



European Network for  
Rural Development

EN

## PROJECTS BROCHURE

The European Agricultural  
Fund for Rural Development

# RURAL INSPIRATION AWARDS 2019



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

Funded by the



## European Network for Rural Development

The European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) is the hub that connects rural development stakeholders throughout the European Union (EU). The ENRD contributes to the effective implementation of Member States' Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) by generating and sharing knowledge, as well as through facilitating information exchange and cooperation across rural Europe.

Each Member State has established a National Rural Network (NRN) that brings together the organisations and administrations involved in rural development. At EU level, the ENRD supports the networking of these NRNs, national administrations and European organisations.

Find out more on the *ENRD website* (<https://enrd.ec.europa.eu>)

## The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)

The EAFRD Project Examples brochure forms part of a series of ENRD publications that help encourage information exchange. Each edition of the brochure features different types of projects that have received RDP co-finance from the EAFRD.

Past editions of the EAFRD Projects Brochure can be downloaded from the publications section of the ENRD website.<sup>(1)</sup> The ENRD collection of good projects and practices<sup>(2)</sup> contains many additional examples of EAFRD assistance to rural development initiatives.

(1) <https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/publications/search>

(2) [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice_en)

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**Managing editor:** Neda Skakelja, Head of Unit, EC Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development.

**Editor:** Elena Di Federico, Publications Manager, ENRD Contact Point.

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Key contributors:

Siobhan Dillon, Carlos de la Paz, Tim Hudson and David Lamb.

Layout: Benoit Goossens (Tipik)

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# Introduction

**The Rural Inspiration Awards (RIA) 2019 were the first EU-wide rural development good practice competition organised by the ENRD in the 2014-2020 programming period. This initiative celebrated projects that are using funding from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) in an inspiring way to make European rural areas more competitive, sustainable and inclusive. The competition aimed to increase the visibility of both the projects and the contribution of rural development policy, and to promote knowledge transfer and networking among rural development stakeholders.**

This Projects Brochure brings the 25 finalists of the RIA 2019 back into the spotlight. The aim is to give well-deserved visibility to the projects, providing updates on their achievements, and hopefully to inspire new projects.

By the end of 2018, EU Member States had already committed €103.2 billion of public expenditure to projects and actions for rural development under Rural Development Programmes (RDPs); and €58.8 billion of this had already been paid out to beneficiaries on the ground. The total expenditure planned until the end of the 2014-2020 programming period is €156.7 billion.<sup>(1)</sup> Beyond these impressive figures, however, the real impact of the EAFRD is better told by people who have used European funding to set up or boost their businesses, make their villages 'smart' and inclusive, their rural communities more resilient and their agricultural activities more competitive and sustainable. Their stories show how sometimes quite small amounts of public support can make a big difference.

Successful stories can inspire more people to replicate similar initiatives elsewhere and unlock the potential of the EAFRD to help rural areas "meet the wide range of economic, environmental and social challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century."<sup>(2)</sup> For this to happen, though, key

information about the projects has to be collected and effectively shared.

National Rural Networks (NRNs) regularly collect project examples and good practices and share them among rural development stakeholders. The ENRD works as a sounding board for good practices and project examples at European level, gathering them into an online database and fostering their dissemination through networking events and thematic publications.

Launched in autumn 2018, the ENRD Rural Inspiration Awards gave an extra boost to the collection of good practices by the NRNs. The initiative encouraged the mapping of successful projects that are using RDPs to reach one or more Rural Development policy objectives: Improving competitiveness (page 4), Environment & Climate Action (page 10), Rural revitalisation (page 16), Social inclusion (page 22) and the use of the LEADER approach (page 28). These constituted the five main RIA categories.

NRNs and National Support Units (NSUs) responded enthusiastically and, by January 2019, 27 NSUs from 23 Member States submitted 176 projects – the maximum number allowed under the ENRD guidelines for the competition.

(1) [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/rural-development-policy-figures/rdp-monitoring-data-summaries\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/rural-development-policy-figures/rdp-monitoring-data-summaries_en) (2018 data – to be published soon)

(2) [https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rural-development-2014-2020\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rural-development-2014-2020_en)



After a first screening by the ENRD Contact Point, 25 submissions (five per each of the RIA categories above) were shortlisted for evaluation by an expert jury which then selected one winner per each category.

In both steps, projects were assessed against the following six criteria:

- Direct benefits, i.e. the potential or actual economic, environmental/climate and societal improvements generated by the initiative;
- Networking value, i.e. the cooperation of different stakeholders and/or the creation of new networking/cooperation opportunities as a result of the initiative;
- Transferability potential, i.e. the potential or actual replication of an initiative in other European areas facing similar issues;
- Synergies with other EU policies and funding tools than the EAFRD and/or the contribution to more than one EU Rural Development policy objective;
- Innovation, i.e. the use of a brand-new technology, methodology or approach created from scratch by the initiative or never applied before at EU, national, regional or local level; and
- Inspirational value, a criterion based on the experts' experience in rural development.

The jury included seven experts from a mix of different rural development organisations and the EU Institutions: COPA-COGECA, Euromontana, BirdLife International, the European Commission – Directorate

General for Agricultural and Rural Development, the European Economic and Social Committee (NAT Section), and the ENRD Contact Point.

In parallel to the technical evaluation by the jury, the general public could express its preferences on the 25 finalists through an online platform. The Popular Vote was promoted through a social media campaign involving the ENRD and all the NRNs concerned. It constituted the sixth RIA category.

By midday of the closing ceremony, on 11 April 2019, over 8 000 people had expressed their support to one of the 25 shortlisted projects. That same evening during the closing ceremony hosted at the *networX* event<sup>(3)</sup> Phil Hogan, then European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, presented the Rural Inspiration Awards to the six winners.

The RIA provided EAFRD funding beneficiaries with unprecedented visibility for their projects at home and internationally, while helping NSUs reinforce their good practice collection process and their connection with the project holders. Overall, the competition has been a wonderful opportunity to share inspiring real stories of rural development. This new EAFRD Projects Brochure is a way to make the celebration continue and provide more inspiration to rural development stakeholders around Europe.

And look out for the 2020 edition of the Rural Inspiration Awards – focusing this time on bioeconomy and climate change – which is now launched!<sup>(4)</sup>

### The ENRD Contact Point Team

(3) *networX* was organised by the ENRD in April 2019 to recognise the value of networking for rural development, demonstrate the results of the past ten years of rural networking and proactively look at its future.  
[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/networx-inspiring-rural-europe\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/networx-inspiring-rural-europe_en)

(4) [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/news/rural-inspiration-awards-2020\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/news/rural-inspiration-awards-2020_en)

# Theme 1: Improving competitiveness

Enhancing the viability and competitiveness of agriculture is a core objective of the current EU Rural Development policy. The Rural Inspiration Awards 2019 recognised projects that successfully use EAFRD funding to ensure and boost the competitiveness of rural areas through economic diversification, promotion of sustainable production and investment in innovation.

The five projects nominated for a Rural Inspiration Award in this category show how the EAFRD is helping improve the competitiveness of farms, forest and other rural businesses in Europe, including by promoting farm modernisation and resilience, food chain promotion and diversification.

Diversification of agricultural production and developing new products and services can be key steps for improving the competitiveness of rural businesses. Young farmers and new entrants are especially well placed to trigger innovation and can benefit greatly from EAFRD support to develop and test new ideas.

*On page 5 you can read how young Spanish farmer Nuria Alvarez used EAFRD funding to introduce an organic blackberry plantation into a region traditionally producing wheat and barley, developing a new range of added-value products.*

A sustainable supply of raw material can help ensure that production needs are satisfied and successful businesses can meet an increasing demand. The EAFRD offers opportunities to promote the efficiency of agriculture and reinforce the local production of raw material, with positive impacts on rural value chains and the local economy.

*Brännland Cider (page 6), a company producing ice-cider in northern Sweden, combined RDP support and crowdfunding to plant an apple orchard that would support its increasing production needs.*

*In Finland, a company producing rye gin and whisky used RDP support to increase its production capacity to meet the demand of national and international markets (page 7).*

RDPs can also support rural businesses in their endeavour to combine economic profitability with animal welfare and sustainability aspects.

