

# ENRD

m a g a z i n e

Connecting Rural Europe...

Spring/  
Summer  
2012  
English



MAIN STORY:  
**LEADER Event 2012**  
**Local Development  
Strategies and Cooperation**





## Dear Reader,

*W*elcome to the ENRD Magazine – dedicated to bringing you up to date with all of the rural development news that concerns you, from across the EU.

And what better way to begin this issue than to look back at a major ENRD event recently held on the LEADER approach to rural development? As many of you know, LEADER is all about 'bottom-up' and giving rural actors on the ground more control over the development of their local area. And the LEADER Event 2012, which focused on local development strategies and cooperation, brought the 'local' and EU dimensions of LEADER together. But the lynchpin for the event was the 230 LEADER Local Action Group (LAG) representatives from all across the EU. The LAGs sought partners for a range of rural development projects and shared their experiences and views, on what worked well in the past and their hopes for the future programming period. In this issue, you can read all about the event, including some of the key messages, such as 'top tips' on the design and implementation of Local Development Strategies.

As always, we've trawled right across Europe to get updates and insights into the many activities you are involved in. We bring you a report on the recent NRN meetings in Finland and Greece and on FLAG-LAG cooperation in our 'Rural Focus' section. And we hear from Northern Ireland, Italy and Germany in our 'Over to You' section. We are sure you will be as intrigued as we were by the diversity of interesting and innovative rural development events, taking place in a country near you!

Finally, enjoy our pick of EAFRD Projects, selected from the RDP Projects Database on the ENRD website, where we visit a bakery in Romania, an eco-farm in Hungary, and lots more...

So, a big 'thank you' to all of you who contributed to this issue and we hope you find it an inspiring and enlightening read!



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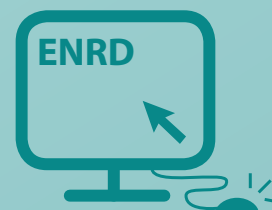


***It's 3 a.m. and already light! Lake Ähtärinjärvi, in western Finland***

Aspen and pine trees by Lake Ähtärinjärvi, in western Finland, on the occasion of the 15<sup>th</sup> NRN meeting in Ähtäri in May, 2012.  
See page 11 for more information.



# ENRD Website Re-launched!



With over 18 000 visits per month, use of the ENRD website has increased by 204%, since December 2010. Currently re-launched, it now features a number of new and exciting additional elements.

The six-language website aims to inform rural development stakeholders and the general public about EU rural development policy and related issues and the website re-launch now makes it even easier to access key information. Log on now to see what's new!

## WHAT'S NEW?

- ▶ An interactive EU map on the home-page – to allow users to access 'country specific' information with one click;
- ▶ A new 'search' function makes information easier to find;
- ▶ Content is organised into key sections – including 'Policy in Action', 'Country', 'Themes', 'LEADER', 'Networks and Networking', 'Publications and Media' and 'Events and Meetings';
- ▶ The new 'themes' section reflects key rural development related topics, such as forestry and the environment;
- ▶ The ever popular RDP Projects Database has grown to feature some 350 rural development projects, including transnational cooperation (TNC) projects, from all across Europe on a diverse range of topics. And look out for the RDP Project 'Video Postcards' – produced by the ENRD to give you a taste of how these projects work on the ground!
- ▶ New 'stand-alone' mini websites include the 'Rural Entrepreneurship Gateway', the 'NRN Self-assessment Toolkit' and the 'LEADER Gateway';
- ▶ OpENRD replaces MyENRD as our on-line community platform – now open to even more stakeholders!



To view the new website please visit: <http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/>



# ENRD Report

The European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) hosts and supports numerous events throughout Europe, not to mention its involvement in a variety of ongoing thematic initiatives – all aiming to promote and share valuable knowledge on rural development. In each issue, we update you on some of its latest activities.

Participants celebrate a successful conference at the closing of the LEADER Event 2012, in Brussels on 27 April, 2012.

## LEADER Event 2012 – Local Development Strategies and Cooperation

Some 400 participants including over 230 Local Action Group (LAG) representatives attended the 'LEADER Event 2012: Local Development Strategies and Cooperation' held on 27-28 April, 2012.

LEADER began in the 1990s as an initiative to allow for a more 'bottom-up' approach to EU rural development, with local actors on the ground being more involved in all major aspects of improving their own local areas. Since then, the initiative has progressed through LEADER II and LEADER+ to now being integrated in the Rural Development Programmes (RDPs).

To implement the approach some 2 300 LAGs have been set up all across the EU. The LEADER Event 2012 saw LAGs joined by representatives from National Rural Networks (NRNs), Managing Authorities (MAs), Paying Agencies, and DG Agriculture and Rural Development, thereby providing a platform to bring local and European dimensions of LEADER together.



Participants stroll past a display for the ENRD Images of Rural Europe Competition, at the LEADER Event, 2012.



## Transnational Cooperation

The spirit of LEADER was very much in evidence at the event with potentially 70 new transnational cooperation (TNC) projects formed on a number of diverse themes – from environmental services to tourism, among others.

Rhiannon Hardiman, from the Bridgend LAG in Wales, said she was there to develop a transnational cooperation project. "This is a great opportunity to meet some new partners and make some new links," she said.

Panayiotis Patras, from the Trikala LAG in Greece, put the TNC notice board to very effective use, finding a Czech LAG with whom they hope to collaborate on a religious tourism project. "We were talking of the possibility of having a transnational cooperation project - through LEADER - on how better to make use of these religious monuments we have in our territory," he said.

A participatory approach was used throughout the event, which allowed participants many opportunities to share their views and feelings. A number of heated exchanges took place in the panel discussions,

*"It's great to see so many like-minded people and great to see so many people with a positive message,"*

Ross Curley,  
LAG representative from County Cork, Ireland

with a lot of information shared on what is working well in this programming round and the likely impact of potential changes after 2013. "It's great to see so many like-minded people and great to see so many people with a positive message," said Ross Curley, a LAG representative from County Cork, in Ireland.

The importance of TNC was addressed and it was acknowledged that what may start out as simply one LAG visiting another LAG region, can reap real dividends in terms of providing the spark of inspiration for a viable rural development project. "It's about helping them to find new solutions to old problems and I think that's very important," said Luis Chaves from the Portuguese LEADER Association.

## Future Programming Round

DG AGRI presented an overview of changes proposed in the next programming round. The changes highlighted included better definition of roles for MAs and LAGs; better definition of running costs and animation costs, etc. Whilst most LAGs seemed to welcome the increase in autonomy, the likely rise in administrative burdens was seen as a potential issue.

A proposal for a new multi-fund approach in the new programming period was presented as an opportunity to improve RDP implementation. This will make it easier to access funding from different sources and should make for a more robust Local

## Future Programming Round: What's New for LAGs?

- More clearly defined roles for LAGs/MAs as regards quality, selection and implementation tasks;
- LAGs to receive and assess applications for support and decide the amount of support to be granted;
- More monitoring and evaluation tasks for LAGs to monitor the effects of the LDS but also the project;
- Clearer definition of running costs;
- Clearer definition of 'animation' or communication costs;
- More preparatory support will be available including a LEADER start-up kit for new LAGs and provisions for capacity building.

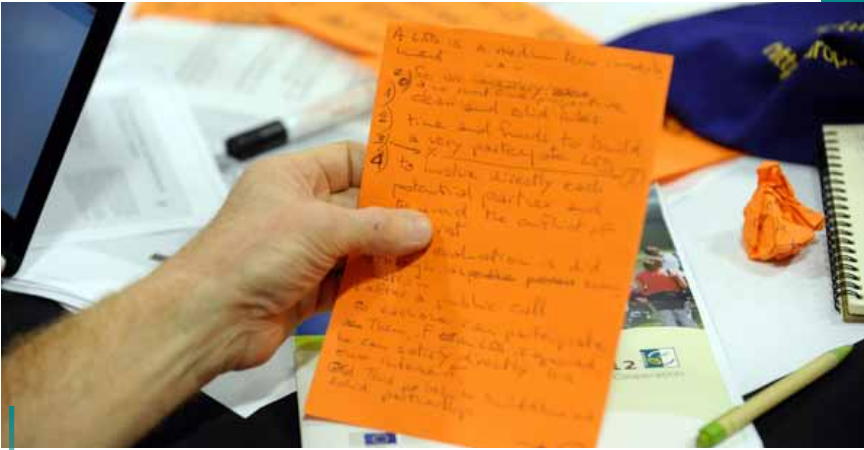
Development Strategy (LDS) capable of responding to the broader needs of an area. However, some concerns were raised as to its potential impact on the LEADER approach.

Speaking of his many years of experience working with multi-funds in Ireland, LAG Manager Ryan Howard struck a positive note on the issue: "In the last few months I've heard more about the 'fear' of this multi-fund approach, [such as] 'will it actually kill LEADER?'. And I think we need to be taking this forward. We are risk-takers. We are here to help and support innovation and encourage that to a new platform," he said. Hans-Olof Stålgren received a round of applause for his comment:



Participants were interested in developing transnational cooperation (TNC) projects at the LEADER Event 2012, on a range of themes.





## 'Top Tips' For LAGs on Better Local Development Strategies

- **It's a process!** A good LDS means a good process. You need a good analysis of the needs of the community, based on a strong 'bottom-up' approach, good ownership, realism and a dynamic approach to delivering the strategy;
- **Keep talking!** Keep your MA informed of developments as you go...they can alert you to any pitfalls or issues, before it's too late;
- **The earlier the better!** Start early and plan, plan, plan. An LDS works well when there is continuity between one programme and the next;
- **Money matters!** Be careful with funding – assess costs and 'match funding' accurately and be prepared to adjust accordingly;
- **Keep watching!** The LDS and the projects need an active review. Constantly watch what's going on!
- **Interact with the community!** Interact with the project promoters more – especially as regards monitoring and evaluation;
- **Focus on the bigger picture!** Focus on qualitative as well as quantitative/financial aspects and benefits;
- **Spread the word!** Actively promote what you are doing – and how – especially to the community itself. People need to know there's a strategy and that it's being achieved!
- **Enjoy the learning curve!** Learn through the process and share what you've learned!

