

The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development

Examples of projects
supporting social inclusion



European Network for
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The EAFRD Project Examples brochure forms part of a series of ENRD publications that help encourage information exchange. Each edition of the brochure features different types of projects that have received RDP co-finance from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD).

This edition of the brochure highlights project examples that have helped to provide a range of social inclusion support services across rural Europe.

Further editions in the series of this EAFRD Project Examples brochure can be downloaded from the *ENRD website's publications and media section*¹, and a *RDP Projects Database*² contains many additional examples of EAFRD assistance to rural development initiatives.

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1 http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/en-rd-library/eafrd_examples_of_projects_brochure_en/en/eafrd_examples_of_projects_brochure_en_home.cfm

2 http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/rdp_view/en/view_projects_en.cfm

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Introduction: social inclusion projects in rural Europe

EU Member States have been using the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) since 2007 to support a vast variety of rural initiatives that are channelled through Rural Development Programmes (RDPs). Many such projects focus on improving quality of life through the promotion of social inclusion.

Social inclusion helps to ensure equal access for individuals and communities to opportunities, rights, and resources (like employment, healthcare, housing, civic engagement, democratic participation, etc.) that are normally available to society and are key to social integration.

Many rural areas are characterised by a restricted access to services.³ Sometimes this is due to the absolute absence of some of the services, but in some other cases, especially when it comes to their design, social services do not properly match the specific needs in rural areas, due to the predominantly urban character of the principles that inspire them.

Social inclusion projects co-financed by the EAFRD provide support that is tailored to the specific needs of rural areas. This covers dedicated assistance for priority groups from the countryside such as (among others) children in need, disabled people, elderly generations, those suffering from poverty including small farmers in certain Member States, immigrants and ethnic minorities such as the Roma.

Many of the EAFRD projects supporting social inclusion actions deliver essential services and introduce new facilities that would not be possible without help from the RDPs. These projects are mainly funded by the RDP measure supporting 'basic services for the economy and rural population'.

Farmers and other rural enterprises have also the opportunity to use EAFRD co-finance for the creation of social services under the RDP measures supporting 'diversification into non-agricultural activities' and 'business creation and development'. LEADER can also set up specific social services based on the assessment of local needs identified in a Local Action Group's local development strategy.

These types of RDP support highlight the beneficial role that EAFRD co-finance can play in helping Member States to achieve their social inclusion objectives. Nine project examples are featured in the following pages. They have been selected to demonstrate the broad scope of the EAFRD as a social inclusion tool for rural areas. These inspiring case studies have much potential for replication elsewhere in rural Europe.

Between them, the projects reveal how EU rural development policy is playing an important role in promoting a more inclusive society and making rural areas a better place to live for everyone. This role will grow in the next programming period (between 2014-2020) since promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas will be one of the EU rural development priorities.

Social farming success story: EAFRD project highlights rural Austria's potential for social inclusion services

A farm diversification project in Austria typifies the potential socio-economic benefits of using agriculture as a basis for the provision of different types of health and education therapies.



© association Guat lebn

Social farming offers many opportunities to provide social inclusion services. The concept of 'green care' has come to the attention of an increasing range of rural stakeholders in recent years and numerous examples of social farming activities can now be found around the EU Member States.

There is a growing understanding about the potential role agricultural and rural resources can play in enhancing the social, physical and mental well-being of people.

At the same time, social farming also represents a new opportunity for farmers to broaden and diversify the scope of their activities and to play a multi-functional role in society. This integration of agricultural and social activities can provide farmers with new sources of income and also enhance the public perception of agriculture.

An EAFRD project from eastern Austria, in the picturesque region of Styria, ably demonstrates how these different socio-economic benefits can be achieved through social farming. Here, a small farm holding has taken advantage of its prime location - surrounded by hills, forests, lakes and fresh air - to establish a specialised therapy centre for people with learning difficulties.

Farm therapy

Walburga Siebenhofer established the Brueckler Farm centre because she had always been convinced that farm environments could have a positive influence of human beings. She wanted to develop an enterprise that would support this and care farming was the obvious choice.

Her efforts were assisted by a well-established tradition of such farms in Austria that are supported by the Austrian Council for Agricultural Engineering and Rural Development (ÖKL).