*A Dutch company used EAFRD funding to create a modular rearing system that allows it to combine the production of eggs and quality rooster meat with animal welfare and the respect of the environment (page 8).*

RDPs offer opportunities to rural young people with an entrepreneurial mindset to set up and develop successful businesses, testing innovative projects and markets on a small scale before planning more ambitious developments.

*Mid Ireland Adventure is a start-up company specialising in outdoor sports activities that used RDP support to purchase equipment and respond to increasing demand for adventure tourism, stimulating a new local market (page 9).*



© Brännland Cider

# Spanish blackberries inspire rural Europe

A young Spanish farmer used RDP funding to introduce a blackberry plantation in her native wheat and barley production area.

Nuria Alvarez left her hometown, Zamora, to pursue her studies at the age of 13 and later undertook a university degree in public relations. At the age of 33, she decided to return to Zamora to start her own business.



Located in north-west Spain, Zamora is primarily a barley and wheat producing area with scarce water resources. Nuria's idea was to innovate by cultivating something different combining her family's experience in farming with her own marketing expertise.

After an analysis of the farm's resources, Nuria decided the area would be ideal for an irrigated blackberry crop. This is a resource-efficient cultivation, as each blackberry plant requires only about two litres of water in the three months of each harvest rotation. This is substantially less than the water required by other typical crops in the area.

In 2017, she received LEADER funding via her local LAG Adri Palomares from the regional RDP of Castilla and León for the set-up of this alternative, high added value crop via her company Agroberry.

With the help of her father – a farmer himself – Nuria started with 400 blackberry plants and gradually expanded to 1 800. By 2021 the plantation is expected to reach full capacity, with 4 500 seedlings

planted across two hectares of land and four kilograms of fruit produced per plant per harvest.

*"What is sown with hands, is collected from the heart."*

**Nuria Alvarez**  
Agroberry

Cultivation is free from both pesticides and herbicides and uses only organic fertiliser, from Nuria's father's cattle. She considers organic certification would be too expensive at this stage but intends to acquire it as soon as the plantation is at full capacity.

The project has created one full-time job and five temporary jobs. Sales increased more than 15% in 2018.

Nuria is an active networker. She participates in fairs, arranges meetings with large companies and generally tries to make herself known among the circle of red fruit producers in Spain. The farm welcomes visitors and openly shares knowledge with interested farmers in the area.

Nuria set up a workshop to process the fruit and create a range of products including jams and wine.

The farm is becoming an attraction for agritourism, which makes the whole area more visible as a destination. More than 30 people visited the farm in 2018.

Agroberry has now received six awards at national and regional level and the Rural Inspiration Awards further boosted its visibility across Europe.



© Agroberry

This project introduced a resource-efficient crop in an area with scarce water resources.

<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Agroberry Original from Zamora</b>
Type of beneficiary	Private company
Period	2015 – 2019
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total budget: € 55 985</li> <li>• EAFRD contribution: € 13 436</li> <li>• National / Regional contribution: € 3 359</li> <li>• Private contribution: € 39 190</li> </ul>
RDP Measure	M19 – LEADER/CLLD
Further info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/agroberry-original-zamora_en">https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/agroberry-original-zamora_en</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.agroberry.es">www.agroberry.es</a></li> </ul>
Contact	<a href="mailto:nuria.alvarez@agroberry.es">nuria.alvarez@agroberry.es</a>

## Making Swedish ice-cider more competitive

**A Swedish cider company combined EAFRD funding and crowdfunding to secure its raw material supply chain and become more economically viable.**

In 2010, Andreas Sundgren Graniti set up the Brännland Cider company in Vännäsby, central Sweden. The company produces ice-cider, a fermented beverage made from the juice of frozen apples which is mainly produced in Canada.

Andreas' business was growing steadily year by year, but the apples used primarily came from southern Sweden because there had been no commercial apple orchards in northern Sweden for decades.

According to the company's business plan, production was set to increase from 20 000 bottles in 2015 to 100 000 bottles in 2017. By 2021, at least 50 % of the company's revenue should come from exports.

To ensure the adequate supply of apples needed for the increasing production, Andreas planned to establish a new apple orchard of about 1 000 apple trees, in cooperation with the Swedish University of Agricultural Science. He decided to combine support from RDP Measure 4 – Investments in physical assets of the Swedish RDP and a crowdfunding campaign.

The crowdfunding campaign invited local individuals and companies to adopt an orchard tree and name it. It received support from 360 companies and individuals and every tree in the orchard is now connected to a person, strengthening the links between the local community and the company.

The apple orchard, which created one new job, gives the company better control of its raw material supply. Brännland Cider's production has achieved its 100 000 bottles/year goal in 2018 and is now stable.

The company's competitiveness has increased. The cider can be found in more than 350 shops all over Sweden, at some Michelin restaurants in Europe and is exported to ten countries.

*"I do not see small-scale as an end in itself; it is not how you create jobs and that does not necessarily mean that you are more environmentally friendly. So, the goal is to grow, but keep the small-scale thinking about our products."*

**Andreas Sundgren**  
Founder of Brännland Cider



© Brännland Cider

The apple orchard planted with EAFRD support created one new job, and gives the company better control of its raw material supply.

The new orchard has also reduced the transportation of apples from the southern part of Sweden, thus reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

Following the project, farmers are beginning to grow apples for commercial use in Northern Sweden.

Since its nomination for the Rural Inspiration Awards, Brännland Cider has been approved as a member of a new EIP-AGRI Operational Group on Commercial productive apple growing in a northern climate.

Project Name	Brännland Cider
Type of beneficiary	Private company
Period	2015 – 2017
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total budget: € 235 980</li> <li>• EAFRD contribution: € 47 196</li> <li>• National / Regional contribution: € 47 196</li> <li>• Private contribution: € 141 588</li> </ul>
RDP Measure	M04 – Investments in physical assets
Further info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/brannland-cider_en">https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/brannland-cider_en</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.brannlandcider.se">http://www.brannlandcider.se</a></li> </ul>
Contact	<a href="mailto:andreas@brannlandcider.se">andreas@brannlandcider.se</a>



# Exporting Finnish artisanal spirits worldwide

**A whisky distillery in rural Finland used RDP support to increase and diversify its production to meet growing demand from national and international markets, while also reducing its carbon footprint.**

Kyrö Distillery, based in Isokyrö, western Finland, started as a small artisanal whisky production facility in 2014. Given the growing demand for its product, in 2016 the owners decided to apply for EAFRD support from the Finnish Mainland RDP to boost the company's competitiveness in the global market by diversifying and increasing its production capacity.

The company used RDP Measure 4 – Investments in physical assets to set up a new production line for gin to allow for the parallel production of both gin and whisky. The distillery increased its bottling capacity from 1 700 to 4 500 bottles per day, renovated its facilities, including a visitor centre with showroom and restaurant, and improved its logistics. The total production capacity of both gin and whisky increased by 400 %.

Kyrö uses 100 % Finnish rye for its production. Locally-produced rye only meets part of the production needs, so the company is working with local farmers

to increase rye production in the area. Locally collected herbs are used for the gin production.

The company set up a heat recovery system to utilise heat and steam from the production line to heat up the distillery. This cuts both energy consumption and energy loss and thus lowers the carbon footprint of the company.

The use of local services and raw materials increases the company's resource efficiency and supports the local community.

The increased production capacity created nine new jobs, four of which are held by women under the age of 29. The company currently employs 30 people.

Kyrö exports to 28 countries in Europe, Asia and the US.

Every year the distillery's visitor centre receives over 14 000 visitors, who use other local businesses as well. In 2018, the annual turnover of the distillery and its visitor centre amounted to € 5 m.

The company is planning to increase its production even further whilst continuing to use local ingredients and creating new jobs for their community.

*“As a company we created our values first, and the brand around them. Now we are building our growth and our future on these same values.”*

**Miko Heinilä, Distillery Manager**  
Kyrö Distillery Company



© Kyrö Distillery

The use of local services and raw materials increases the company's resource efficiency and supports the local community.