A participant notes some observations on the importance of local development strategies (LDS) at the LEADER Event 2012. A participatory approach ensured that all those attending could offer their suggestions and views.

"Let LEADER be the leaders – let us start now! Let us take the lead to develop strategies for the coming period, where we can include the social fund, we can include the regional fund and if something will change and we can no longer use the social fund – well, we solve that problem!"

### Design and Implementation of Local Development Strategies

A number of workshops were held on issues relating to the design, as well as monitoring and evaluation of an LDS, with a number of key messages emerging...

The importance of an early start and planning effectively was underlined, both in the strategy preparation work and strategy implementation. The need to simplify administration was highlighted, particularly for small-scale projects. More innovation was called for at all levels, as was better communication of the overall impact of LEADER – particularly in terms of its potential to help achieve the aims of an LDS. "It is up to us to show the community that LEADER is important. We must show our results," said Petri Rinne, President of the European LEADER Association for Rural Development (ELARD).

Concluding his summary of the outcomes of the workshops, LDS expert and member of the 'ENRD Focus Group 4' on the issue - John Grieve, said an LDS 'local development strategy' is a process: "It's not just a document. It's dynamic. It needs to be owned. It needs to be embedded and it needs to be delivered. So a real strategy, not a bid... and it needs to be needs driven."

### 'Five Hundred Lonely Rangers...'

But perhaps it was Petri Rinne who best summed up the spirit of the event. "I often feel that we are like lonely rangers, waging our lonely war against globalisation and urbanisation. But then at an event like this, we see we are 500 lonely rangers in the same room, and we can develop this family feeling and use the secret weapons of innovation and knowledge transfer between our regions."

**Note:** You can find further information on the event, as well as on transnational cooperation and Local Development Strategies on the ENRD website. To view a video of the event visit the 'media gallery' on the ENRD website or click [here](#).

## Local Development Strategies: Focus Group Meeting in Helsinki

The ENRD Focus Group 4 (FG4) on the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of Local Development Strategies (LDS), held its second meeting in Helsinki, on 29-30 March, 2012.

Hosted by the Finnish NRN, the main objective of the meeting was to present the initial findings of FG4 surveys and to develop a common understanding about differences in implementation

and monitoring & evaluation (M&E) practices between LAGs and Managing Authorities (MAs) in EU Member States.

The preliminary findings of the second phase were presented at the LEADER Sub-Committee on 31 May, 2012. The overall report of FG4, including findings both from the first and second phase of its work, will be finalised by the beginning of July 2012.



# Campaign to Mark 50 Years of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

A campaign to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is currently underway at the European Commission (EC). The CAP@50 campaign was officially launched at an inter-institutional event in Brussels, on 23 January, 2012, gathering more than 150 guests involved in the history and current reform of the CAP. Speaking at the launch, the Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Dacian Cioloș, said: "2012 is an important year, not only to remember the past 50 years of history, but especially for us to look ahead towards a new reform of the Common Agricultural Policy. Today, food security remains important, but we have also new concerns such as climate change and the sustainable use of natural resources. This campaign will help to reflect on this evolution".

Under the slogan 'a partnership between Europe and farmers', the campaign includes an interactive website, a travelling exhibition, audio-visual and printed materials, as well as a series of events in Brussels and EU Member States. Several national launching events are also foreseen in the six founding Member States of the EU.

In a video statement, presenting the campaign on the CAP@50 website, the Commissioner warns that given the expected growth in world population in the coming years, agricultural production will have to double in the same period, despite the problems posed by climate change, loss of biodiversity, water scarcity and other challenges.

For more information on the CAP@50 campaign, visit: [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/50-years-of-cap/network/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/50-years-of-cap/network/index_en.htm)  
And... to follow the very latest updates on the CAP, visit: <http://www.facebook.com/EUAgri>  
and/or <https://twitter.com/#!/ecspokesroger>



## Policy in Action! *New Factsheets Available*

A new series of brief rural development 'Policy in Action' publications, called "thematic information sheets", have been developed by the ENRD Contact Point. These information sheets examine specific topics relating to EU rural development policy so as to provide a clear perspective on policy intervention. In this way they highlight links between policy and the implementation of measures, coupled with examples of their actual outcomes on the ground.

Topics in this series include: promoting knowledge transfer and investing in human capital; investments in physical capital and modernisation; promoting agricultural production under recognised quality label/standards; supporting farms in the new Member States so they may enter the market; the preservation of the EU's natural resources and farm landscapes; supporting forestry; encouraging diversification of the rural economy; and improving services for population areas. In addition, the use of specific project examples, extracted from the 'RDP Projects Database' (available on the ENRD website) illustrates the perspective of project promoters/owners.



*Thematic Information Sheets are available on a range of themes including the promotion of recognised quality standards for agricultural production.*

For further information, visit the 'Policy in Action' section of the ENRD website. Or click [here](#).

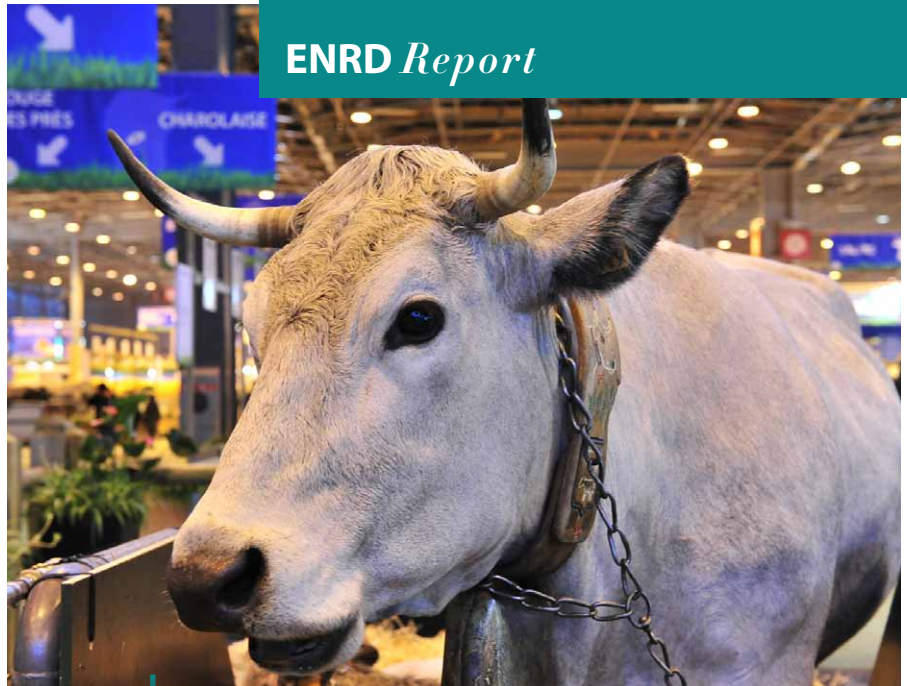


## ENRD Attends Major International Fairs

The ENRD was recently in attendance at two major international fairs...

### *International Agricultural Fair, Paris*

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) was the main theme of this year's International Agricultural Fair, held in Paris from 25 February to 04 March, 2012. DG AGRI representatives were present at the European Commission Stand, to convey to the event's 600 000+ visitors, how revisions to policy can help meet the current challenges faced by EU rural areas. The ENRD was represented by some 15 experts on rural development, farmers and Local Action Group (LAG) members, who showcased their project examples and brought along local products for tasting. The history of the Paris Fair goes back to the 1870's, and over time the event has managed to evolve to embrace the changing face of agriculture and rural development in Europe.



'Valentine' – a 'Gascon' cow and the mascot and star of the Salon de l'Agriculture Show in Paris.

### *International Green Week, Berlin*

The 77<sup>th</sup> International Green Week – the world's largest agricultural summit – took place in Berlin, from 20-29 January, 2012. This year's event saw some 420 000 visitors flock to the Berlin Exhibition Grounds – its largest attendance in over four years. All aspects of food quality and safety were promoted at the fair, which featured 1 624 exhibitors from 56 countries.

The ENRD joined DG AGRI at the exhibition, to showcase a selection of best-practice EAFRD projects from around Europe, during a series of eight 'country days' for Poland, Finland, Germany, Austria, Estonia, Scotland, Hungary and Luxemburg. Each day featured a short presentation by the Rural Network of the respective country, together with a demonstration of projects from that country by Local Action Groups (LAGs).



To learn more about the 2012 'Salon International de l'Agriculture' visit: <http://www.salon-agriculture.com>

For information on International Green Week, visit: <http://www.gruenewoche.de/en/>

## Workshops Held on Future Rural Development Programmes

Some 170 participants attended a two-day workshop on what the future holds for Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) on 14-15 March, 2012, in Brussels. The workshop entitled 'Strategic Programming and Monitoring and Evaluation for RDPs 2014-2020' was jointly organised by the ENRD and the European Evaluation Network for Rural Development.

The event brought together representatives of National Authorities, NRNs, EU organisations and the European Commission,

as well as evaluators. The overall aim was to further engage Member States and rural stakeholders in preparations for the future RDPs. Participants were asked to offer concrete ideas and suggestions, on how to enhance strategic programming, and how to ensure sound monitoring and evaluation in the next programming period, from 2014-2020. For further information on the specific outcomes of these workshops, please visit the 'CAP Post 2013' section on DG AGRI's website: <http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture>.



## Focus Group on Environmental Services

The recently established ENRD Focus Group on the delivery of environmental services had its first meeting on 16 March, 2012. The purpose of this group is to consider how the delivery of environmental services (biodiversity, water quality, soil functionality, climate regulation, etc.) supported through the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) can be improved and maximised in the future, in order to inform the design and implementation of Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) after 2013. The group is examining, among other things, the available measures and ways of combining them, the role 'collective action' and community-led initiatives can play, and how to encourage farmers to become more involved in environmental work. The meeting provided for an animated discussion among members – who represent a wide spectrum of actors, from farmers to Managing Authorities. In particular, members shared their experiences, and began identifying good examples of policy delivery and key factors for success, including: better ownership and collaboration between stakeholders in the design and implementation of the measures; more collaborative advice and good quality, fairer contract design. The initial findings of the Focus Group were presented at the Coordination Committee meeting in Brussels, in June 2012.