EAFRD co-finance was awarded to help her fulfil her objectives of setting up a social farm that improved the quality of life of people with various disabilities. The RDP funding was used to cover part of the costs involved in launching and running a programme of green care activities. These are designed to be flexible so that they can adapt to the specific needs of individual clients.

Highlighting some of the Brueckler Farm's main activities, Ms Siebenhofer observes that, "popular services offered by our farm include helping clients to develop animal care skills and how to take responsibility. Working with animals and people is a way of improving clients' interpersonal skills. Activities like donkey walking, among others, are used to provide training for the improvement of physical skills."

Results show that the care farm clients are able to learn and carry out new exercises demonstrating improved mental and physical well-being. The farm has also raised the profile of care farming and its therapy techniques are increasingly perceived in a positive way, becoming more widely accepted as a viable agricultural diversification option.

Diversification outcomes

The Brueckler Farm has diversified into this non-agricultural business activity to such an extent that commercial-scale food production is no longer carried out and the farm's land is used solely as a therapy resource. Using the land in this way maximises the farm's potential to provide care services to a large number of clients.

Social farming offers useful job creation opportunities for rural communities.

Certified in 2010 by the Austrian authorities for its work in green care services, the project is now used as a good practice case study by ÖKL for other agri-businesses interested in becoming certified for farm-based therapy services.

Other positive outcomes from this social inclusion success story include the fact that it has managed to create and support ten jobs from the farm's four hectares of land.

“Working with animals and people is promoted as a way of improving clients' interpersonal skills.”

Walburga Siebenhofer



Help for minority groups: Hungarian EAFRD project improves opportunities for rural Roma families

Some sections of rural society remain disadvantaged by obstacles to integration. Many Roma communities, for example, continue to experience problems regarding exclusion from employment, education, health and welfare.



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People from minority ethnic groups who live in rural areas experience the same sort of social inclusion challenges as other local residents. However, their experience may be exacerbated by problems associated with their relatively small and/or dispersed population sizes. Besides potential isolation or discrimination, low population numbers can also mean that particular social inclusion needs are difficult for support services to pick up.

Assistance from the EAFRD's quality of life measures can help tackle these sorts of demographic disadvantages and ensure that minority groups receive equal access to social inclusion support. A great deal of such work has been carried out using RDP co-finance and knowhow has been gained into effective solutions for minority groups' rural development needs.

Roma communities for instance have benefitted from RDP support in many Member States and EU guidance on Roma inclusion⁴ underlines the EAFRD's role as a useful support source. An EAFRD project example from Hungary's Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén region highlights how this has happened in practice and resulted in social inclusion benefits for Roma families.

Roma support

Méra Village is home to a community of Roma people. RDP funds from the LEADER budget were awarded to a project here involved in helping to improve socio-economic opportunities for children from disadvantaged Roma families. The project aimed to build the capacity of parents to help their children have a better future.

A training programme was organised for parents looking to develop various life skills that would help their children receive a better education, increase employment prospects, and improve quality of life. Training activities focused on strengthening parental competencies in socio-cultural, educational and communication skills. These help the parents to advise and assist the social integration of their children.

Participants in the project developed their communication and collaboration skills, increased their learning abilities and developed problem-solving and conflict management skills. The training was provided for Roma parents as well as other members of rural communities.

4 http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Resources/Documents/2011_10_Common_Basic_Principles_Roma_Inclusion.pdf

The outcome was that parents felt empowered to act as role models and 'life guides' for their children. Edit Glonczy Béláné from the project notes how, "participants in the training courses were able to expand their material thinking, measure the risks associated with their decisions, increase their literacy, and improve understanding about the benefits from continuous education for themselves and their families."

Ms Glonczy Béláné feels the project's positive outcomes will provide a lasting legacy for the trainees saying, "at the end of the training the participants achieved their goals and their competences have been expanded. The results can be measured not only from the development of the participants but also on the whole family and particularly the children. This has made a big difference in helping to address the children's education problems. Family and workplace relations have changed positively."

The EAFRD can be used to support equal opportunities and to address particular needs for ethnic minorities in rural areas.

“Due to the training, the participants developed their communication and collaboration skills, and increased their learning abilities, problem-solving and conflict management skills.”