<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Kyrö Distillery – Investing in improved production capacity</b>
Type of beneficiary	Private company
Period	2016 – 2018
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total budget: € 1 284 315</li> <li>• EAFRD contribution: € 107 882</li> <li>• National / Regional contribution: € 148 980</li> <li>• Private contribution: € 1 027 452</li> </ul>
RDP Measure	M04 – Investments in physical assets
Further info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/kyro-distillery-investing-improved-production-capacity_en">https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/kyro-distillery-investing-improved-production-capacity_en</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.kyrodistillery.com">http://www.kyrodistillery.com</a></li> </ul>
Contact	<a href="mailto:miika@kyrodistillery.com">miika@kyrodistillery.com</a>

# Transforming the Dutch poultry sector

**A Dutch company producing eggs and quality rooster meat is using EAFRD funding to combine animal welfare with sustainable practices and financial profitability.**

In the conventional egg laying poultry sector, young male chicks are disposed of by being gassed. But Dutch company Kipster recognised there were other possibilities.

Previously Kipster had been sourcing their laying hens from a rearing company which, in turn, bought its chicks from a hatchery. Kipster wanted the whole production chain to be as sustainable and animal-friendly as possible, but the hatchery and the rearing company that they had been using did not meet welfare certification standards.

The company applied for funding under Measure 4 – Investments in physical assets of the Dutch RDP to invest in a modular rearing system where hens and roosters can be reared together for a period of 17 weeks. The rearing is carried out according to the specifications of the Dutch ‘Beter Leven’ (‘Better life’) quality mark, which is awarded according to animal protection and welfare standards. After this period the roosters are slaughtered to produce high-quality meat.

Kipster’s total product concept has achieved excellent results. The company has signed a contract with the supermarket Lidl to provide the chain with its eggs over the next five years. The eggs can be sold for 23 cents each, which is higher than the average price.

Kipster is now developing a dedicated quality mark for rooster meat production in consultation with the Dutch organisation for the prevention of cruelty to animals (*Dierenbescherming*). Upon completion, Kipster will be able to charge a higher price for their rooster meat.

The new rearing system avoids the transportation of chicks from the hatchery to the rearing pen and then

of hens from the rearing pen to Kipster – a process that would have caused a lot of stress to the animals and the unnecessary emission of greenhouse gases.

Kipster co-founder Ruud Zanders is number two in the sustainable top 100 of the Dutch daily newspaper Trouw. The company plans to start a Kipster barn in Belgium.

*“Choose an integrated approach. Try to contribute to all aspects of world issues and work together with people outside your own circle of fellow farmers.”*

**Ruud Zanders**  
Co-founder of Kipster

Project Name	<b>Kipster – introducing a modular rearing system for eggs and poultry production</b>
Type of beneficiary	Private company
Period	2018 – 2019
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total budget: € 770 000</li> <li>• EAFRD contribution: € 125 000</li> <li>• National / Regional contribution: € 125 000</li> <li>• Private contribution: € 520 000</li> </ul>
RDP Measure	M04 – Investments in physical assets
Further info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/kipster-introducing-modular-rearing-system-eggs-and-poultry-production_en">https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/kipster-introducing-modular-rearing-system-eggs-and-poultry-production_en</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.kipster.nl">http://www.kipster.nl</a></li> </ul>
Contact	<a href="mailto:ei@kipster.nl">ei@kipster.nl</a>

© Valerie Kuypers



This project improves animal welfare and has increased the company's profitability.

# Adventure tourism in rural Ireland

**A start-up company specialising in outdoor sports activities used RDP support to purchase equipment and respond to increasing demand for adventure tourism.**

Jonathan O'Meara set up the micro-enterprise Mid Ireland Adventure to respond to the demand for adventure sports in a rural context. A former journalist, Jonathan drew on his marketing, PR, design and IT skills to create a logo and a brand for his company.

Central to his business strategy was the establishment of a reputable, trusted and respected brand that offers high-quality adventure sport activities with very high safety standards.

Jonathan invested heavily in up-skilling and gained several instructor certificates in adventure sports and water safety. He then used LEADER funding from his local LAG, Offaly Local Development Company, to invest in a range of adventure sports equipment respecting safety features and standards. This includes mountain bikes, paddle boards and wetsuits.

Since its first season in 2017, Mid Ireland Adventure offers both water and land-based activities in County Offaly. The business offers activities all year round. Water-based activities are more popular in summer months and mountain hikes and bike tours are more popular in the winter.

Environmental education is part of the ethos of Mid Ireland Adventure. It aims to inspire greater appreciation of the Offaly environment by providing information on local history and nature. The company also promotes increased water safety.

Mid Ireland Adventure is attracting an increasing number of local, national and international visitors to the Midlands area, including from Europe, the US and South America. These visitors bring benefits to the local economy since they also use local retail, hospitality and accommodation services.

The project created one full-time job (Jonathan is the main employee of the company) and one seasonal position.

*"...Offaly Local Development was always on hand to assist and offer excellent support and advice throughout the process... The LEADER grant was a huge help in the early stages, it allowed the business some breathing space in the first couple of years of operation."*

**Jonathan O'Meara**  
Mid Ireland Adventure



© Mid Ireland Adventure

This project is attracting an increasing number of local, national and international visitors to the Midlands area, with benefits to the local economy.

The company tailors its activities to extend the tourist season and to meet the needs of specific client groups and occasions, like birthday celebrations and bachelor/ette parties.

The company opened a new mountain bike shop in the nearby village of Kinnitty in winter 2019, creating another full-time job.

Project Name	Mid Ireland Adventure
Type of beneficiary	Private company
Period	2017 – 2018
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total budget: € 20 957</li> <li>• EAFRD contribution: € 6 580</li> <li>• National/Regional contribution: € 3 898</li> <li>• Private contribution: € 10 478</li> </ul>
RDP Measure	M19 – LEADER/CLLD
Further info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/mid-ireland-adventure_en">https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/mid-ireland-adventure_en</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.midirelandadventure.ie">http://www.midirelandadventure.ie</a></li> </ul>
Contact	<a href="mailto:info@midirelandadventure.ie">info@midirelandadventure.ie</a>

# Theme 2: Environment & Climate Action

**Sustainable management of the rich natural resources of Europe's rural areas is indispensable to preserve biodiversity and to address climate change. Efficient management of resources also contributes to the long-term economic and social sustainability of agriculture. This RIA 2019 category recognised the value of projects that are using EAFRD funding to preserve ecosystems, fight against climate change and reduce the impact of rural activities on the environment.**

The transition to a 'green economy' is an approach that seeks economic growth in harmony with environmental sustainability. Together with the restoration and preservation of ecosystems, these are key priorities of EU Rural Development policy.<sup>(1)</sup>

All over Europe, RDPs are preserving biodiversity and supporting resource efficiency and the shift towards low-carbon and climate resilient rural economies, for example through appropriate water and soil management and through the development of rural bioeconomy value chains. Agriculture is showing its potential to contribute to environment and climate action.

The five nominees for this RIA category show in practice how delivering on environmental and climate objectives can also go hand in hand with economic viability.

The Commission's CAP post 2020 proposals signal a higher level of environmental ambition to facilitate an effective response to the challenge of biodiversity conservation in European rural areas. Some inspiration for this may come from the projects that are using current RDP support to contribute to the restoration, preservation and enhancement of ecosystems.

*On page 11 you can read about the Kowalski Farm (Poland), using RDP support to implement a sustainable model of agriculture that combines the production of high-quality products and environmental protection.*

*Two Irish farmers are using RDP support to actively manage their farm to tackle biodiversity loss in their local area (page 12).*

Cooperation and knowledge sharing are crucial to ensure that good practices in sustainable resource management are developed which take into account the needs and views of different stakeholders and that successful initiatives can be disseminated and replicated elsewhere.

*The Finnish Mainland RDP is supporting cooperation and knowledge sharing to tackle eutrophication in a vulnerable lake system (page 13).*

*In France, a LEADER inter-territorial cooperation project is supporting the development of a system for verifying the traceability and sustainable management of wood from hedgerows (page 14).*

RDPs often offer the best option to allow the small-scale testing of environmentally friendly practices that may seem risky from a financial point of view. The success of these practices can raise awareness and generate community support and wider uptake.