## Intercontinental Forum for Sustainable Development in Brazil

Over 200 participants attended the Intercontinental Forum for Sustainable Development, held in Santa Catarina, Brazil, from 21-24 November, 2011.

The event was organised in recognition of how the issue of local sustainable development has become increasingly important in recent decades, both in Europe and Latin America. Despite differing contexts, a common desire is emerging to strengthen mutual exchange of experiences and search for innovative solutions to tackle rural development issues. Hence, the event focused on strengthening the links between actors involved in promoting local and territorial development.

The European LEADER Association of Rural Development (ELARD) – an ENRD member organisation – joined participants, representing 13 European and Latin American Countries, at the event. Concluding the Forum, a 'Declaration of Santa Catarina' was signed by the parties involved. It underlines the importance of local development processes and promises new perspectives for the exchange of experiences and cooperation between actors, on both continents.

For more information, visit: <http://www.foro-santacatarina2011.org>

## ENRD Contact Point Visits

### Bulgarian Local Action Groups (LAGs)...



Representatives from the Bulgarian LAGs with members of the ENRD Contact Point team, in Brussels.

Representatives from five - recently established - Bulgarian Local Action Groups (LAGs) visited the ENRD Contact Point on 24 April, 2012 to learn more about the structure and role of the ENRD and the activities that focus upon LEADER.

### University of Missouri Students...

A group of students from the University of Missouri visited the ENRD Contact Point on 12 January, 2012, as part of a wider study visit to the EU institutions, in Brussels. They were keen to learn about reforms to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the role of the ENRD in furthering networking and exchange among rural development policy actors, throughout the EU.

### Finnish Rural Network Unit...

A study group of Finnish rural development stakeholders, representatives of the Finnish regional authorities and the Finnish Paying Agency visited Brussels, in February, to hear about the latest activities of the ENRD.

### Romanian Network Support Unit...



Representatives from the NSU in Romania, with members of the ENRD Contact Point team, in Brussels.

Three representatives from the newly formed Network Support Unit (NSU) of Romania visited the ENRD Contact Point premises for the first time on 19 April, 2012. The visit focused on ENRD activities and possibilities for cooperation with other National Rural Networks (NRNs).



## NRN Focus

National Rural Networks (NRNs) are set up by Member State governments to bring together those involved in rural development and to help implement EU rural development policy. This section features all the latest NRN news from recent meetings and other events organised throughout the EU.

### Greek Network: 14<sup>th</sup> NRN Meeting in Greece

A total of 54 participants from 18 NRNs attended the first NRN meeting of 2012, in Thessaloniki, Greece on 2-3 February. Hosted by the Greek NRN, the meeting focused on a number of key themes, from 'clustering' to 'rural finance' and the 'added value of networking'. An overview of the outcomes of the first 'Mediterranean Macro-Regional Network Cluster Meeting' which took place on 01 February, 2012, in Thessaloniki, was presented. The theme of 'Demonstrating the Added Value of Networking' was addressed through an update on action related to NRN joint-action and common methodologies for demonstrating the added value of networking. In addition, the issues of Rural Entrepreneurship and the Joint NRN Initiative on 'Rural Finance and Short Supply Chains' were discussed.



...while participants at the 14<sup>th</sup> NRN meeting in Thessaloniki, Greece, experienced an uncommonly chilly reception.

### Finnish Network: 15<sup>th</sup> NRN Meeting in Finland

The 15<sup>th</sup> NRN Meeting was held in Ähtäri, Finland on 8-9 May, 2012.

This meeting was billed as the most important NRN meeting to date, with the general aim of building a shared understanding for forthcoming discussions on how to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of networking as a rural development policy tool in the EU-27.

For the first time at such a meeting, over 70 participants from Managing Authorities (MA), Network Support Units (NSUs) and Evaluators came together and engaged in animated discussions, so as to enhance the current level of knowledge and understanding of networking in rural development policy, and identify ways in which to improve networking as a policy tool in all Member States in the future.

The meeting covered the diversity that exists in terms of the form and function of National Rural Networks

(NRNs), how they perform and the challenges they encounter, including:

- The role and responsibilities of the NSUs, as well as networking for the current programming period;
- The composition and constitution of minimum requirements, in terms of structure, competence and budget required for an NSU to effectively deliver its mandate;
- Available tools, for assessing the outputs and results achieved by the NSUs, as well as general networking activity.

The results of the discussions will feed directly into an ENRD Coordination Committee Workshop on the 'The Future of Rural Networking' – planned for September/October 2012. This will contribute directly to enhancing the networking component of Rural Development Programmes, in 2014-2020.





A 'vision' of rural development by young people involved in the Swedish NRN initiative.

## Swedish Network: New Website to Engage Young People in Rural Development

The Swedish NRN has launched a new website, designed to engage young people in rural development. The website follows a review of the RDP, carried out by the NRN's working group on youth, which concluded that young people are under-represented 'at all levels'. As a result, funding was provided to explore and address the issue, as well as to set up the new website, which aims to assist all young people who would like to invest in rural areas. The working group is also encouraging young people to visualise what they imagine the future of the countryside to be. Their creations are displayed as interactive 'collages' on the site, with messages contained inside each image. Commenting on the importance of such an initiative, Hans-Olof Stålgren from the Swedish NRN said: "Without young people desiring to live in rural areas there cannot be any sustainable rural development". For further information, visit: [www.landsbygdsnatverket.se](http://www.landsbygdsnatverket.se).

## Welsh Network: Workshop on Farm Diversification

A workshop on 'farm diversification' was held in Wales on 23 February, 2012. Facilitated by the Welsh NRN, the workshop allowed participants to discuss problems and achievements encountered, whilst running projects under Measure 311 (Axis 3), of the Rural Development Programme (RDP). Some 30 participants, from all over Wales, heard presentations from Johathan Williams and Eleri Wyn Roberts, of the Wales Young Farmers Club. And Nia Hollins, from the Vale of Glamorgan LAG spoke about their 'Pride in our Farming Families' grant scheme. The event was held at Quackers, Newbridge-on-Wye, a successful farm diversification project, involving an indoor play centre area for children, conference facilities and a café. Participants also heard about 'diversification in action' from the farmers who have developed the Quackers Centre. For further information, visit: [www.wales.gov.uk/ruralnetwork](http://www.wales.gov.uk/ruralnetwork) or [www.quackersnow.com](http://www.quackersnow.com).



Vanessa Thomas from the Welsh Rural Network, with Michael Hammond, owner of 'Quackers' farm-diversification project.

## Finnish Network: Seminar on the Role of the Arts in Rural Development

A seminar, celebrating the role of arts and creative businesses in rural development, was held in Finland, on 15-16 February, 2012. This was the third 'Little Miracles' seminar, held in Kaustinen, a small municipality in western Finland, which hosts the country's biggest folk music festival. Leaders of creative businesses and representatives from the Ministries of Education and Culture; Employment and the Economy; and Agriculture and Forestry came together to discuss opportunities for the sector, barriers to development and how different EU funds can be used to nurture and support a creative approach to growing the rural economy. Participants heard from a range of inspirational speakers, including *Signmark*, a deaf Finnish 'hip-hop' artist. A visit to an actual audio-visual training centre was also organised as part of the event. Juha-Matti Markkola, Network Coordinator said: "We have been delighted to work with so many partners, including the municipalities of Kaustinen and Kokkola, to bring together this third seminar for creative industries. We believe the sector is still under-utilised in terms of business development and its role in regenerating our countryside." For further information, visit: [www.rural.fi](http://www.rural.fi), [www.ruralpolicy.fi/en](http://www.ruralpolicy.fi/en), [www.creativeindustries.fi](http://www.creativeindustries.fi), [www.luovatalueet.fi](http://www.luovatalueet.fi), [www.taiteenkeskustoimikunta.fi/web/pohjanmaa/pohjanmaan-taidetoimikunta](http://www.taiteenkeskustoimikunta.fi/web/pohjanmaa/pohjanmaan-taidetoimikunta).



Signmark – the deaf Finnish hip-hop artist who participated at the 'Little Miracles' event to promote the role of the arts in rural development.

## Irish Network: New Case Study on Development in Action

The Irish NRN has expanded its database of case studies with a report focused on 'rural community development in action', based on the locality of Upperchurch-Drombane, in County Tipperary.

Launched in 2012, the study examines factors affecting the potential of the area to become a self-reliant community, including critical success factors and barriers to development and growth. The report also identifies a range of lessons learned. For example, one of its recommendations is that future rural development policy "should include a focus on developing communities' capacity to exploit assets such as food, water, air and energy in a sustainable way". The Upperchurch-Drombane report is the latest in a range of studies completed by the NRN, on such diverse themes as renewable energy, community development, outdoor recreation, waste management and agriculture. All of the case studies aim to "analyse and disseminate examples of good practice within the RDP and to act as a stimulus to others". For further information, see the Irish NRN website [www.nrn.ie](http://www.nrn.ie) or click [here](#).



Residents of local community housing in Upperchurch-Drombane.

## Flemish Network: Consultation Day on the Countryside after 2013

A consultation day for agricultural and rural stakeholders from across Flanders was held on 7 February, 2012, in Brussels. Hosted by the Flemish Rural Network, the event was part of official preparations in Flanders for the next Rural Development Programme (RDP).

Some 170 delegates, including farmers, farming organisations, nature conservation organisations, landscape conservators, LEADER Local Action Groups (LAGs), and financial and insurance companies attended the meeting. Their contributions are now being incorporated into a report, which the Network will use to inform the development of the Flemish RDP, from 2014-2020.

Nele Vanslebrouck, Coordinator of the Flemish Rural Network said: "We appreciate the efforts of all the actors. They joined forces in order to prepare the first steps of a powerful RDP, and we hope they will keep on working like this." For further information, visit: [www.ruraalnetwerk.be](http://www.ruraalnetwerk.be).