Edit Glonczy Béláné



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Success factors

Success factors noted by this EAFRD project include ensuring that the target audience is involved in the design of the training course content and its delivery methods. This ensures project relevance and boosts a sense of ownership by the beneficiaries, which engenders greater commitment to the training process and more positive overall results.

Follow-up support work with the families can also improve a social inclusion project's sustainability and reach.

Services for special needs: EAFRD project provides valuable transitional care support in rural Spain

Funds from a Spanish RDP have helped to create a community residence where severely disabled people can be offered basic care, as well as educational and professional occupational training.



© Manuel Santos Lamas

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People who experience severe disabilities require special care. Those living in the countryside require rural care and providing such services for severely disabled people from rural areas is possible as part of the EU's quality of life agenda within rural development policy.

A residential care project from the region of Galicia in Spain shows exactly how the EAFRD can be used for such social inclusion purposes.

Led by the *Asociación de personas con discapacidad AVANTE*, this project is improving the societal integration of disabled people. Demand for the service came from various sources, including feedback from the families of disabled people.

Manuel Santos Lamas from the project explains how, "parents and other family carers were aware that our region lacked residential facilities that help disabled people to gain sufficient independence to live a more autonomous lifestyle outside the family home."

EAFRD support

Co-finance from the EAFRD provided the project with a crucial contribution towards construction and equipment costs for a new purpose-built residential care centre. A combination of adapted accommodation, education facilities, and outdoor recreational space formed the main basis of the social inclusion centre.

Results of the project filled a vital gap in rural Galician care services and Mr Lamas notes how popular the support has been:

"Our clients and their families greatly appreciate what we do here and we have had applications from people living as far as 150 km away who want to come and use the project's facilities.

Demand is high because we provide a quality service for our residents helping them to come through a difficult transition process."The project also gives the residents' home carers important respite time, which also helps to improve quality of life.

Supporting disabled people through a transitional process to become more autonomous involves different educational and professional occupational training. These are highly skilled jobs that the project has brought to the local area.

“Staff have to be able to teach our residents a diverse range of skills,” notes Mr Lamas, “these include basic skills of daily life, such as personal hygiene, but also other abilities like cooking, shopping and cleaning. We teach social skills related to interacting with other people. Conflict management, decision-making, agreement reaching, living together, learning how to give and receive comments are all part of our residential care service.”

In addition the project wants its clients to enjoy life so it uses space inside and outside the centre for recreation. Clients are able to play board games, listen to music, surf the Internet, dance, make crafts, bake and enjoy cinema or theatre performances. The surrounding countryside is used for guided walks to help clients understand their environment.



© Manuel Santos Lamas

EAFRD projects can apply social inclusion approaches to greatly improve the quality of life of rural residents with special needs.

Personal benefits

Discussing the project’s benefits, Mr Lamas is satisfied with its results. “An example of the way our service helps can be seen through a resident who had previously lived all their life in the family home in a rural town. They chose to emancipate themselves and we helped them to meet the challenges and benefits of developing a life outside the family. They are now able to plan their own activities, manage a budget for common costs, shop, and enjoy community resources in order to improve their personal quality of life.

Another user of the project is a young orphaned person with disabilities who relied on help from neighbours. Thanks to the accommodation we provide this person can now stay at the centre during the week and so overcome the transportation problem that had otherwise prevented them from participating in our training programme.”

“We have had applications from people living as far as 150 km away who want to come and use the project’s facilities.”

Manuel Santos Lamas

Coordinating rural care: LEADER project promotes cooperation between social services in Belgium

Greater collaboration between social inclusion support services can reduce duplication of effort and help to make more effective use of staff resources. Joined-up action also tends to generate a wider understanding of the roles of individual care providers and so promotes shared learning across organisations.

Providers of social inclusion care services appreciate the benefits of coordinated delivery. Efficiencies gained through integrated approaches, using multidisciplinary working methods, result in more personalised care planning for people in need. This is especially the case for people with complex support needs who require assistance from a number of different organisations.

Whilst the setting up of such cooperation involves some initial challenges, the synergies that result can improve the overall quality of service. Lessons learned from an EAFRD project example in Belgium's Flanders region provide useful insights for other rural care projects aiming to improve coordinated approaches.