*In the Balearic Islands (Spain), an RDP-supported pilot project (page 15) demonstrated the environmental and economic benefits of using solar energy for the primary sector.*



(1) See EU Rural Review 23 on 'Green Economy', [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/publications/eu-rural-review-23-green-economy-opportunities-rural-europe\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/publications/eu-rural-review-23-green-economy-opportunities-rural-europe_en)

# Sustainability meets quality production in rural Poland

**RDP support enabled a Polish farmer to implement a sustainable model of agriculture that combines the production of high-quality products and environmental protection.**



Krzysztof Kowalski owns a 130ha traditional family farm in the catchment area of the Turka river, in central Poland. The farm grows flax and oilseed rape which it presses into oil and sells directly to customers. The farm has also bred Polish 'Złotnicka' pigs for over ten years under the supervision of the University of Life Sciences in Poznań and is the country's largest breeder of this rare breed.

Krzysztof decided to develop a sustainable model of agriculture combining high-quality agricultural production with the protection of the environment. He applied for support from RDP Measure 10 – Agri-environment-climate of the Polish RDP.

Since 2015 the farm has been creating and maintaining midfield wetlands, ponds and buffer zones, cultivating catch crops and leguminous crops and testing fodder and water regularly for nitrates and pesticides.

Over 1 000 trees (beech, hornbeam) were planted along the Turka river and in between the fields, as buffer zones that prevent nutrient runoff and support biodiversity.

Winter cereals and rape are sown to cover the entire area along the river from autumn to spring, preventing the leaching of nitrogen and phosphorus.

Stubble crops are planted to shade the soil, reducing evaporation and soil erosion. The remains of organic matter are ploughed in to increase the amount of humus in the soil and thus its fertility.



© Kowalski Farm

The farm is the country's largest breeder of the rare Polish 'Złotnicka' pig breed.

The farm is largely self-sufficient, for example the cake residue from oil extraction is used as an ecological and nutritious feed for the animals. Good animal welfare conditions are maintained, manure and slurry are applied according to the terms and amounts defined by the Code of Good Agricultural Practice under the Nitrates Directive.

The farm's success is largely due to its holistic approach towards sustainable crop and pig production.

Krzysztof and his wife Hanna actively share their experience and knowledge with Polish and foreign farmers. The farm is a member of the National Network of Teaching Farms.

The farm's high-quality products have won many prizes in national and European competitions and are included in the National List of Traditional Products. The farm participates in agricultural fairs and local produce competitions and is often featured in specialist publications.

*"The Awards have bolstered my motivation and desire to share with other people how to live in harmony with nature."*

**Krzysztof Kowalski**  
Kowalski farm

Project Name	Kowalski Farm – Agri-environment-climate support for sustainable agriculture
Type of beneficiary	Individual farmer
Period	2015 – 2020
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Total budget: €33 618</li> <li>EAFRD contribution: €21 381</li> <li>National / Regional contribution: €12 237</li> </ul>
RDP Measure	M10 – Agri-environment-climate
Further info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/kowalski-farm-agri-environment-climate-support-sustainable-agriculture_en">https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/kowalski-farm-agri-environment-climate-support-sustainable-agriculture_en</a></li> <li><a href="http://www.olejekowalski.pl">http://www.olejekowalski.pl</a></li> </ul>
Contact	Krzysztof-kowalski64@wp.pl

# Actively managing a farm for biodiversity

**An Irish farm used RDP support to set up a project to tackle biodiversity loss in their area, providing species-specific habitat enhancement on their holding and community education.**

Donna Mullen and her husband Brian Keeley, owners of the Golashane farm in Kells, north-east Ireland, studied ecology and are passionate about helping preserve biodiversity. Thanks to the Green Low-Carbon Agri-Environment Scheme (GLAS) – the agri-environment scheme of the 2014-2020 Irish RDP – they designed cheap and easy methods to reverse habitat loss on their 43-acre farm, comprised of three large fields of intensive grassland with little plant or animal diversity.

Donna and Brian planted 15 acres of woodland, two orchards of heritage Irish apple trees, an acre of wildflowers for pollinators, approximately one km of hedgerows and 7.5 acres of bird seed crop – oats, linseed and kale – to increase the number of overwintering birds and rodent eaters such as buzzards.

Deadwood habitats were created to provide shelter for insects. More than an acre of wetland was created to provide a habitat for amphibians and act as a carbon sink, cleaning the water which runs off the fields.

In 2016 an artificial badger sett was built with the support of the local community.

This way their working farm became also a nature reserve. Many new species of birds and mammals are now living on the farm, including 22 species of birds, newts and pine martins. A few hedgehogs reintroduced from the local hedgehog hospital are now breeding throughout the area and the farm is now an official wildlife release site.

The farm developed bat box hibernation plans that are now being used throughout Ireland when repairing traditional farm buildings under the guidance of the Heritage Council.

The farm also engages in community education on farm wildlife and has already trained about 300 people, both on site and via the festival ‘Moynalty Goes Wild’. A further 400 people attended the 2016 online festival talks. About one third of the events’ audience are children.

The farm collaborates with the Irish Wildlife Trust to advise on farm nature reserves to many groups. As a result, a network of farm nature reserves has been established in the area.

The Rural Inspiration Awards motivated Donna and Brian to, “become bigger and better!” They plan to apply for LEADER funding to build bird hides, owl and pine martin boxes.

*“The Rural Inspiration Awards gives a status to biodiversity which is beyond monetary value.”*

**Donna Mullen**  
Golashane Farm Nature Reserve



© Golashane Farm Nature Reserve

The project holders designed cheap and easy methods to reverse habitat loss on their farm.

<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Golashane Farm Nature Reserve</b>
Type of beneficiary	Farmers
Period	2014 – 2020
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total budget: € 7 200</li> <li>• EAFRD contribution: € 4 200</li> <li>• Private contribution: € 2 000</li> <li>• Other sources: € 1 000</li> </ul>
RDP Measure	M10 - Agri-environment-climate
Further info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/golashane-farm-nature-reserve_en">https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/golashane-farm-nature-reserve_en</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.wildlifesurveys.net">http://www.wildlifesurveys.net</a></li> </ul>
Contact	<a href="mailto:donnamullen@wildlifesurveys.net">donnamullen@wildlifesurveys.net</a>

# Cleaning a lake system in Finland

**A Finnish NGO used EAFRD funding to create 64 new wetland sites to improve water quality in the Pien-Saimaa lake system, generating environmental and economic benefits.**

The Pien-Saimaa lake system in south-eastern Finland covers approximately 120 km<sup>2</sup>. Shallows and slow water circulation make the lake system vulnerable to eutrophication – excessive algae growth – and have a negative impact on the lake’s potential to be used, either for professional or recreational purposes.

In 2015 the local NGO Pien-Saimaan Suojeluyhdistys applied for funding from RDP Measure 7 – Basic services and village renewal of the Finnish Mainland RDP to launch the project ‘Pusa’. The initial goal was to create 15 new wetland sites to protect the lake system’s water quality.

Micro-organisms in the wetland naturally purify the water from different pollutants and excess of nutrients. Wetlands also act as biodiversity hotspots and carbon sinks, benefitting soil quality and contributing to the fight against climate change.

The project holders organised a series of training sessions with a wetland expert for local land owners and constructors to help them plan, create and maintain wetland sites. Water protection plans were developed, including trenches in the forests which prevent nutrient runoff from the forest into the lake.

An extensive network of stakeholders – municipalities, SMEs, private citizens, foundations and other third sector actors – got to work together, often as volunteers. Public events were organised, some gathering over 400 participants.

*“In the Finnish countryside volunteer work is a magnificent power to push things forward.”*

**Antti Happonen**  
Lappeenranta Municipality

In the end, 64 new wetland sites were created using funding from both EAFRD and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). In synergy with other projects in the area, they greatly contributed to improving the water quality in some areas of the lake system.

