

## 10 good reasons to live in Upper Styria

LEADER helps improve youth awareness in Austria about local development opportunities.

### EAFRD-funded projects

**Location:** Eastern Upper Styria, Austria

**Programming period:** 2014-2020

**Priority:** P6 – Social inclusion and local development

**Focus Area:** Local development

**Measures:** M19 – LEADER CLLD

<b>Funding:</b>	Total budget	38 390 (EUR)
	EAFRD	23 520 (EUR)
	National/Regional	5 880 (EUR)
	Private/own	297 (EUR)

**Timeframe:** 01/02/2017 – 31/10/2017

**Project promoter:** Regionalmanagement  
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### Summary

Like many other regions in Europe, Eastern Upper Styria is experiencing a demographic decline as young people increasingly decide to leave the region. A LEADER project aimed to change adolescents' perception of their homeland by helping them to identify opportunities available to them in their area. Over the course of several workshop sessions, school pupils had creative discussions to find reasons why they would want to stay in their region. They conducted interviews with well-known people of the region (actors, politicians, etc.), and produced a series of video clips sharing those stories and journeys. Back in the workshops, the young people discussed the benefits of their local area, developed slogans, graphic designs, and images that celebrated their local identity. These ideas were then discussed with a professional communication agency, which integrated them into a formal campaign.

### Project results

- An evaluation at the HAK Mürzzuschlag school showed that the project was known by most of the pupils in this school.

- The project brought together diverse groups of people, including school pupils, regional authorities, private individuals, politicians, etc., who worked together to shape a positive image of the region to counteract emigration tendencies.
- The project was shared via other youth initiatives, so it is estimated that the outputs of the initiative reached approximately 15 000 pupils in 2019.

### Key lessons and recommendations

- Demographic decline is a major challenge for most rural areas in Europe.
- CAP funds can play a key role in promoting the participation of young people in activities that promote a positive image of rural areas as attractive places to live, work, and visit.

### Context

Similar to many other regions in Europe, Eastern Upper Styria is experiencing a demographic decline as young people increasingly decide to leave the region. The district of Bruck-Mürzzuschlag lost 4.9% of its population in a decade.





Young people are attracted to urban areas, as they think there are more opportunities for their future there. One of the issues contributing to this outmigration is that young people tend to hold a negative view of their region that does not reflect its true dynamics or potential.

This project emerged from a previous initiative called “Youth Migration in Rural Areas”, carried out by the Federal Chancellor’s Office and the State government of Styria, which had revealed that all high school students would prefer to leave the region. These findings highlighted the urgency of taking positive action to raise awareness about the strengths of the region among this target group. Studies have shown that the active engagement of young people with their homeland can counteract potential emigration. At the same time, young people need to feel that they live in a nice area that offers opportunities for a bright future.

## Objectives

The project had two main objectives:

- to offer a framework of creative activities within which young people could explore and examine their region and identify its strengths by themselves; and,
- to promote the region to local young people in a relatable and innovative way.

## Activities

Project activities included:

- conducting preparatory work. A preparation meeting was held with all project partners, and a kick-off meeting held with the pupils.

- organising meetings with the pupils at schools. This involved 12 workshops with pupils and additional meetings with the ‘Do it!’ communication agency. Pupils prepared 10 video clips and one theatrical play.
- delivering the ‘Role-Model-Talk’ concept. The project team and the pupils identified four interesting personalities in the region to be interviewed, and prepared interview guidelines. This process allowed pupils to get to know interesting personalities, companies, and job profiles, raising their awareness of job and career opportunities in the region.
- organising a concluding/dissemination event with 200 young people and well-known political, business and media personalities. Publishing 16 press reports in the [regional] media.
- designing and launching a promotional campaign to improve the image of the region among young people. The concept of the campaign was a collaborative effort between the advertising agency and the youngsters, and included the distribution of 51 000 free cards and 50 000 stickers, presenting the strengths of the area and the opportunities available to young people.
- documenting and reporting on the project activities and results.

## Main results

- The project brought together diverse groups of people, including school pupils, regional authorities, private individuals, politicians, etc., who worked together to shape a positive image of the region to counteract emigration tendencies.
- The participatory approach made it possible for young people to actively contribute to all levels of the project. 20 pupils were members of the steering group that was involved throughout the whole project, and nearly all the youngsters contributed their own spare time to working on aspects of the project.
- An evaluation at the HAK Mürzzuschlag school showed that the project was known by most of the pupils in this school.
- The project was shared via other youth initiatives, so it is estimated that the outputs of the initiative reached approximately 15 000 pupils in 2019.
- The project received wide publicity via the regional press and private television, and about 200 people (pupils, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders) celebrated the project results at the final event.

## Key lessons and recommendations

- > Demographic decline is a major challenge for most rural areas in Europe.
- > This LEADER project demonstrated that the active and creative involvement of young people is fundamental for changing perceptions about rural life and helping young people identify opportunities for themselves in the countryside.

*“There are many reasons to stay and plan the future in Upper Styria. We focused on youth participation in order to get the “real” 10 reasons to stay in our region from our main target group – young people. One of our project goals was a direct sensitisation for regional advantages to see the region with different (young) eyes. We found out that the new generation knows and appreciates the high quality of life in our innovative region”.*

Martina Hassler - youth management

*“One of the most important results of the project was the knowledge that our youth needs more possibilities to get information about the region. So, this was the cornerstone for our new project ‘youth region’, funded by means of the province of Styria”.*

Martina Hassler - youth management

## Additional information:

Website:

[www.obersteiermark.at](http://www.obersteiermark.at)

10 reasons to live in Upper Styria:

[www.rudischer.com/10-gruende-fuer-die-obersteiermark/](http://www.rudischer.com/10-gruende-fuer-die-obersteiermark/)

[Local Action Group Mariazellerland Muerztal](#)