## German Network: New Discussions on Agri-Environment Measures

A meeting on the future development of Agri-Environment Measures in Germany was held in Göttingen, on 8-9 February, 2012. The joint meeting, between the German Rural Network and other partners aimed to make the existing measures more efficient, whilst taking better account of requirements on nature conservation, biodiversity, water protection, climate change and sustainable agriculture.

The 130 participants included representatives from all Federal States, as well as the Federal Ministry. The meeting focused on the CAP reform proposals, the results of the mid-term evaluation and feedback from EU auditors and German administrators, as well as 'new challenges'. However, practical issues were also addressed, such as farm advisory services, planning Agri-Environmental Measures at farm level and specific measures for grasslands and farmland. Fifteen posters depicting scientific and empirical evidence were also displayed. For further information, see: [www.netzwerk-laendlicher-raum.de/aum](http://www.netzwerk-laendlicher-raum.de/aum).





Laurence Lamb shows the participants around the recording studios, in Scotland.

## Scottish Network: Project Visits Begin with Youth Project

The Scottish Rural Network organised a visit to an award winning social enterprise project on 7-8 February, 2012, as part of a series of project visits around Scotland, planned this year.

In total, 11 participants visited the LEADER supported project called 'Yipworld.com' in Ayrshire in the south-west of Scotland, which provides young people with a wide range of training opportunities, indoor and outdoor activities, active citizenship and volunteering places, career and employment support and much more.

Outreach support is also provided through a mobile unit that delivers information and advice to some 3 000 young people every year.

The visit also formed part of a series of events on the topic of 'Young, Gifted and Rural' – a joint initiative with the Carnegie UK Trust, which culminated in a large-scale conference, in June 2012. For further information, see: [www.ruralgateway.org.uk](http://www.ruralgateway.org.uk) or [www.yipworld.org](http://www.yipworld.org)

## Welsh Network: Food Tourism Event Shares Good Practice

An event focused on sharing good practice regarding 'food tourism' was held in Wales on 08 March, 2012. The event organised by the Welsh Rural Network, in partnership with Mid Wales Local Food Talks, involved presentations on topics such as accreditation, developing food clusters and sustainable food businesses.

Keynote speakers on the day included the Welsh Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Food, Fisheries and European Programmes, Alun Davies; and Peter Birnie, who has worked extensively with organisations such as 'Visit England' and 'Alastair Sawday Guides'. Speaking about the event, Alun Davies told delegates: "A strengthened Welsh food culture, leading to a steady demand for quality food, is one of the most important attractions for visitors in Wales. When one thinks of a holiday in France or Italy, the promise of great food is a huge attraction. I want tourists, from the UK and beyond, to think of Wales in the same way."

For further information, see the Welsh Government's website <http://wales.gov.uk> or click [here](#).

## Austrian Network: Seeks to Improve Processes for Participation in Protected Areas

A meeting on improving stakeholder participation in the management of protected areas in Austria was held on 23 February, 2012, in Klagenfurt.

Some 80 participants, including managers of protected areas, and representatives from local stakeholder groups, came together to discuss ways of addressing conflicts of interest that may arise between those involved in different sectors, such as agriculture, forestry, road construction and nature conservation in protected areas.

The Austrian NRN - 'Netzwerk-Land' - along with the University of Klagenfurt, delivered a workshop on good practice in protected areas to promote mutual understanding among all stakeholders. Participants heard about work from 'Natura 2000' in Styria and Carinthia and the Hochgebirgs-Naturpark in the Zillertal Alps. They also worked in small groups to address their own local challenges.

Hemma Burger-Scheidlin, conference coordinator from the Austrian National Rural Network said: "By organising a conference for protected areas every year, we could start a continuous process of discussion". For further information, visit the Austrian NRN website [www.netzwerk-land.at](http://www.netzwerk-land.at) or click [here](#).



Alun Davies, Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Food, Fisheries and European Programmes of the Welsh Government addresses the event.



Austrian workshop session on participative processes in protected areas.



*The Memory Oak project's agri-tourism centre.*

## Over to You!

In this section, we share a selection of interesting articles on issues that matter to you - either taken directly from your publications or written especially for this magazine. So, Over to You - Italy, Germany and Northern Ireland!

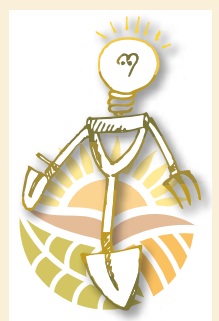
## The ESEMPI Awards for Rural Development: A 'How-to' Guide

*The ESEMPI awards are seen in Italy as an instrument for communicating 'good practice' examples of rural development. In this article, written especially for the ENRD Magazine, Milena Verrascina, of the Italian NRN's Good Practice and Innovation Task Force, guides us through the process of running a highly successful awards campaign.*

**A**nalysis and cataloguing of good practices has become quite a widespread activity in terms of publicly-financed actions. In recent years, whether due to a growing interest in the sector or to a growing awareness of the need for accountability - analysis of those actions and the projects financed through rural development policies has become more apparent.

The work plan of the Italian National Rural Network (NRN) includes an action dedicated to precisely this - the analysis, cataloguing and transfer of good practices. This entails the identification of appropriate tools for supporting analysis and dissemination of actions, including: production of traditional information tools such as magazines, newsletters, reports and thematic

publications; monitoring and development of project databases; organisation of conferences and workshops; and study visits to foster exchange and comparison of experience. Such activities require effective communication strategies and tools, capable of reaching various targets. Good practices are interesting in themselves but their value increases if others know about them - thereby inspiring others to follow suit. This necessitates the planning of combined actions to be implemented using standard and more innovative communication tools. Awards ceremonies are one such tool.







Francesca Lenzi and Graziella Romito at the awards ceremony.

Awards provide an incentive (directly or indirectly) to improve or continue the projects that receive them. The idea for the ESEMPI competition for outstanding development work, using innovative methods and practices - and its related prizes - was designed therefore, to lend visibility and resonance to publicly-financed rural development projects. The ESEMPI competition was launched in June 2011 and a second ceremony for 2012 is underway.

### The ESEMPI Awards

The period prior to the development of the competition saw the drafting of the Europe 2020 Strategy. This gave rise to a lively debate on the contribution that agriculture and rural development could make to the strategy. For this reason, the awards ceremony was geared towards actions linked to Europe 2020, which demonstrate the potential of rural development to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. In order to highlight the importance of the LEADER approach to implementing development actions in rural areas, certain award

categories were dedicated to projects financed within the LEADER framework.

An expert 'working group' was set up, so as to ensure broad dissemination of information in support of the awards. The working group consisted of NRN stakeholders including rural development actors and those more directly involved in rural policy. The group invited all round-table members to inform the coordinators of relevant projects or nominate projects for the awards.

Prizes offered included stipends worth €16 000, which allow recent graduates to undertake one-year study periods with the winning projects.

At the end of the selection process, seven projects received prizes in the following categories: Sustainable Growth, Inclusive Growth, Smart Growth, Sustainable Growth on the basis of the LEADER Approach, Inclusive Growth on the basis of the LEADER approach, Smart Growth on the basis of the LEADER approach and a special Innovation Prize, awarded by a jury of experts to an innovative project, which combines these three elements of growth.

### Running the Competition

The 'call process' - aimed at identifying outstanding projects - was publicised through the

Network's information channels: on the main websites dealing with rural development issues; via correspondence to the Network mailing list; and through communication actions by the Network's regional Contact Points.

Entries were submitted by filling in an online form, which required candidates to submit information on the main characteristics of their project, including qualitative judgements. A system was used whereby candidates proposed themselves based on their own self-assessment. Entries were validated by the working group who, after having checked that they fulfilled the minimum eligibility requirements, placed the relevant projects on an online database.

The call was addressed to public and private actors (individual entrepreneurs, consortia, local institutions, non-profit organisations) responsible for initiatives and projects financed under the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) 2007-13 or through other sources. It was felt that opening up the competition to projects funded by sources other than EAFRD, including self-financed projects, would broaden the scope of potential candidates and provide extra 'food for thought' on ways to help rural areas use private funding or other support mechanisms.

When the deadline for submissions arrived, over 100 entries had been received.



Food produced through sustainable environmental practices, as part of the Memory Oak project.

Following evaluation of the proposed projects, a jury - with expertise ranging from environmental matters to regional marketing and from evaluation to social matters - presented its verdict, identifying the most relevant projects divided into categories. The relevance criteria and thus the evaluation parameters focused on three aspects: the ability of the project to reach rural development goals (i.e. its effectiveness), the project's sustainability based on its economic, social and environmental aspects, and the transferability of the actions carried out or the results obtained.

The final vote, which involved more than 100 of the Network's stakeholders, was taken on 19 October, 2011. Each winner, was given a few minutes to explain their project in person, so as to capture the attention of the audience on an emotional level and to demonstrate the impact support actions can have on territorial and business decisions.

## Final Considerations

Particularly innovative characteristics of the ESEMPI awards include a participatory approach based on a 'bottom-up' process, which starts with the projects putting themselves forward as candidates, before broadening through the active involvement of the NRN's expert group, thus allowing widespread diffusion of information on outstanding projects, irrespective of whether they win, among key actors in rural development policy. Another particularly interesting aspect is linked to the nature of the prizes themselves, which consist of graduate training opportunities, as well as support for the continuation and development of the winning projects (in many cases the projects require human, rather than financial resources to continue their work). Therefore, this presents a 'double advantage' for the winners, with graduates receiving a year-long traineeship with the winning projects. The success of such an approach is confirmed by the high level of interest in the stipends among recent graduates.

Finally, as regards the selection of projects eligible for the awards, it is worth noting that these are not only open to projects financed through the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). The rationale for this was that whilst it is of course important to demonstrate the impact of the EAFRD, at the same time, we should remember that as researchers and as a National Rural Network, we are concerned with rural areas and the rural economy as a whole, and thus with any projects that do outstanding work. All

of these projects help us to understand the real needs of such areas and how best to launch and support development processes, be they business, social or land-related. An interesting statistic from the projects submitted concerns their financing sources. Most received EU support through EAFRD and the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund, as well as through the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund, but a considerable number of projects (19%) were self-financed. This shows that there is a high level of dynamism among the initiatives submitted and in rural areas as a whole, even when public support is not available.