The improved water quality has generated new professional and recreational activities. This has brought economic benefits to the local fisheries sector, boating, cottage rental and other service providers.

The project has generated a number of other EU and private projects in the same water system and its approach has already been repeated in five other nearby water systems.



© PUSA

This project brought together an extensive network of stakeholders – municipalities, SMEs, private citizens, foundations and other third sector actors.

*“We are extremely proud of our project. We started with practically nothing – no financing or experience. But we networked and got support from authorities and other NGOs, and these even led to new projects.”*

**Marjut Sassi**  
Project coordinator

Project Name	PUSA project – Clean the lake Pien-Saimaa
Type of beneficiary	NGO
Period	2015 – 2017
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total budget: € 139 000</li> <li>• EAFRD contribution: € 46 704</li> <li>• National / Regional contribution: € 42 256</li> <li>• Private contribution: € 27 800</li> <li>• ERDF funding: € 22 240</li> </ul>
RDP Measure	M07 – Basic services & village renewal
Further info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/pusa-project-clean-lake-pien-saimaa_en">https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/pusa-project-clean-lake-pien-saimaa_en</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.piensaimaa.fi">http://www.piensaimaa.fi</a></li> </ul>
Contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="mailto:marjut.sassi@kymp.net">marjut.sassi@kymp.net</a></li> <li>• <a href="mailto:antti.happonen@lappeenranta.fi">antti.happonen@lappeenranta.fi</a></li> </ul>

# Managing French hedge wood sustainably

**Three French cooperatives used EAFRD support to develop a label that certifies the quality and traceability of products sourced from sustainably-managed hedgerow trees.**

Today, there are nearly 600 000 km of hedgerows in agricultural areas in France, representing nearly 65 million m<sup>3</sup> of wood in total. The demand for renewable energy is increasing and biomass boilers are becoming increasingly popular. This attracts new companies to the market who offer to cut down trees, shred and remove the wood at competitive rates.

However, currently there is no system in place to ensure the sustainable management of hedgerows in agroforestry. Farm managers responding to public tenders for supplying wood cannot provide the necessary certificates to prove the sustainable management of the wood resources on their land.

Three cooperatives from different French regions – Normandy, Brittany and Pays de la Loire – joined forces to respond to this situation. They used LEADER funding through an inter-territorial cooperation project to develop a certification system for wood produced through sustainable hedgerow management.

The system is co-designed by farmers and traders and has explicit specifications for both sides. It includes a tool to geolocate the origin of every certified lot of wood and a tool that supports hedgerow management actions on the ground. It also includes a tool to help farmers establish farm-wide management plans, to see which interventions are required for each hedgerow.

Today, more than 200 people are involved in the project including inhabitants of the respective LAG areas, agricultural producers, traders, territorial development agents. Two project manager jobs have

already been created and more jobs will be created in future to support the development of the label.

This certification system has a high replicability potential and the aim is to disseminate it to other areas within France and Europe.

*“Before, I saw hedges as a constraint. Now I understand their importance for my farmland and I know that if I maintain them properly, I will have an additional source of income on top of better-quality production.”*

**Jordan Vacquerel**

Farmer and new producer of sustainably managed hedgerows

<b>Project Name</b>	<b>A certification label for the sustainable management of hedgerows</b>
Type of beneficiary	Cooperatives
Period	2017 – 2020
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total budget: € 439 631</li> <li>• EAFRD contribution: € 178 459</li> <li>• National / Regional contribution: € 130 610</li> <li>• Private contribution: € 130 561</li> </ul>
RDP Measure	M19 – LEADER
Further info	<a href="https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/certification-label-sustainable-management-hedgerows_en">https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/certification-label-sustainable-management-hedgerows_en</a>
Contact	<a href="mailto:e.roussel@petr-paysdubocage.fr">e.roussel@petr-paysdubocage.fr</a>

© A certification label for the sustainable management of hedgerows



Today, more than 200 people are involved in the project including inhabitants of the respective LAG areas, agricultural producers, traders and territorial development agents.



# Promoting the use of solar energy by the primary sector in the Balearic Islands

**EAFRD funding was used to get expert advice and technical support to produce solar energy in two Spanish islands and raise awareness about its environmental and economic advantages.**

The Balearic Islands (Spain) import 96 % of the energy they consume, mainly from fossil fuels. As a result, energy on the islands is expensive which means increased production costs in the agricultural sector. The annual energy cost is estimated at around one billion EUR, which is equal to 3.8 % of the Islands' GDP. Renewable energy represents only 3.5 % of the energy consumed in the Balearic Islands, while on the Spanish mainland the share of wind and solar energy is 21 %.

The LAG Eivissa-Formentera wanted to encourage local businesses to invest in photovoltaic systems for the production of electricity for self-consumption. This was hoped to lead to decreased reliance on imported energy, resulting in climate and economic benefits.

The project involved two slaughterhouses and three agricultural cooperatives on the islands of Eivissa and Formentera.

Funding from RDP Measure 19 of the Balearic Islands' RDP was used to get expert advice. The experts conducted on-site visits to collect detailed information about the energy consumption of the five organisations involved and installed energy consumption meters to assess real-time electricity consumption profiles.

The experts drafted feasibility studies for each of the five entities covering the technical, economic and environmental aspects of their energy usage. The proposed solutions enabled the five participating entities to cover between 26 % and 67 % of their energy needs through solar power.

All five participating entities proceeded to implement the measures proposed in the feasibility studies.

The project raised other cooperatives' awareness of the possibilities offered by solar power and 55 additional studies are planned for other farms and agri-food businesses in the two islands. Local fishing organisations have also shown interest in having similar studies for their buildings.

Some site managers are now thinking about what else they can do to take better advantage of the generated photovoltaic energy, for example by changing working hours and investing in electric cars.



© LAG Eivissa-Formentera

The five participating cooperatives are able to cover between 26 % and 67 % of their energy needs through solar power.

*"I was surprised by the simplicity and speed of the installation."*

**Pep Mayans**  
Cooperative Agroevivissa S. Coop.

Project Name	<b>SOLAR ENERGY – Promoting the use of solar energy by the primary sector in the Balearic islands</b>
Type of beneficiary	LAG
Period	2017
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total budget: €21 418</li> <li>• EAFRD contribution: €17 134</li> <li>• National / Regional contribution: €4 284</li> </ul>
RDP Measure	M19 – LEADER
Further info	<a href="https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/solar-energy-promoting-use-solar-energy-primary-sector-balearic-islands_en">https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/solar-energy-promoting-use-solar-energy-primary-sector-balearic-islands_en</a>
Contact	<a href="mailto:pepmartinez@conselldeivissa.es">pepmartinez@conselldeivissa.es</a>

# Theme 3:

## Rural revitalisation

**Supporting rural business and services means increasing the likelihood of successful, self-sustaining economic activities in rural areas and ensuring a better quality of life for rural communities. The projects included in this RIA 2019 category are inspiring examples of the use of EAFRD funding to maintain and generate new rural services, boost the rural economy and improve the connection of rural areas with the wider world, contributing directly to EU Rural Development Policy objectives.**

Rural areas across Europe are undergoing rapid changes. These can pose risks but also create real opportunities for these areas to play a new and distinct role in society. Vibrant rural communities refuse to simply wait for change to happen to them. Instead they proactively explore innovative solutions to the challenges they face and try to seize new opportunities.

Through innovation in rural businesses and basic service provision, rural areas can play an important role in the transition to a modern, greener, and more caring society. In particular, the application of modern digital technologies offers new opportunities for rural businesses and can enhance the provision of services in fields such as e-health, online education, mobility and local energy production.

A good internet connection is therefore an essential basic service to drive today's rural communities. In this respect, RDPs can offer versatile tools for public authorities, the private sector and communities to overcome the digital divide in remote, mountainous, island or peripheral regions.

*In sparsely populated areas of Finland, the project 'Kuitua pohjoiseen' - High-Speed Broadband Network in the North (page 17) provides information to help villagers set up cooperatives and apply for public grants to build their own high-speed broadband networks.*

*The project Broadband Network Development in Rural 'White Areas' of Greece aims to close the digital divide in remote and sparsely populated rural 'white areas', lacking any Internet connection (page 18).*

Meeting and discussion with like-minded people often triggers new business ideas. Coworking spaces can create opportunities for cooperation and innovation in rural areas and also offer good Internet connections.