Soetkin Neiryck from the Regional Health Council for Roeselare and Tielt was involved in the House-Care-Net-Work project. Reflecting on the project's development process, Ms Neiryck says that, "we work in a rural region where smaller communities have difficulty accessing basic social support services and in the past we had noticed that some organisations that were responsible for services overlapped each other. Our project gave us a chance to strengthen cooperation between the boundaries of care services and target groups. We wanted to create a strong expert network in the Tielts Plateau LEADER territory."



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Cooperation goals

The project's objectives were centred on improving the accessibility of support services for rural communities. Four organisations - from the private and public sector - joined forces in the House-Care-Net-Work project and pooled their expertise in well-being, housing support, family care, and social services.

"Our project objectives sought to build a strong field of support by enabling each of the partners to bring in their own specialist solutions for rural residents who are vulnerable and have special needs," notes Ms Neiryck.

She continues, "by working together we were able to set up new rapid-response services and introduce a system so that our clients only need to deal with one person who coordinates all their care needs from the partner organisations. Better cooperation also helped our clients to avoid problems that could lead to them becoming more vulnerable."

Peoples reactions to the 'one-stop-shop' style support service were positive, and the dedicated approach to care delivery was appreciated by those who suffer from isolation problems. A comment from one of the project's elderly clients highlights

the value of an inclusive approach - "people don't want to listen to us anymore, they are too busy all the time. At least you want to listen."

LEADER legacies

Results from the cooperation project provide a model for other rural areas to explore, using LEADER funds and/or alternative sources. Actions started by the project have been continued and even bolstered in communities like Wingene where voluntary bodies providing care services have adopted new policy measures for collaborative work.

A management framework is now provided to better synchronise the needs of the target groups with the volunteers. Management skills training has also followed on from the LEADER project.

In addition, lessons learnt from this EAFRD-supported initiative have informed a new Flemish government project that is providing similar client-oriented care support for social housing tenants.

One of the project's key lessons, as observed by Ms Neirynek, relates to the challenges involved at the beginning when

Sitting service providers around the same table to discuss cooperation can help improve the quality of their care operations.

establishing cooperation arrangements. She recalls how, "it was very hard to illustrate the added value of working together. Some groups thought that 'what we do ourselves, we do better' so it was difficult to introduce cooperation tools like a common registration system or to gain agreement about the importance of supporting volunteers on a multi-local level!"

Social services from elsewhere in rural Europe should thus take heed of such useful experience and ensure that sufficient time is made available during project planning phases to properly prepare all partners for a smooth roll-out of cooperative care.

“Our project objectives sought to build a strong field of support by enabling each of the partners to bring in their own specialist solutions.”

Soetkin Neirynek



Rural therapy opportunities: Social inclusion benefits flow from Finnish project providing animal-assisted therapy

Farm animals have been shown to have positive benefits for people at risk of social exclusion. Animal-assisted therapy is also an effective part of mental health treatment benefiting adults and children suffering from depression and anxiety, 'attention deficit hyperactivity disorder' and forms of autism.



© Vilpi

The goal of animal-assisted therapy is to improve participants' social, emotional, or cognitive functioning, and advocates state that animals are useful for educational and motivational therapies. Animals used in therapy can include farm animals as well as domesticated pets and even marine mammals like dolphins.

Finnish RDP funding has been used successfully to demonstrate the potential of animal-assisted therapy in the Pegasos project, which adopted a special focus using horses as 'hippo-therapy' tools for young people.

Reviewing the background to this type of social inclusion project, the Pegasos coordinator Teea Ekola explains: "In some parts of Finland there is a lack of appropriate care services to address issues resulting from the social exclusion of children and teenagers. There is increasing demand for child protection services and there was an urgent need for more effective solutions to guarantee the wellbeing of children, youth and their families."

"We had experience in social work and knowledge of socio-pedagogical horse therapy but we knew there was only a limited supply of this sort of service in Finland. So together with our project partners coming from family and youth homes, we established our Pegasos project."

"Development and production of the project's services took a long time. EAFRD support enabled the project to develop stronger foundations and to try different approaches, than would have been possible had the project been solely privately funded. The need to produce results quickly is usually connected to privately-funded projects, whereas having the opportunity to test different techniques and methods, allowed us to achieve a good quality service which we continue to provide after the RDP funding for our project ended."