### The Winners - General Awards:

- **Special Innovation:** Awarded to 'Ethical Gardens' (Orti E.T.I.C.I) – a social-inclusion project that offers job placements for vulnerable social groups, with local agricultural and horticultural enterprises;
- **Inclusive Growth:** Awarded to the 'Le Ali' cooperative for its work restoring an ancient villa, located in the hills around Bologna. The villa is now a tourist attraction, which offers city dwellers a "taste of the countryside" among other things.
- **Sustainable Growth:** Awarded to the 'Memory Oak project' – an agro-tourism centre that promotes sustainable environmental practices.
- **Smart Growth:** Awarded to the 'Vastedda della Valle del Belice' project which provides a milk-curdling centre for use by all Vastedda PDO cheese producers, thereby enhancing the value of this local cheese.

### The Winners - LEADER Awards:

- **Sustainable LEADER Growth:** Awarded to a cooperation project run by the Mongioie LAG, which aims to get all 44 local administrations in the mountainous Piedmont region to sign up to an 'Eco Management and Audit Scheme' (EMAS);
- **Smart LEADER Growth:** Awarded to 'School, Job and Future' – a project that aims to increase a sense of local identity and heritage by providing training and work experience for students, on local projects that make the most of local resources;
- **Inclusive LEADER Growth:** Awarded to the 'Castagneto Tourist Enhancement Project' of the Antico Frignano e Appennino Reggiano LAG. This project aims to get local people involved in the development of the area as a tourist attraction.

© Milena Verrascina



Workers employed at the social inclusion project 'Orti ETICI' – winner of the Special Innovation Award.

As planned, the prizes for the winning projects take the form of study stipends for recent graduates who will have the chance to carry out field work, receive training on aspects of rural development or support further development of the winning projects. For their part, by training the graduates with a view to offering them future employment, the winners will be able to acquire extra professional support in achieving their growth objectives. The choice of awarding a study stipend fulfils an aim of the NRN in helping to bring young people and civil society in general, closer to the rural environment.

For more information, please visit the "Buone Pratiche e Innovazioni" thematic page at [www.reterurale.it](http://www.reterurale.it).





A 'handmade' straw-bale house in the eco-village of 'Sieben Linden'.

Taken from the 'In Focus' section of the publication 'LandInForm' Issue 4/2011, published by the German NRN, this article examines how communities interested in developing alternative lifestyles, such as alternative economic systems and communal living, constitute a counterweight to the trend of rural emigration. By Iris Kunze.

## Communities Strengthen Infrastructure and Social Climate, in Germany

**T**he migratory trend from the countryside to towns goes on. However, movement in the opposite direction has also been detected. It is not just 'drop outs' and nature lovers, but also people interested in alternative ways of life who see the countryside as somewhere they can realise their potential. The driving force behind this is, among other things, a desire for more community-based living.

Two opposing trends exist in western societies. On one hand, people (especially single people)

- seek fulfilment in technologically-advanced, densely-populated, big-city life. Since the green movement came to prominence, others - including the educated 'middle-class' - have gravitated more and more towards lifestyles that offer possibilities to combine communal living with self-fulfilment. The countryside is becoming an ever more attractive place for this. One way this is reflected is in the growing number of alternative communities that have been set up, particularly in rural areas of eastern Germany, thanks to favourable land and property prices. So what form do these communities take and can they be viewed as a homogeneous group?



## More than 200 Communities in Germany

The Eurotopia directory ([www.eurotopia.de](http://www.eurotopia.de)) currently lists some 200 alternative communities in Germany, all of which have differing objectives. They are involved in ecology, culture, social issues and training and run activities in these fields, often related to agriculture. A common characteristic is their community-oriented lifestyle, which extends beyond the small family group. Many of the communities are inter-connected and have set up networks with a view to exchanging experience. For example, the 'Global Ecovillage Network' (<http://gen.ecovillage.org>) has some 15 000 members, also organised on a regional basis. Through four-week courses provided by the Network's 'Ecovillage Design Education' training programme, interested parties can learn the fundamentals of how to make such villages economically efficient and equitable or how to maintain good neighbourly relations and a strong community spirit ([www.gaiaeducation.org](http://www.gaiaeducation.org)). Examples of good practice in these areas include rules for decision-making and the common use of machinery, cars or communal areas. That such skills are indispensable is evidenced by the fact that only about 10% of these intended communities survive their first five years of existence.

## Working towards the Future at Klein Jasedow

In 1997 at Klein Jasedow in the Federal State of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, a community, which had originally been established in Bavaria, opened a media-production company, publishing house and concert and seminar facility. With financial support from the private sector, they bought three dilapidated residential houses, a former cultural centre, three out-buildings of an old manor house, as well as land for building and farming. Over time, the community also launched charitable initiatives, such as the 'European Academy for Healing Arts', which developed the 'Zukunftswerk Klein Jasedow' regional network ([www.zukunftswerk-kleinjasedow.de](http://www.zukunftswerk-kleinjasedow.de)). Today, the community has an incredibly diverse range of businesses and charitable projects. One example is the gong manufacturer, 'Sona', which is currently in its start-up phase and consists of a gong-making workshop producing musical instruments for use in sound therapy. The Oya Media Company publishes 'Oya: Think Differently, Live Differently' a bi-monthly magazine on cultural and creative topics. The community also moved the 'Kräutergarten Pommerland' or

Pomeranian Herb Garden into the area and has been producing teas, mainly using its own organically-grown herbs, since 2001. Furthermore, the community has a recording studio, musical projects and a sailing boat for hire. The 'Maxwiesenhau' inter-generational project provides accommodation for young and old people. Many more initiatives are planned, including a guest house and a restaurant. Apart from this, through the jobs created by their activities and their ever-widening range of services, the charitable organisations are revitalising the region by providing cultural and meeting places, as well as attracting tourists from elsewhere.



Growing vegetables organically in the community.

The latest joint project saw the establishment of the 'Lassaner People's Power-Station Corner', which takes the form of a cooperative with the long-term objective of transforming the area into a bio-energy region.

## Life in the Steyerberg Garden

Since 1984, the Steyerberg Lebensgarten, or 'Life Garden', on Lake Steinhuder, in Lower Saxony, has transformed a former Nazi forced-labour camp, which had long stood empty, into an ecological settlement ([www.lebensgarten.de](http://www.lebensgarten.de)). This community has also strengthened rural infrastructure by opening architectural and photographic studios and various medical practices. In addition, the construction of an independent school is currently at the planning stage. A seminar centre brings in visitors from outside the area, while cultural events and parties are well-attended by local people. Building projects, regular cookery courses and herb gathering are not just opportunities to share experiences,



Permacultural gardening and eco-restoration in the 'Steyerberg Garden' eco-village.





Permacultural gardening and eco-restoration in the 'Steyerberg Garden' eco-village.

but also to develop friendships and business relationships, between long-standing residents and newcomers. In this way, the 'Lebensgarten' has become a local meeting place.

### Generating Economic and Social Profits

The rural population is heavily involved in agriculture and is also ageing because of the drift of younger generations away from the countryside. However, the new communities provide villages with an influx of young, well-trained people. By using the possibilities offered by the Internet, these communities provide rural areas with independent, globally-connected service businesses and new job opportunities. In this way, they make a financially small but nonetheless important contribution to revitalising regional economic networks.

Along with concrete job opportunities and infrastructural improvements, these communities also bring other benefits and support. As well as providing general assistance for those living in the neighbourhood, they also organise events for young people and help to integrate older people into the community, all of which fosters an atmosphere of trust and openness that goes beyond commercial interests. In this way, the communities often improve the social fabric of rural areas that may otherwise have become dormitories for urban commuters.

### Overcoming Prejudice through Openness

How are such community projects received by long-standing village residents? A research study (Kunze, 2009, see below) based on interviews and observations from participants, collected over a number of years, came to the following conclusions: At first, intended communities that do not, as a rule, follow traditional village values and lifestyles, encounter irritation and scepticism among local inhabitants. However, in most cases, mistrust and prejudice can be overcome by openness on the part of the community and a desire to work together to benefit the local economy. Indeed, it is precisely the differences between the local population and the newcomers that have given rise

to a fruitful exchange of ideas and the revitalisation of village life.

For further information, please see the NRN magazine 'LandInForm', on their website: <http://www.netzwerk-laendlicher-raum.de>

For further information on the research, see: <http://www.uni-muenster.de/de/>

### Further reading

Kunze, Iris (2009): *Social innovations for sustainable ways of living - Intentional communities and Eco-villages as experimental learning fields for socio-ecological sustainability*. Ecotransfer-Verlag, Münster.



Permacultural gardening and eco-restoration in the 'Steyerberg Garden' eco-village.





© Philip Wallace on behalf of Ballynure and District Friendship Club

Ballynure Garden Village Fair, Co. Antrim.

*'Future Proof your Village: A guide to Sustainable Local Living' was produced by the Northern Ireland Rural Network following the work of a Thematic Working Group on Village Renewal and Development. Here, Aileen Donnelly summarises its findings.*

## Future Proof your Village: A Guide to Sustainable Local Living

**T**he roll out of the Village Renewal and Development funding stream in Northern Ireland resulted in the establishment of a Thematic Working Group (TWG) focusing on Village Renewal and Development. It incorporated a year-long commitment from a group drawn from all seven Local Action Groups (LAGs) and included six-village study visits to share experiences. The final report of the group was summarised in the publication called 'Future Proof your Village: A Guide to Sustainable Local Living'.

There has never been a better time to revisit the role and potential of the rural village and its surroundings. The current economic downturn has affected food and energy prices, as well as housing costs, making it harder for many to cope effectively. Climate change and pressures on resources mean low prices on

many essentials are likely to be a thing of the past and may require significant changes in lifestyle.