They can help attract new professionals to settle in the countryside.

*Cowocat\_Rural (page 19) is using RDP support to set up coworking spaces that create opportunities for cooperation and innovation, promoting coworking and teleworking in Spanish rural areas.*

Networking and peer to peer learning can help start-up enterprises connect with others, collaborate and share – both within and outside their own locality. This can increase employment opportunities, improve skills and strengthen the local economy.

*On page 20, learn about the GrowBiz approach to enterprise support, encouraging Scottish rural businesses to connect, collaborate, share and network with other enterprises in their local community and further afield.*

RDPs can support rural citizens, and especially young people, in testing innovative business ideas, so that they can fine-tune their concept, test out suitable locations and create a first customer base with minimum risk.

*In a small town in Austria, EAFRD funding was used to develop a Pop-up-Shop concept that offers flexible rental options to pop-up shops (page 21).*



© Kelly McIntyre (GrowBiz)

# High-speed broadband in rural Finland

**EAFRD funding helped villagers access high-speed broadband networks in a remote and sparsely populated rural area of northern Finland.**



Until recently, high-speed broadband infrastructure in Lapland was developed through small individual projects. However, these solutions tended to provide only very weak internet connectivity and entirely ignored the more sparsely populated areas. A systematic and coordinated approach was required and so the inhabitants of small villages decided to take action themselves.

The five LEADER LAGs in Lapland all joined forces and, under the coordination of the LAG Tunturi-Lappi, developed the project 'Kuitua Pohjoiseen', receiving funding from Measure 1 – Knowledge transfer and information actions of the Finnish Mainland RDP.

The project involved 20 cooperatives of villagers across Lapland and started with the collection of examples of successful high-speed broadband initiatives that could be replicated across the region. The project motivated the villages to participate and to work together and encouraged the authorities to speak the same language as the villagers, facilitating their access to funding opportunities. Attention was given to involve the indigenous Sami people in all the project actions.

The project also acted as an intermediary, helping the cooperatives learn from each other and negotiate the necessary network arrangements with service operators.



© Picasa

The project helped secure access to high speed internet to more than 30 villages – over 3 000 people – in Lapland.

The project helped secure access to high speed internet to more than 30 villages – over 3 000 people – in Lapland.

*“The project has been a tremendous help for us living in rural villages. We now have reliable internet access, prior to the project we did not know that this was possible. New families have moved to our villages, and they are able to work and study remotely. Even the youth are excited because the connections are stable.”*

**Katri Jylhä**

Secretary of the Kinisjärvi-Vuoma village association

The project organised 70 events across the region, with 1 432 participants. The project staff contacted over 1 700 people through door-to-door promotion.

The high-speed broadband network will help exchange and store online the area's cultural heritage and local knowledge, preserving it for future generations.

The experience of 'Kuitua Pohjoiseen' is continuing with a new EAFRD-funded project ('Kuitu kylässä', 2018-2020) coordinating village networks and researching the impact of high-speed broadband on village vitality.

Project Name	<b>Kuitua pohjoiseen – High-Speed Broadband Network in the North</b>
Type of beneficiary	LAG
Period	2015 – 2018
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total budget: € 300 355</li> <li>• EAFRD contribution: € 126 149</li> <li>• National / Regional contribution: € 174 206</li> </ul>
RDP Measure	M01 – Knowledge transfer & information actions
Further info	<a href="https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/kuitua-pohjoiseen-high-speed-broadband-network-north_en">https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/kuitua-pohjoiseen-high-speed-broadband-network-north_en</a>
Contact	<a href="mailto:nina-maria.moykkynen@tunturileader.fi">nina-maria.moykkynen@tunturileader.fi</a>

# Tackling the digital divide in rural Greece

**EAFRD support enabled a national intervention aiming to close the digital divide in remote and sparsely populated rural white areas in Greece.**

‘White areas’ – areas lacking internet infrastructure – are usually remote, mountainous, island or peripheral regions. Bridging the digital divide can have positive impacts on local businesses and social activities in those areas.

The private company Information Society S.A. and the General Secretariat for Telecommunications and Post (GSTP) of the Greek Ministry of Digital Governance joined forces to develop a project addressing the digital divide in sparsely populated areas of Greece.

The Rural Broadband Project started in 2014 with the aim of setting up a high-capacity broadband network in mountainous and island areas in the regions of Central Macedonia, Central Greece, the South Aegean and Piraeus in the Attica Region.

The project combined funding from RDP Measure 7 – Basic services & village renewal (29% of the budget) of the Greek RDP with funding from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

The project benefitted almost 45% of the national territory, connecting 19 prefectures in northern regions, 15 in the centre and 17 in southern Greece. It provided connectivity to 5 077 villages or settlements in mountainous and insular rural areas, populated by over 525 000 residents.

Approximately 16 000 households in former rural white areas are now connected to a high-capacity broadband network. The network offers internet access at a bandwidth up to 30 Mbps, with the capacity to increase its speed up to 50 Mbps.

The extension of broadband networks to rural areas provides new opportunities for the agricultural sector. These include the development of precision farming and the use of Big Data for climate and agriculture.

Access to broadband also fosters small businesses, enables remote working and provides instant access to agricultural commodity price data, increasing the competitiveness of rural businesses. It can also impact positively on sectors like culture and tourism.

*“Rural broadband encourages Greek people to live in rural areas and provides technologies that improve their quality of life.”*

**Ministry of Digital Governance**

The Rural Inspiration Awards boosted the project’s popularity and encouraged further private and public investments in telecom infrastructure across the country, including through the use of ERDF and EAFRD funding.

<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Broadband Network Development in Rural ‘White Areas’ of Greece</b>
Type of beneficiary	Private company
Period	2014 – 2019
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total budget: € 1 39 506 050</li> <li>• EAFRD contribution: € 29 751 969</li> <li>• National / Regional contribution: € 7 437 992</li> <li>• Private contribution: € 38 654 662</li> <li>• ERDF contribution: € 63 661 427</li> </ul>
RDP Measure	M07 – Basic services and village renewal
Further info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/broadband-network-development-rural-white-areas-greece_en">https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/broadband-network-development-rural-white-areas-greece_en</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.nga.gov.gr">http://www.nga.gov.gr</a></li> </ul>
Contact	<a href="mailto:g.pantos@mindigital.gr">g.pantos@mindigital.gr</a>



© Nikos Karanikolas

Approximately 16 000 households in former rural white areas are now connected to a high-capacity broadband network.

# Coworking to boost entrepreneurship in rural Spain

**Coworking spaces set up in rural areas through EAFRD funding can generate opportunities for cooperation and innovation while attracting new professionals to settle in the countryside.**

Coworking is a way of working that allows independent professionals, entrepreneurs and SMEs from different sectors to share the same physical and virtual workspace. It can both improve connections and help save costs.

The LAG Consorci Intercomarcal d'Iniciatives Socioeconòmiques (from Ribera d'Ebre in Catalonia) thought that rural coworking spaces could stimulate economic activity and help maintain the population in rural areas of Spain where outmigration is a real problem. They wanted to provide opportunities for professionals to work in a collaborative space without needing to move away from a rural environment.

The project 'Cowocat\_Rural' used EAFRD funding to set up a network of coworking and professional spaces and encourage participants to work together to share ideas and best practices. The organisers were committed to providing advice on rural coworking and the creation of new spaces. They also offered a technical assistance service (with home visits or through Skype meetings) aimed at supporting people or organisations who are interested in coworking and/or in creating a coworking space in other Catalan rural areas.

The project developed a RuralPass, a 'Coworking Rural Visa' that promotes and facilitates the mobility of professionals between the rural coworking spaces and also between rural and urban coworking spaces.



© Cowocat\_Rural

The project provides opportunities for professionals to work in a collaborative space without needing to move away from a rural environment.