Harnessing hippotherapy

"Every aspect of our horse therapy services, in the stable and in the surroundings, is used in a socially rehabilitative way. Different skills are learned in a stable. For instance, physical strength is put to the test and improved when the participant is in direct contact with the horse and different equipment. Social skills and mental capabilities develop through communication between the horse and the person taking care of it. The mere realisation that their own social skills have improved helps to strengthen the lives of the individual children and teenagers."

“In fact, Pegasos enables children and teenagers, and their families, to develop preventive child protection tools that they can use in their life beyond the stables. For example, we had a child who was going to be placed in a foster family since other therapies had not worked. Yet, once the child started to attend weekly horse therapy sessions slowly the need for the other types of therapy decreased. As a result of our sessions, the child no longer needed psychiatric or family therapy, and ultimately the support weekends in foster care were also not required. The child’s social skills improved and their self-esteem grew remarkably.”

Another case of success from the RDP project was a teenager who had disciplinary difficulties with their parents. During hippo-therapy the teenager was faced with situations in which the horse was unmanageable. These situations taught the teenager to look at their own behaviour and, with the project’s support, they realised how this affects those around them. The child’s issues at home improved drastically as a result of their participation in the RDP-funded service.

EAFRD support helps social inclusion projects to take the time that they need to become fully effective.

Partner inputs

Several stables from Finalnd’s Etelä-Pohjanmaa region provided Pegasos with the facilities it needed, and further collaboration was fostered between institutions focussing on neuro-linguistic programming, reflexology, and youth work.

Public sector partners have also played important roles in the project’s achievements, as noted by Ms Ekola, “public health centres in Finland are supported by the municipalities and therefore as the project provided alternative care methods, more municipalities got involved and more young people from the public health centres were referred to the Pegasos project.”

“The strongest and most important indicator of the project’s success has been the increasing demand for our services. There is still a great need for effective welfare work and the area of horse therapy has every opportunity to become more widely used within health care services.”



“Having the opportunity to test different techniques and methods helped us to achieve a good quality service. **”**

Teea Ekola

Welcoming immigrants in rural areas: Swedish projects showcase the EAFRD's potential for social integration support



© Annika Thorvaldsson

Rural Europe offers many attractions. People migrate to the countryside to take advantage of the benefits of a rural European lifestyle, however, the integration of newcomers into rural areas can create both challenges and opportunities; EAFRD co-finance is available to help support the social inclusion of new rural citizens.

Sweden's National Rural Network (NRN) has a dedicated working group that is focused on improving the support provided by the national RDP for newcomers who want to settle in rural areas. Nils Lagerroth from the working group notes how, "in Sweden about 22% of people are from another country and integration of new citizens into rural areas is a horizontal goal for the Swedish RDP. This goal is fairly new in Swedish rural policy. It has thus been an important task for our NRN to promote activities and projects that includes newcomers into rural areas."

"Tools such as brochures and checklists that disseminated best practices were developed to help LEADER groups and regional authorities take account of integration issues when developing projects. Today we see that better cooperation exists at national, regional and local level when developing new projects involving new citizens in rural areas"

A variety of integration projects has been supported by the Swedish RDP. These include an educational initiative from near Växjö that is helping to improve employment prospects for newcomers, and another beneficial example can be found in Borlänge where farmers are involved with social inclusion processes.⁵

Växjö education initiative

Newcomers to rural areas can often hold useful experiences in agriculture, herding, or gardening, and some have also been farmers in their home countries. Despite their knowledge and skills, however, many remain unemployed in Sweden.

The *Macken i Araby* economic association set out to address this challenge and received EAFRD co-finance to help them introduce a related training programme. Speaking about the planning work carried out before the project, Karin Borgenvall from *Macken i Araby* recalls how, "a steering group was formed within the project to bounce ideas off one another. We also looked at previous attempts by similar programmes."

Findings from their research indicated that effective results could be achieved from a seven month support programme for newcomers that combined training in agriculture, forestry, livestock management, gardening and Swedish language studies. "Our point of reference was the demand for labour in the countryside, which was mainly for animal keepers and clearance work in the forest," notes Ms Borgenvall.

