The project engaged with 45 active partners, including several village societies in the region.
- The multi-channel communication reached more than 334 000 people.
- Seven workshops were held in the pilot municipalities, and 36 other events were organised. In total, 655 people participated. The project also participated in various other events organised by other actors, so as to increase its reach.
- Five empirical surveys were undertaken, focusing on factors related to place-of-residence choices and migration decisions and willingness.
- The project involved young people. According to the survey findings, young people wish to live in rural areas, and the project aimed to include their voices already at the planning stage.
- A video was created for the National Rural Parliament and young people's stories were published on the project website.
- The project enhanced municipalities' positive ideas about villages and deepened cooperation among municipalities and villages.

- The project inspired local people to observe existing local push and pull factors and further improve the vitality of their region.
- The project promoted new partnerships: for example, a study trip encouraged two municipalities to work together on a new project.

Key lessons and recommendations

- Ensure that broader themes such as rural living and migration are divided into smaller, tangible elements. This is particularly effective for workshops so that different aspects of the broad theme of rural vitality can be explored one at a time.
- The project was successful in involving a wide variety of stakeholders, which is an indication of the importance of its topic. Other municipalities eagerly applied the developed models, signaling the clear need for activities that promote positive ideas about rural living and working.
- Observe that active, multi-channel communication is important to ensure a good level of project visibility. It is recommended that similar projects should actively communicate their activities and achievements, so that they are also noticed and applied elsewhere.

Quote

"Landemia was executed extremely well. A tangible project with tangible activities. The project workers actively encouraged municipal leaders to commit to the project. In the Isojoki municipality, similar activities will continue after Landemia: it has launched a LEADER project to map empty properties, for example."

Project stakeholder

Additional information:

www.youtube.com/@landemia

www.facebook.com/landemia.hanke



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