The project actively encourages networking and training. It already organised 12 networking meetings among rural coworkers, with more than 300 attendees. More than 130 professional coworkers are currently part of the network.

'Cowocat\_Rural' participates in Catalunya Coworking Days that offer training and opportunities to exchange experiences.

The project also runs a training programme in a local high school to promote the coworking concept among its students.

The project has since been promoted in national and international publications as an example of good practice.

*"Rural coworking has allowed me to increase my quality of life, improving my work-life balance and giving me more time for myself, while also allowing me to establish new collaborations with my coworking colleagues."*

**Pilar Andres Munté**  
Coworker

Project Name	<b>Cowocat_Rural – Network of coworking spaces in rural Catalonia</b>
Type of beneficiary	LAG
Period	2014 – 2021
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Total budget: €319852</li> <li>EAFRD contribution: €139775</li> <li>National/Regional contribution: €180077</li> </ul>
RDP Measure	M19 – LEADER/CLLD
Further info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/cowocatrural-network-coworking-spaces-rural-catalonia_en">https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/cowocatrural-network-coworking-spaces-rural-catalonia_en</a></li> <li><a href="http://www.cowocatrural.cat">http://www.cowocatrural.cat</a></li> </ul>
Contact	<a href="mailto:info@cowocatrural.cat">info@cowocatrural.cat</a>

# Supporting Scottish rural businesses

**An EAFRD-funded project provides a comprehensive support service for new and existing enterprises in rural Scotland, leading to increased employment, improved skills and a stronger local economy.**

Perth and Kinross is one of 32 council areas of Scotland, United Kingdom and has a population of around 100 000 people.

Many local enterprises are disadvantaged simply because of their location, and they are unable to access more centralised business support services provided by the public sector because of lack of transport and the expense and time involved in travelling. Start-up and micro rural businesses need extra support as they face unique challenges, including poor connectivity and skills gaps.

GrowBiz, an independent community-based organisation, aimed to address this issue in collaboration with local partners from the public sector. It applied to the Perth & Kinross LAG for LEADER support for its 'Enterprising Rural Perthshire' (ERP) project.

The project started in 2016 with awareness events, initial one-to-one meetings with local businesses and further development of the existing GrowBiz mentoring programme. Since then it has been offering one-to-one advice, peer support, learning sessions, training workshops and networking. In March 2017 it was a partner in a successful pilot micro-grant fund for tourism, care, niche manufacturing and creative sectors.

The ERP project supported more than 700 individuals. It helped create more than 200 new businesses and provided support for over 400 existing enterprises. The project was particularly beneficial for start-ups and micro-businesses.

Three new women's enterprise networks were set up and now meet every other month.

The project reached out to 2 500 attendees through 200+ learning and networking events and trained 45 new small-business mentors.

*"It's fantastic to see the hard work put in by the mentoring team being recognised, this project perfectly demonstrates the ethos of the LEADER Programme."*

**Iain Matheson**  
Vice-chair of the Perth & Kinross LAG



© Kelly McIntyre (GrowBiz)

The project was particularly beneficial for start-ups and micro-businesses.

GrowBiz has now launched another LEADER project, 'Making Rural Business Digital', which in addition to supporting rural enterprises with digital skills and learning, is developing ten pilot Smart Villages in Perth and Kinross, along with five enterprise hotspots offering co-working space and connectivity.

Participation in the Rural Inspiration Awards gave GrowBiz added confidence and impetus, and also extended its network of contacts and potential collaborators across Europe.

Project Name	<b>GrowBiz – Enterprising Rural Perthshire</b>
Type of beneficiary	Private company
Period	2016 – 2019
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total budget: €536 988</li> <li>• EAFRD contribution: €356 664</li> <li>• Private contribution: €180 324</li> </ul>
RDP Measure	M19 – LEADER/CLLD
Further info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/growbiz-enterprising-rural-perthshire_en">https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/growbiz-enterprising-rural-perthshire_en</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://growbiz.co.uk">https://growbiz.co.uk</a></li> </ul>
Contact	<a href="mailto:jackie@growbiz.co.uk">jackie@growbiz.co.uk</a>

# Revitalising an Austrian town

EAFRD funding was used to develop flexible rental options for pop-up shops and helped revitalise a small Austrian town's centre.

Enns is a small rural town in Upper Austria. Due to the increase of large supermarkets and shopping centres in the nearby capital Linz, in Enns – like in other small towns – many vacant retail spaces remain empty, while rental prices are set too high, further discouraging new businesses. The range of services and products available shrinks and customers are drawn even more to bigger shopping centres in urban areas.



To break this vicious cycle, Enns Tourism and City Marketing Ltd. developed a pop-up shop concept for the town centre. The project used LEADER funding from its local LAG Regionalentwicklungsverein Zukunft Linz Land to make use of vacant sales space, initially on a temporary basis, providing new businesses with an opportunity to launch new ideas, to test out the location and to attract new customers with minimum risk.

The project included the development of a specific interior and exterior shop design to brand the shops, a comprehensive marketing strategy and ongoing support for both landlords and tenants. It also included the operational and administrative management of associated events.

The internal design system adapts quickly and flexibly to any room size or layout, adjusting the setting to the needs of the tenant and without requiring construction works.



© Zeitgeist Enns

The project provided new businesses with an opportunity to launch new ideas, to test out the location and to attract new customers with minimum risk.

Possible tenants can choose between a short-term use option for several days or a long-term use option for approximately one to six months, depending on the nature of the business and the time and finance available.

Several short-term pop-up stores opened in Enns. Nine pop-up stores were let on a long-term basis and some of the businesses set up in the frame of the project have settled permanently in the spaces they rent.

Customer traffic has increased by 43 % in the year 2018 on the Linzer Straße promenade, the main shopping street in the centre of Enns. New and old business owners keep organising micro-events across the town centre.

The project has resulted in fewer vacant retail spaces in the town centre and its experience is highly transferrable to similar rural areas.

*"I believe that this project leads the way to revitalise town centres sustainably. Currently there are seven more destinations throughout Austria which are interested in the concept. Suitable destinations will receive our knowhow in revitalising inner towns."*

**Franz Stefan Karlinger**  
Mayor of Enns

Project Name	Zeitgeist Enns – Pop-up-Shops Concept
Type of beneficiary	Private company
Period	2016 – 2019
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Total budget: €126121</li> <li>EAFRD contribution: €40359</li> <li>National / Regional contribution: €10090</li> <li>Private contribution: €75673</li> </ul>
RDP Measure	M19 – LEADER/CLLD
Further info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/zeitgeist-enns-pop-shops-concept_en">https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/zeitgeist-enns-pop-shops-concept_en</a></li> <li><a href="http://www.popupstores.at">http://www.popupstores.at</a></li> </ul>
Contact	<a href="mailto:management@tse.at">management@tse.at</a>

# Theme 4: Social inclusion

**Promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas is one of the EU Rural Development priorities. This RIA 2019 category recognised projects using EAFRD funding to, amongst others, fight digital exclusion, promote social farming, combat energy poverty, contribute to the integration of migrants and encourage the involvement of youth in the public life of rural areas.**

Social inclusion is a long-term process that often exceeds the timeframe of formal programmes. However, RDPs can support initiatives that combine an immediate response to the needs of specific social groups with a long-term vision for inclusion that is about the whole community.

The projects shortlisted for this RIA category show the importance of a partnership approach and ongoing communication and exchange amongst key stakeholders. These initiatives are using RDPs effectively to address specific disadvantages in rural areas, including demographic changes, a weaker labour market, limited access to education, energy poverty, remoteness and geographical isolation.

Energy poverty is an increasing challenge in Europe. Affording proper thermal conditions seems to be particularly hard for some people living in rural locations, mainly due to generally lower incomes and poor housing.<sup>(1)</sup> RDPs can support rural communities in devising collective solutions.

*The French association Enerterre promoted the renovation of traditional houses for the benefit of people in fuel poverty. The renovation works are carried out by volunteers under the supervision of building professionals (page 23).*

Some rural areas are facing important demographic changes such as out-migration of young people, women and people with higher qualifications or an increasing number of migrants from a different cultural background. Strategies to tackle these issues vary, but a bottom-up approach that empowers local individuals and communities is key to success.