5 The following case studies are extracts from Sweden's 'Rural Best' publication that can be viewed in full at <http://www.landsbygdsnatverket.se/abouttheswedishruralnetwork.4.677019f111ab5ecc5be80004860.html>

A group of eight students participated in the pilot phase of the project. "It was a conscious decision to locate the training programme in the local agricultural secondary school at Ingelstad. The school has previously had some hostility towards immigrants. These days we are greatly appreciated at the school and we're trying to find ways to increase the contact between the school's pupils and our trainees," concludes Ms Borgenvall.

Borlänge farm links

Cooperation between the Borlänge municipality and local farmers has provided valuable work experience for newcomers from Somalia, Iraq, Kosovo, Chechnya, and Azerbaijan. EAFRD support here has been used to link up the skills of newcomers with labour needs in the region's agricultural sector.

Developed in partnership with the Swedish Public Employment Service and the Federation of Swedish Farmers, this RDP action has also been successful at achieving its social inclusion goals. "The project has shown great results. The participants have been very motivated and worked really hard at the farms. Our evaluations show that the farm owners are very positive towards the idea of hiring people with an immigrant background," says Valbone Shala, who managed the project.

Newcomers in rural areas can help to strengthen the countryside's socio-economic fabric.

“Integration of new citizens into rural areas is a horizontal goal for the Swedish RDP.”

Nils Lagerroth

"Borlänge takes in around 400 refugees every year, but many of them do not become a part of society. A change to how we view and approach one another is probably what's needed in order to achieve change," believes Ms Shala, who also thinks that this EAFRD project has contributed to such a change saying, "I have noticed how the Public Employment Service and the municipality are eager to bring this model to other areas and industries."



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Digital inclusion: Slovenian farmers benefit from computer literacy courses

Access to the Internet is frequently considered as a basic social need in modern societies, and RDP support is being used to address digital inclusion challenges around rural Europe.

Computer skills and knowledge of the Internet can connect rural citizens to new and better opportunities in their professional lives, as well as add value to their overall quality of life.

The term 'digital divide' is often used to refer to those who are excluded from Internet access. Individuals who suffer such exclusion may be those already at a disadvantage.

Hence, digital inclusion is a priority for the EU and EAFRD co-finance has been used to help increase access to Internet services throughout the countryside.

Rural development policy recognises that investments in ICT infrastructure need to be complemented by capacity building support. This ensures that local communities are properly equipped with the skills required to make best use of the digital world.

Support from Slovenia's RDP LEADER funds has been used to tackle digital exclusion problems faced by farmers through a successful series of computer skills training courses.



Countryside online

Demand for a dedicated computer training project for farmers was identified by staff at the Adult Education Centre in Slovenska Bistrica. Brigita Kruder from the Centre tells how, "we noticed that very few agricultural businesses were participating in digital literacy classes and we saw this as a missed opportunity. For instance, these days if you do not have Internet banking for your business you have to go to the town for every transaction. This involves all the inconveniences of having to think about your transport, the banks' opening hours, and all the paperwork you need to complete."

"Our project encourages rural residents to start helping themselves by taking more advantage of computers. Once people start the learning process they normally get enough confidence to continue to gain more knowledge on their own, and so the initial push is important as it leads to long-term effects. This was the reason why we organised a series of information sessions in five different villages to help motivate more farmers to think about learning computer skills."

Results from the information sessions were encouraging and succeeded in not only attracting farmers to the training but a variety of other people from the rural areas also signed up for the courses. Ms Kruder notes that, "the Countryside Online



© Adult education centre Slovenska Bistrica

project offered training places for basic computer skills and a specific follow-on course was provided about using websites for business promotional purposes. Both types of training were well used by farmers and other rural enterprises like tourism operators and service providers.

We discovered that most people were keen to learn from the basic skills classes but we had to do more to persuade our clients about the benefits of running their own website." Some people were initially cautious due to the commitments they would have to make to invest in their own hardware, software and connectivity. Technical advice was provided that helped the trainees to identify cost-effective solutions for the hardware and software needs of their respective businesses.

“Once people start the learning process they normally get enough confidence to continue to gain more knowledge on their own, and so the initial push is important as it leads to long-term effects.”