Regenerating rural villages and their surrounding areas by improving economic prospects and 'quality of life' is one of the central tenets of the current Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme (NIRDP) 2007-2013. Northern Ireland covers an area of some 1.4m hectares and has a total population of 1.7m (approximately 2.5% of the UK total). Whilst around one-third of the population live in the Greater Belfast area, most of the remainder can be found in small towns, villages and more remote rural areas.

According to the NIRDP, one of the strengths of rural Northern Ireland is "the ability and willingness of rural dwellers to become involved in decisions about their future through





© Rural Development Council (RDC)

Cushendall, Co. Antrim

the many and diverse rural community partnerships". On that basis, one of the main approaches to rural development in Northern Ireland stresses that "the communities that most closely experience problems or identify opportunities for development should be involved in the design and delivery of projects and programmes to tackle such issues and improve their quality of life".

An integrated, village-level approach was recommended, to assist villages and their surrounding areas to realise the potential of their economic, social, cultural and environmental resources. The NIRDPA advocates investment in the social and economic fabric of villages, through integrated village plans. One of specific measures in Axis 3 supports people – through activities – to promote sustainable village renewal and development and to enhance the sense of shared ownership, social cohesion and inclusion.

The 'Village Renewal and Development' measure focuses on supporting activity and capacity-building, enabling residents of villages and surrounding areas to create a vision for the area. This ensures the economic, social, cultural and environmental potential of the area is achieved by supporting those actions for which the local community has ownership. It also ensures that an integrated action plan is devised, which defines the role of the village and so develops the potential of the rural area.

The main goal of an integrated village plan is seen as 'future-proofing' and safeguarding the ability of people to continue to afford to live in rural villages. The publication 'Future Proof Your Village' includes sections on topics including land, energy, housing and settlement planning,

economic activity at local level and collective community effort. It provides ideas for devising a village plan to complement the general rural development of the local area and the wider hinterland.

The three cross-cutting themes within the publication are energy, cooperation and creative thinking.

The energy theme relates to how people can be motivated to think in an 'energy-efficient' way. Energy costs influence the affordability of almost everything we buy – from food and fuel to housing materials and medicines, so an 'energy audit' is a useful place to start to think about how village planning can help reduce costs. Suggestions on how to do an 'energy audit' are provided in the document. There is evidence that the most successful way of reducing energy and household costs, as well as contributing to tackling climate change, is to work at community level. And in terms of cooperation, it is clear that more can be achieved by communities than by individual households on their own. The third theme – 'creative thinking' – refers to efforts that inspire imaginative ideas and the publication contains some creative suggestions, in this regard.

There are many different tools and approaches available to help people take stock of village development and decide what should be retained and what should be changed – as well as how to make those changes. But some of the main outcomes of successful village development have been

identified as follows:

- **Quality of Life:** development of a village where individuals and families can lead healthy, satisfying lives without unwarranted stress or strain;
- **Sense of Place:** development of a village that has character, a sense of history, and makes the most of its landscape and countryside;
- **A Place to Live and Work:** a village that allows more people to work near to where they live - by exploiting local opportunities and creating suitable workplaces;
- **A Shelter from the Storm:** a village that provides more independence from the peaks and troughs of global markets and political instability through, for example, greater self-sufficiency in energy and food production – and of course a place that values and utilises local skills

These defining factors all have one thing in common – the sense that rural villages are valued and ought to be nurtured. Their existence should be cherished, protected and safeguarded for future generations to enjoy.

'Future Proof Your Village: A Guide to Sustainable Local Living' is available in both hard copy from the Rural Network or in soft copy format by downloading from the RNNI website [www.ruralnetworkni.org.uk](http://www.ruralnetworkni.org.uk).

**Aileen Donnelly**  
Northern Ireland Rural Network



Ahoghill, Co. Antrim

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© Agnese Lapina

Study tour to home-made ice cream producer, 'Skriveru Saldejums' as part of the International Food Conference, in Latvia.

# LEADER in Action

Local Action Groups (LAGs) are local public-private partnerships who work to promote the LEADER 'bottom-up' approach to rural development in the EU. This section features some of the many LAG-based activities and events to have taken place recently.

## Scotland: Construction Skills Project Receives Boost

**T**rainees at the Cairngorms Construction Skills Project were given a boost recently when they were visited by Mike Russell, the Cabinet Secretary for 'Education and Lifelong Learning' in the Scottish Government. The project, supported by the Cairngorms LEADER LAG since 2010, has already supported 22 trainees in securing skills related to the construction industry. Coordinated by the Highland Small Communities Housing Trust, the project enables trainees to spend three days per week in college and two days per week on placement, either with a local business or working on community projects, including improvements to a village church, a hospital and school gardens in the area. The project's next community undertaking involves the dismantling of a traditional wooden highland cottage in Carrbridge, which will be relocated to the Highland Folk Museum in Kingussie, some 25km away, where it will be re-built, thereby safeguarding its future. Other upcoming activities involve the construction of the second phase of an affordable housing initiative at Ardgeal, starting with felling the timber in local forests. For further information, see: [www.cairngorms-leader.org](http://www.cairngorms-leader.org), [www.hscht.co.uk](http://www.hscht.co.uk).

## Latvia: International Food Conference Hosted by Latvian Rural Forum

**L**EADER LAGs from 14 countries came together to discuss local food development and promotion, in Latvia, on 15-18 February, 2012. Some 100 delegates attended the conference entitled 'Local Identity Product: Sustainable Support Systems for Communities in Europe', which examined a range of themes relating to local food production, such as how global decisions affect local actions; how development organisations can assist local food production; development and branding; and the potential for collaborative transnational projects. Participants also attended a food festival from the Aizkraukle district, as well as an international showcase of local products from all participating countries. A report is now being produced, which will provide recommendations for national and EU level policy on local food products. For further information, see: [www.vip.kompetences.lv](http://www.vip.kompetences.lv) or <http://lf.partneribas.lv>.



© CNPAV Wee Epics, Claire Muckart

Stuart Dunbar, Marcus Reuttimann and Hamish Fenton, marking trees for Phase 2 of new houses in Argeal, Scotland.





Participants brave the cold in Satakunta.

## Finland: LAGs meet with Transnational Partners to Discuss Local Food

A meeting between potential transnational partners to discuss joint-ideas for working together on local food projects - was held in Finland on 16-17 February, 2012. The meeting, hosted by four Finnish LAGs involved delegates from LAGs in Sweden, Cyprus, Austria and Ireland, all of whom got together in the coastal region of Satakunta, in south-east Finland. The first day of the meeting involved each LAG presenting their area and ideas for joint working, before collective discussions took place on possible collaborations. The second day was complemented by a series of field trips to local food producers and food markets. The Finnish LAGs are already collaborating on the development of a network of local food producers, establishing improved links between local producers, local markets and restaurants and educating the public about the availability and use of local produce. Work is also ongoing on overcoming supply chain problems. International collaboration would involve the transfer of good practice between countries; developing links between food producers, so as to foster new collaborations; and 'local food' events featuring produce from partner countries. For further information, see: [www.karhuseutu.fi](http://www.karhuseutu.fi).

## Spain: Cooperate to Compete Conference Learns from LEADER

The LEADER model, and examples from both the current LEADER programme and LEADER+, were presented at the third Congress of Rural Development in Aragon, northern Spain, on 15-17 February, 2012. Entitled 'Cooperate to Compete', the Congress was part of the 37<sup>th</sup> International Fair of Agricultural Machinery and was designed to reflect the importance of cooperation in addressing the challenges of competing in a global economy. In particular, the conference examined how cooperation can be used to improve competitiveness in territorial development, food chain and market development, resource access and use. One of the LEADER examples showcased was the Marca de Calidad Territorial (Calidad Rural Case Study), which demonstrated how a region covered by nine LAG areas can develop, and make use of a quality brand for a wide range of products and services. For further information, see: [www.calidadterritorial.com](http://www.calidadterritorial.com).

## Estonia: LEADER Supports Web Design Skills in Businesses

Sixteen Estonian enterprises benefitted from training in web design and marketing, thanks to the support of LEADER funds. Some €8 900 was granted to the Rāpina Incubation Centre by the Borderlands LAG in south Estonia, which facilitates training for participants working together to achieve improved quality standards for web design and cross-marketing. The training was delivered between March and November 2011, during which participants worked with professional advisors to develop their own websites. These have all now been launched and have been 'live' since January 2012. Participants were delighted with the training they received. According to Irina Bobkova, a glass artist: "Now my activities are visible not only to local customers, but to international ones as well". Another participant, Aime Klau, a massage therapist added: "If you're not on the internet, you don't exist in the business world". To view the websites, links can be accessed from the Rāpina Incubation Centre's own webpage: [www.ariabi.ee](http://www.ariabi.ee).



### III CONGRESO NACIONAL DE DESARROLLO RURAL

Promotional Poster for the Cooperate to Compete Conference.

## Ireland: LAG Ensures Active Citizenship through Ageing with Confidence

An initiative to encourage ageing citizens to take a more active role in rural development has been undertaken by a LAG in County Clare, in the west of Ireland. The programme, entitled 'Ageing with Confidence' was launched in March, 2012 by the Clare Local Development Company. It is being run in seven communities across the region.

Each programme aims to provide support for older residents in remote areas and is delivered over eight weekly sessions with a maximum of 15 participants, in each. Speaking about the project, Mary Farren, Community Development Officer explained that, as people age, their confidence is affected and this can reduce their quality of life: "Through this programme we are able to address issues relating to physical, mental and emotional health, whilst offering practical solutions, such as information on local services," she said. Following the success of this project, the LAG is now looking at developing a 'Programme on Active Citizenship for Older People' in partnership with an organisation called 'Age and Opportunity' in Dublin. For further information, see: [www.cldc.ie](http://www.cldc.ie).

## LEADER Transnational Cooperation Project Announces Photo Competition Winners

A selection of images submitted as part of a LAG photo competition on geology, are now accessible for public viewing. LAGs from Müllerthal in Luxembourg and the Brenz region, in Germany have been collaborating since April 2011, on a range of geology related initiatives. Their most recent enterprise - a photographic competition entitled 'Stone Kingdom' - was designed to capture the landscapes and geological characteristics of the two areas. Some 150 images were submitted in Brenz region, while 77 photos were submitted in Müllerthal. The awards ceremonies in both countries were held in January 2012 and the winning entries were exhibited in each community. A selection of the entries and the winning photographs can now be viewed on the LAG websites. Anette Pieter from the Müllerthal LAG said: "We had some surprising feedback from the participants of the competition. They all confirmed that through this competition they had come to understand their local area better. And through the visual acuity gained through looking through the lens of the camera, they had discovered previously overlooked highlights". To view the photos, please visit the LAG websites: [www.mu.leader.lu](http://www.mu.leader.lu) and [www.brenzregion.de](http://www.brenzregion.de).



Winner in the 'individuals' category of the 'Stone Kingdom' photography competition - João Jago.

## Portugal: PROVE Project Launches Weekly Seasonal Produce Baskets

An exciting Portuguese project, which supplies a variety of seasonal fruit and vegetables to some 1 500 customers every week is expanding to Lisbon, thanks to LEADER funds. The project, developed with the support of 16 LAGs across Portugal, takes produce from some 100 farmers and supplies them to customers via 45 delivery points set up around Portugal. Now PROVE Lisbon, which began in February 2012, will see the Culinary Arts Centre in Santa Clara supplied-to-order with baskets of the local produce, every Tuesday. Working with the LAG - ADREPES (Associação para o Desenvolvimento Rural da Península de Setúbal), PROVE Lisbon

will be sourcing local seasonal produce from a young farmer called Ana Marques situated in Várzea da Moita. For further information, see: [www.adrepes.pt](http://www.adrepes.pt) or [www.prove.com.pt](http://www.prove.com.pt).







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LAG and FLAG territories often overlap.

## Rural *Focus*

EU rural development is a multi-faceted topic, incorporating a diverse range of issues from forestry to rural finance or 'new challenges' like climate change. In this edition, we 'focus' our attention on cooperation between Local Action Groups (LAGs) and Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs).

# EU Funds on the Ground: Cooperation between LAGs and FLAGs

**T**wo-thirds of Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs) are formally cooperating with Local Action Groups (LAGs), so as to better ensure the effective implementation of community-led local development programmes in their shared territory. This is according to a recent study by the European Fisheries Area Network (FARNET).

Fisheries zones and rural areas often coincide and overlap, especially in the more remote rural coastal zones and around inland lakes and waterways. Therefore, cooperating to promote more sustainable paths for development and to more effectively use various EU funds is becoming increasingly recognised as a highly productive approach to rural development.

However, although the desire for cooperation clearly exists, differing geographical conditions and developmental priorities preclude any 'one size fits all' organisational model for LAG/FLAG cooperation.

For example, the recent FARNET study notes the following:

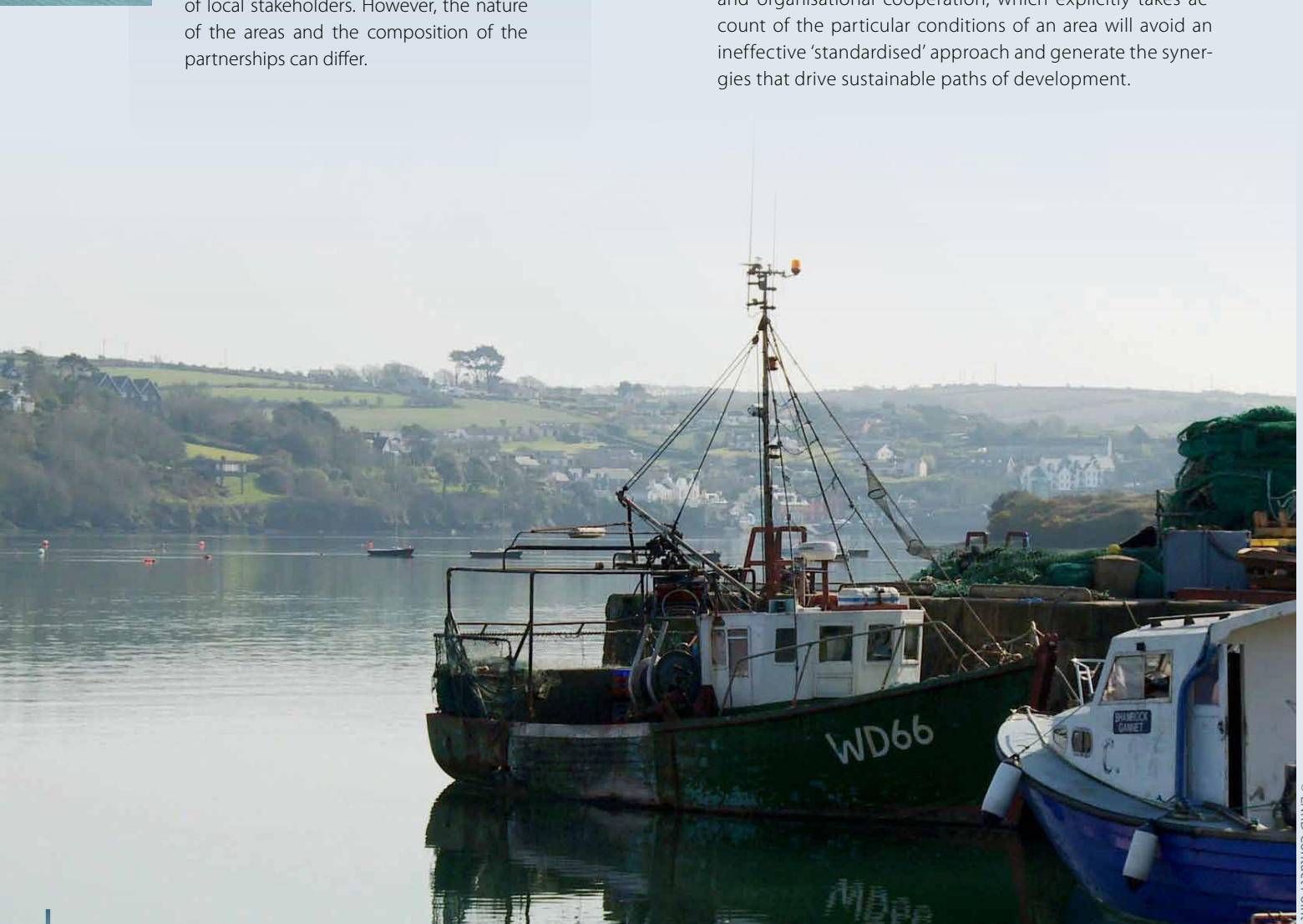
- In 40% of cases considered by the study, the FLAG and LAG are, in fact, the same organisation, with a single overarching strategy. In this case, the specificities of the fisheries part are taken care of by a separate sub-partnership. This model is especially important in Finland, Denmark, Germany and Latvia.
- In around 10% of cases, both FLAGs and LAGs are managed as 'sub-partnerships' of a third 'accountable body', usually a local public organisation. Examples here include the FLAGs and LAGs managed by the local development agencies in Greece, the "Pays" or other inter-municipal bodies in France and similar models in Portugal, Sweden and the Netherlands.
- Some 12% of FLAGs have some sort of formal organisational relationship with the LAG, even though they are separate freestanding organisations. This kind of solution has been used by countries such as Finland and Ireland to deal with the fact that many FLAG areas overlap with multiple LAGs because of the geographical dispersion of fishing communities.

### LAGS and FLAGS – an overview

While LAGs are funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development's (EAFRD) LEADER programme, FLAGS fall under the remit of Axis 4 of the European Fisheries Fund (EFF). Launched in 2007 Axis 4 for "the sustainable development of fisheries areas", follows similar principles to those of LEADER. The average budget of both FLAGS and LAGs is fairly similar (€3.2 million for FLAGS compared to €3.9 million for LAGs), though the variation in budget between FLAGS is greater than for LAGs (ranging from under €0.1 million to €17 million per group). Both have integrated area-based local strategies, with projects selected by local partnerships made up of a balanced mix of local stakeholders. However, the nature of the areas and the composition of the partnerships can differ.

From these models we can already see that a number of components – geography, institutional infrastructure and strategic objectives – inform the model of cooperation. And there are other considerations also - namely the differing goals and focus of Axis 4 of the European Fisheries Fund (EFF) and LEADER; the different arrangement of boundaries for FLAG and LAG areas (LAGs often cover a larger area than FLAGS, which are often concentrated along a coastline); and differences in terms of the key stakeholders for each programme (the setting up of project selection committees may help in this regard).

However, it is clear that in the future, ways in which the different initiatives interact and complement each other will become more important. In light of challenges such as climate change adaptation and economic instability, cooperation is a key tool for maximising the effectiveness of EU funds and for ensuring that rural and fishery areas develop in a holistic way. With both LEADER and EFF committed to fostering community-led local development, the challenge for stakeholders is to design cooperation in such a way that it will provide additional benefits for their respective programmes, rather than dilute their central focus. Strategic and organisational cooperation, which explicitly takes account of the particular conditions of an area will avoid an ineffective 'standardised' approach and generate the synergies that drive sustainable paths of development.



A fishing village in East Cork, Ireland.



# EAFRD Projects

The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) co-finances an array of rural development projects, across the EU. In each issue, we select a few projects that we find interesting and inspiring!



The bakery used EAFRD co-financing to combine modern equipment with traditional baking methods.

## EAFRD Supports Traditional Bakery in Romania

*A small bakery business in Romania used EAFRD support to modernise and expand its capacity. Now the 'Agropan' bakery provides fresh bread for over 85 000 people, as well as much needed employment for locals, in the counties of Cluj and Bistrita.*

The project centres on increasing the productivity and competitiveness of the bakery, as well as expanding the range of products it can offer to local communities. At the same time, the bakery is increasing the geographical area to which it sells its products – which now includes almost all shops in the region.

Agropan started activities in 1991 as a small bakery run by Monika Ersek. It was clear to Monika that expanding the business would require crucial investment and so, together with her team, she decided to take a risk and restructure the business. Thanks to €900 000 received in EAFRD funding, coupled with private funding of some €1.7 million, Agropan was able to invest in such activities as renovating the factory, modernising equipment and staff training, all of which improved both productivity and hygiene standards.