Brigita Kruder

Bridging 'digital divides' can help to promote social inclusion in rural communities.

Positive outcomes

Overall outcomes of the project were positive with 24 trainees from the LEADER territory completing the computer literacy course, which ran twice. Each of the trainees who passed the course received a nationally certified qualification in computer skills and 15 participants went on to attend the complementary web-design course. Some 11 new websites were set up as a result.

An example of the type of business that benefitted from the training is the Goričan farm. This diversified agri-tourism and hospitality businesses is now advertising its services through an interactive website promoting the farm's, "great ambience and delicious home grown food."

Mobile support services: Portuguese projects improve management of home care provision



Community development approaches to social inclusion continue to increase throughout rural Europe and the EAFRD is involved in supporting these projects through the use and improvement of mobile social services.

Dispersed populations are a common characteristic of many European rural areas. In such situations it can prove difficult for disadvantaged people to gain access to transport needed to reach key services such as health care or domestic support.

Mobile (also known as peripatetic) services offer solutions to this rural development challenge, and the EAFRD is able to help private, public and voluntary sector organisations bring such services, which enhance social inclusion, to the people that need them most.

Two examples of EAFRD projects from Portugal illustrate the benefits of this mobile approach to social inclusion. The first example was launched by a local community development group (*Associação Recreativa e Cultural de Sousel* [ARCS]) that used RDP funds to help introduce a series of mobile domestic care service for elderly residents in the Sousel region.

The project costs included work to develop and run a 'social taxi' service, a repair and maintenance service for electricity and plumbing, and a general handyman service. All of these services were charged at subsidised prices and RDP funds were used to purchase vehicles as well as cover the identification, selection and registration of potential users, based on individuals' particular needs.

Luís Correia from the project says, "our support has been very well received by elderly people here. The social taxi service for instance has been extremely useful for helping seniors travel to routine visits at the health centre. In the case of our home repair service, the project is helping to reduce stress for our clients that experience plumbing leaks or other domestic maintenance problems in their homes."

As many as 300 disadvantaged people are benefitting from the project through improved housing conditions, better mobility, reduced isolation and enhancing social inclusion within the community.

The benefits of mobile service provision in rural areas are thus clear, and searching the ENRD's database of RDP projects⁶ will highlight numerous examples that confirm how the EAFRD is having a positive impact through the provision of peripatetic activity.

EAFRD co-finance is available not just for the provision of mobile services but also for efforts to improve efficiency. A second Portuguese project example demonstrates the EAFRD's flexibility here.

Efficiency gains

Vehicle efficiency can significantly affect the operations of mobile service provision. This fact was acknowledged by an EAFRD project focused on improving home care services for rural residents. Initial actions involved replacing the service's old car fleet that had started to run up regular repair and maintenance costs. New vehicles were selected for their better fuel consumption and reliability.

Each of the four new cars was fitted with a modern tracking device that can record all the locations, routes, and time spent on different jobs. Software associated with the trackers then calculates efficiency improvements based on an assessment of the optimum organisation of visits and journey routes.

Daniel Oliveira from the Mobile Home Care Service (*Serviço Móvel de Apoio Domiciliário [SMAD]*) project says, "our vehicle location system has been very useful and it had an immediate effect on reducing fuel fees. We also noticed that it improved our drivers' approach to carrying out their work."

"Analysis of the previous service delivery patterns is being used to revise the routes assigned to the SMAD delivery. The project results mean that it has been possible to extend the hours of home support and increase the number of new homes to serve. We can also provide quicker response times by using more uniform and controlled methods for managing our mobile care."

Further efficiency efforts were also co-financed by this EAFRD project through an environmental audit of the SMAD organisation. The findings noted improvements that could be made to the office and support facilities. Daniel Oliveira notes that, "over 70% of the activities that we carry out during our home help services happen here in our premises, such as laundry work and meal preparation. The project funding helped us to identify opportunities to be more energy-efficient in the way we store food or wash and iron clients' clothes."

Mobile forms of social inclusion support can help bring vital services to those most in need in rural areas.

“The project results mean that it has been possible to extend the hours of home support and increase the number of new homes to serve.”