And Monica's enterprising vision paid off. The hard work of her team and the vital funding support they received have ensured that locals now enjoy an array of produce, including traditionally baked bread and other high-quality baked goods. In addition, Agropan has created 103 new jobs in the area – an enormous boost for a region where unemployment is a major concern.

To see a 'video postcard' of this project visit the media gallery on the [ENRD website](#).

## Spanish and French LAGs Cooperate on Food-chain Business Development

*A transnational cooperation (TNC) project, located in the cross-border area of the Basque and Navarra mountains, is supporting cross-border economic development projects on 'food chains'.*

The TNC project, between the French 'Montagne Basque' LAG and the Spanish 'Montaña de Navarra' LAG, centres on cooperation, as a means of improving overall professionalism and developing new opportunities for food-related industries. This includes the pooling of resources and joint initiatives on the promotion and marketing of products and quality services.

In particular, cooperation between the LAGs led to three main outcomes: the development of a strategy for the Basque pig industry; support for cheese cooperatives experiencing processing difficulties; and the development of procedures for the direct sale of meat between the two regions.

The project spanned seven months between September 2010 and March 2011. The total budget was €45 815



Black Pig from the Basque Country.

## Austrian LEADER 'Cheese' Project Creates Local Synergies

*EAFRD funding has enabled a LEADER project, aimed at adding value to locally-produced cheese, to collaborate with tourist services and farmers alike – improving the local economy of a mountain area in Austria.*

Some €61 186 in EAFRD support has enabled the Bregenzer cheese route project to engage in a range of activities, including organising culinary and cultural events to promote the area, and training and promotion events to improve business planning and marketing. Some 180 partners from different sectors are involved in the project, which is helping to safeguard local farming methods, employment and the income of 1 200 farming families, as well as the ongoing viability of 90 alpine dairies. In addition, turnover has increased significantly through direct marketing, giving local producers



*The Bregenzerwald region is famous for the quality of its cheese.*

more independence from mainstream milk buyers. The project is currently focused on increasing financial viability through contributions from three main partner groups: farmers, tourism and the public sector. A

genuine example of the effectiveness of networking for creating synergies between farming, tourism and the local economy!

## EAFRD Supports Family-Run Eco-Farm Project in Hungary

*EAFRD funding has helped an organic family farm in Dél-Alföldi region, in Hungary, to diversify its activity to include eco-tourism services for groups and individuals alike.*

The Héjja family have been practicing organic farming since 1999, and now run a 'multi-functional' facility hosting research projects and farm-to-school programmes for local schools. In total, some €145 000, including €66 000 in EAFRD funding was invested to expand farm activity, allowing for the building of a new agricultural exhibition centre to showcase traditional farming activities and equipment, an animal petting area to educate children about farm animals; and a new 60m<sup>2</sup> apiary, made of traditional materials, to teach students

about beekeeping. As well as allowing the family to diversify the farm's activities, the project also provides jobs for the whole family and helps to keep young people in the area. The farm also benefits the entire local community by providing a new tourist attraction, where visitors can enjoy fresh and organic food, and promote organic food practices in the region.



*Students learn about honey and organic produce at the popular 'Farm to School' programme at the eco-farm.*

## Belgian EAFRD Project Helps Prevent River Pollution

*Municipalities in the province of Limburg are cooperating with farmers to create and maintain natural buffer zones, which prevent river pollution from fertilisers and pesticides.*

Farming activities in the Dommel and Warnebeek river basin have resulted in run-off from some residues from fertilisers and pesticides seeping into the river. To

combat the problem, seven municipalities in the province of Limburg, along with the Dommelvallei Water Management Agency, agreed to join forces with local farmers to find a way to protect and improve water quality, as well as biodiversity. Some €500 000 was used to support farmers in the creation and maintenance of buffer zones between fields or arable land and

watercourses, and to assist them in completing the necessary administrative requirements. The buffer zones offer benefits for water quality and biodiversity, as well as improving the overall management of brook banks. In addition, the project fostered a 'spirit of cooperation' between local authorities and farmers, and encouraged additional farmers to join the scheme.



# In your *Own words*

In this section, we pass the microphone to you and hear what you have to say. For this issue, we spoke to you at the LEADER Event 2012, held in Brussels on 27-28 April.

"I just hope that this programme will change in the right direction and that means the bottom-up approach must be delivered. LEADER cannot be anymore just an approach. It must be a programme."

*Peter Plaimer, from the LAG Regionalkooperation Unterkärnten, Austria, speaking at the LEADER Event 2012, about his hopes for LEADER in the future.*



"Transnational cooperation is important to us because meeting other LAGs, exchanging ideas and sharing challenges, means we can work together to solve problems – or even find someone with a solution already! Seeing our area through other people's eyes builds confidence in what we can achieve."

*Malgorzata Sliczna, Stowarzyszenie Lokalna Group, Dzialnia Dolina Stobrawy, Poland, speaking about the importance of TNC, at the LEADER Event 2012.*

"FARNET – the fisheries area's network is actually about bringing the LEADER-type approach to a different type of area with a different set of problems, which is the fisheries areas... indirectly proving that the LEADER approach works, that it is effective. Because it has been transferred now to another situation and it still works."

*Urzula Budzich-Szukala FARNET, speaking about the effectiveness of LEADER during a panel discussion, at the LAG Event 2012.*



"I don't apologise for having a system with sound financial management practices in it – because it has to be there. At the end of the day, we have to realise that we are managing somebody else's money. We are managing tax payers' money. We have to ensure the systems in place are robust enough to make sure that money is managed correctly."

*Deirdre Kelly from the Irish Managing Authority, speaking about the necessity of administration and bureaucracy - during a panel discussion at the LEADER Event, 2012.*



"I think in the future it will be important that new projects can be developed without being constrained by too much bureaucracy. I'm part of the 'state system' myself, but yet I see from looking in at how well a (LAG) can work – that it should not be constrained by too many rules and regulations. There has to be innovation and they (LAGs) have to be allowed to develop without constraint."

*J. Hogan from SECAD in Ireland, speaking about the need to curb bureaucracy for those working with LEADER.*



## Connecting Rural Europe...

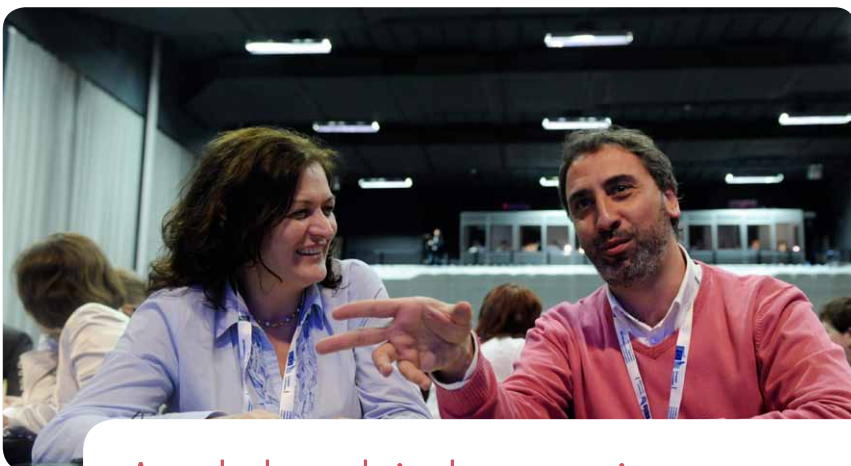
Terje Aus, from Saarte Koostöökogu LAG in Estonia, chats to Aivar Niinemägi from the PAIK LAG in Estonia and another participant at the LEADER Event 2012, in Brussels, on 27-28 April.

## Out & About

Smile, you're on camera!  
Some of our favourite photos of all the networking activities you've been involved in, over the last few months.

## Making a good point...

Alistair Prior (Scottish Rural Network) and Huub Kwantes (Netherlands Rural Network) at the Finnish NRN Meeting, in May 2012.



## And the third most important aspect of a good LDS is...

Judit Rácz of Hungary chats to Silvio Calice, from the Maillella Verde LAG in Italy discuss Local Development Strategies at the LEADER Event 2012.





## Toasting success...

The winning team at the Müllerthal LAG 'Stone Kingdom' photo competition at the awards ceremony in January 2012, in Luxembourg. For more information, see page 29.



## Sshh!

Giuseppe Gargano and Annalisa Del Prete, from the Italian NRN share some networking and cooperation secrets at the LEADER Event 2012.

## Enjoying the LEADER spirit...

Hanna Hirvonen, designer and owner of Hanhi Design, one of the participants and receiver of LEADER support, at the seminar on the role of the arts in rural development, held in Kaustinen, western Finland, in February 2012.



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If you have a question you would like answered, write to our ENRD experts at [info@enrd.eu](mailto:info@enrd.eu)!

## Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

**Q:** *How can I apply for EU rural development funding?*

**A:** You can apply for EU rural development funding through the Member States' *Rural Development Programmes* (RDP). The application processes may differ between countries and for different types of rural development projects. The *Managing Authority* of the RDP or your *National Rural Network* (NRN) can explain the information you need to know about applying for EU rural development funding in your country.

Contact information for the RDP Managing Authorities and NRNs is available by clicking [here](#).

For any questions related to your log-in details, please contact: [MyENRD@enrd.eu](mailto:MyENRD@enrd.eu)

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ENRD MAGAZINE is published in 6 official languages (EN, DE, FR, ES, IT, PL) and available in electronic format on the ENRD website.  
Manuscript finalised in June 2012.  
Original version is the English text.

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STORY OF THE MONTH: 15th NRN meeting in Finland tackles the future of networking

21 June 2012: The best entries to Images of Rural Europe - the photo competition celebrating the beauty and diversity of rural life - have been selected by the jury and are now available online via ENRD's gallery.

18 June 2012: AGRYA, the Hungarian young farmers' organisation, wants to hear about your experience of national and European subsidy support for youth projects and young farmers' activities in rural areas. [Find out more and complete the survey.](#)

More news

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