Daniel Oliveira



© Serviço Móvel de Apoio Domiciliário

Problem-solving assistance: English farm provides valuable care services for local community

EAFRD co-finance from England's RDP has been used to enhance a care farm development leading to the provision of new services and support that are helping to solve some of the social inclusion problems faced by people with special needs.



© Future Roots

Future Roots is a social inclusion project at Rylands Farm in Southwest England. The project includes around 12 hectares of farmland that is used for rearing quality beef cattle, sheep, goats, chickens and pigs. Horticulture and other rural development activities are also carried out on the farm. All of the farming practices are used as therapeutic tools within a carefully structured programme that helps disadvantaged groups and members of the local community.

Julie Plumley and James O'Brien set up the care farm by drawing on their backgrounds in social care and agriculture. Ms Plumley explains how, "Future Roots uses the therapeutic value of farming and the countryside to support people with varying degrees of social integration needs. These include old people and young people."

"Care services provided by our farm are used to re-engage young people with learning through vocational training in agriculture and rural skills. Adults who become isolated receive support aimed at re-integrating them back into their community. Our farm also places attention on strengthening families and communities by promoting learning between the generations."

In 2009, the farm received EAFRD assistance to help with its business development plan. Funds were used to offset some of the costs involved in testing the feasibility of the care farm model and to cover expenses related to marketing and staffing.

The benefits of this EAFRD project have been evident since 2011 and extend the social inclusion services provided by Future Roots to a broader clientele. For instance, young people with autism, Asperger syndrome, or behavioural problems have been helped to enable them to develop a greater self-awareness through a better understanding of the countryside. New practical skills and team working activities are also being applied to improve other clients' abilities for coping with life and interacting in society.

Tailored solutions

All of Future Roots' services are designed around what people need, and the project's success is attributed in part to its adaptation as a client-oriented business. Livestock have been specially halter trained (even the cows) so that children can work with them without fear. Horticultural activities are designed to

provide clients with the opportunity to learn how food is produced and to feel what it is like to nurture something.

Considering these and other success factors for Future Roots, Ms Plumley believes that, “social farming works when partner organisations understand and appreciate the full therapeutic value of the rural social services that farmers can offer. This requires strong advocacy and clear standards: qualities that individual farms may struggle to maintain on their own. Hence work to foster joint working between associations of care farm stakeholders can be constructive and lead to sustainable growth in this sector.”

Positive outcomes

Future prospects for Future Roots look good as the social inclusion project continues to grow and build on its results. Ms Plumley points to the assistance that monitoring and evaluation provides in helping to steer this type of social inclusion project towards its long-term goals.

“We have been measuring our success by tracking what happens to the young people that we work with after they leave our service. We’ve been particularly interested in whether they enter education, employment or training, as this is a key indicator for the UK Government. Currently, 88% of those who take a

The countryside possesses intrinsic therapeutic values that can be harnessed in win-win ways to help society and rural economic development.

vocational qualification with us find a place at college, a training scheme or a job despite being regarded as ‘hard-to-reach’ when we start working with them.”

“Nonetheless, we have always been aware of the more profound, therapeutic changes that farming and the countryside can have and we are now trying to capture that with the support of evaluation partners.”

Parents of children attending the project have said “this is fantastic, I have seen my children happy for the first time.” Teachers also report encouraging changes in young people’s behaviour and attitude after their time on the care farm. Young people say they enjoy visiting the project, even if they did not look forward to it at the start. They have gained qualifications and talk about the difference that Future Roots has made to them. In due course, the care farm allows those who have become marginalised to make positive choices in their lives.

“Fostering joint working between associations of care farm stakeholders can be constructive and lead to sustainable growth in this sector.”

Julie Plumley



The European Network for Rural Development

<http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/>

The screenshot shows the ENRD website interface. At the top, there is a navigation menu with tabs for Home, Policy in Action, Country, Thematic, LEADER, Networks & Networking, Publications & Media, Events & Meetings, and Info. Below the navigation is a search bar and a 'Advanced Search' option. The main content area includes a section titled 'The European Network for Rural Development (ENRD)' with a brief description of its mission. There is also a 'Connect with EU' section featuring a map of Europe with country flags, and a 'Key Tools' section with icons for various services like LEADER, RDP, Library, and Communication. A 'News' section is visible at the bottom right, listing recent updates.