*'Ny på landet' – Rural newcomers (page 24) is a project that supports the integration of young migrants into Swedish society and is organised by young migrants themselves.*

*Young people from rural Finland and Scotland came together to create a Youth Manifesto, outlining ways in which local actors can engage young people in their activities (page 25).*

The needs of particularly vulnerable groups of society can be met through very different approaches: from activities directly linked to agriculture, like social farming, to digital technologies. Here again, the empowerment of the participants and the overall community is a major factor contributing to success.

*In Belgium, the Nos Oignons association organises collective and individual activities on farms for people who suffer from mental health and/or social issues. Read about this successful EAFRD-funded initiative on page 26.*

*A Polish LAG organised a series of tailored workshops to combat digital exclusion among people over 50 years old (page 27).*

(1) European Parliament, DG Internal Policies, Proceedings of the Workshop 'Energy Poverty' – Brussels, 9 November 2016, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2017/607350/IPOL\\_STU\(2017\)607350\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2017/607350/IPOL_STU(2017)607350_EN.pdf)





# Addressing energy poverty in rural France

An association used EAFRD funding to bring together local resources, including people's skills and time, to renovate rural homes lacking essential energy services.



Rural Normandy's traditional houses form an exceptional built heritage. However, these very old buildings are deteriorating and do not offer adequate warmth for their inhabitants. Renovation costs may be too expensive for low-income households.

The Enerterre association addressed this issue using LEADER funding from their local LAGs Pays de Coutances, Pays du Cotentin and Pays de Saint Lois. Using participative working methods, they gathered local volunteers to carry out building renovation works under the guidance of a paid building professional. The use of volunteers lowered the overall costs, offering an affordable option to households with lower incomes.

The project used local natural materials (lime, straw and flax) which are more compatible with old traditional buildings.

Between June 2016 and December 2017, 56 low-income households were identified as potential beneficiaries. These households were either identified by social workers, local elected officials, word of mouth, or they applied for support on their own. They were all facing difficult situations (e.g. family, professional or financial problems) and mostly experienced energy poverty or social isolation.

The project included visits to assess the buildings' conditions, learn about individual household's situation and needs, and define together the renovation plan. Volunteers as well as beneficiaries were involved in the works. Enerterre also offered advice on public funding, raised awareness about energy efficiency, eco-renovation and local materials, and put the beneficiaries in contact with the necessary craftsmen.

In two years, 14 households underwent renovation and another 18 received advice.

The project allowed the households to save on average 65.5% of the renovation costs.

The project also developed social cohesion and solidarity in the communities. Volunteers offered more than 6 000 hours of their time to the project and thus acquired or improved their skills and knowledge in eco-renovation. Beneficiaries committed to helping other home owners in return for the help they received.

Enerterre generated a turnover of €60 412 for local craftsmen.



© Enerterre

The project allowed low-income households to save on average 65.5% of the renovation costs.

Since November 2017, Enerterre has been part of an Erasmus+ project called 'HELPS', which is spreading its experience in four countries (Spain, Greece, Italy and France).

*"I had just lost my job. I was having a hard time and losing confidence. Thanks to Enerterre, I realised that I was able to do something, and also that I wasn't the only person in this kind of situation. This experience restored my self-confidence."*

**Catherine**  
Home owner

The Rural Inspiration Awards have motivated the Enerterre staff and increased the project's visibility and local recognition, also in the local press.

Project Name	Enerterre – Fighting against energy poverty
Type of beneficiary	NGO
Period	2016 – 2017
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Total budget: €41 496</li> <li>EAFRD contribution: €33 197</li> <li>Private contribution: €8 299</li> </ul>
RDP Measure	M19 – LEADER/CLLD
Further info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/enerterre-fighting-against-energy-poverty_en">https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/enerterre-fighting-against-energy-poverty_en</a></li> <li><a href="http://www.helloasso.com/associations/association-enerterre">http://www.helloasso.com/associations/association-enerterre</a></li> </ul>
Contact	<a href="mailto:laubert@enerterre.fr">laubert@enerterre.fr</a>

# Supporting migrants' integration in rural Sweden

**EAFRD funding supported a project helping young migrants integrate into Swedish society through nature-based activities and outdoor learning.**

Moving to a new country comes with a host of challenges – from weird cultural quirks, learning a new language to finding a job and a place to live. It can take many years of hard work to get established. At times, many migrants find themselves vulnerable, homesick and without direction.

'Ny på landet' ('Rural newcomers') began in 2011 as an interregional cooperation project between three LEADER areas in Sweden to help ease young migrants' journey into integration. At the time, the project focused on employment, housing, culture and leisure, providing a safe, nurturing environment, particularly for young asylum seekers.

The project then developed a specific focus on nature and outdoor living, introducing young migrants (16 to 25-year-old) to nature-based activities and outdoor recreation, including mushroom and berry picking, orienteering and outdoor winter sports. The participants also learn about safety in nature, citizen's participation, Swedish norms, unspoken rules and social codes.

Some former participants receive certified training in leadership, group dynamics, conflict resolution and meeting techniques and become team leaders. They organise new camps for other participants and are very much involved in all aspects of the project.

The project is based on the participants' own experiences as they face the issues associated with integrating into Swedish society. The project empowers the participants, broadens their perspective and encourages them to be creative, learn new things and

meet new people. It also strengthens their CVs and facilitates their search for a job.

LEADER has helped the project connect with the private and public sector as well as rural community organisations. For example, camp food and supplies are purchased at a rural grocery store. Municipalities help recruit participants and rural community organisations provide expertise and know-how on camp locations, local events and attractions.

Before being nominated under the Rural Inspiration Awards, 'Ny på landet' won the 2017 Swedish Rural Awards.

*"The ENRD Rural Inspiration Awards gave 'Ny på landet' and its stakeholders – mostly volunteers – an EU-wide recognition. That what we do matters. And it is a nice feeling."*

**Jeanette Uner**  
Folkungaland LAG



© Ny på landet

The project helps ease young migrants' journey into integration.

<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Ny på landet – Rural newcomers</b>
Type of beneficiary	LAG
Period	2018 – 2020
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total budget: € 159936</li> <li>• EAFRD contribution: € 79968</li> <li>• National / Regional contribution: € 27 189</li> <li>• Local contribution: € 52 779</li> </ul>
RDP Measure	M19 – LEADER/CLLD
Further info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/ny-pa-landet-rural-newcomers_en">https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/ny-pa-landet-rural-newcomers_en</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.facebook.com/NypalandetOrg">http://www.facebook.com/NypalandetOrg</a></li> </ul>
Contact	<a href="mailto:jeanette@leaderfolkungaland.se">jeanette@leaderfolkungaland.se</a>

# Engaging young people in rural Finland and Scotland

**Young people from Finland and Scotland got together to develop and co-design a youth manifesto that outlines ways to engage young people in social and environmental activities.**

Rural areas are suffering from out-migration, especially that of young people. Offering young people a chance to have an impact or influence in their own local area and engaging them in locally important actions can help prevent out-migration and create long-term living opportunities in rural areas.

Finnish LAG Rieska developed an international cooperation project with the objective of bringing together young people from around Europe to share knowledge and experiences of living in rural communities, to discover common themes and to work together to create more opportunities for them in rural areas. The project used RDP Measure 7 – Basic services and village renewal of the Finnish Mainland RDP and started in 2018.

The project brought together LEADER groups and young people from Finland and Scotland and helped them develop and co-design a youth manifesto that outlines ways in which communities, protected areas and environmental organisations can meaningfully engage young people.

The project’s goal is to find ways to respond to the needs of the young people as expressed in the manifesto and to involve them in this work.

The project has already involved more than 40 young people from all over Europe.

Youth boards have now been formed in Scotland and, via the Europarc Federation, the model has been replicated in Germany and Italy. LEADER youth funds are a great way to support young people in

creating their own projects. The project holders want to disseminate these good practices to LEADER groups across Europe as widely as possible, including through participation in ENRD events, and to make youth involvement a common LEADER practice.

*“It is so nice to be able to act upon the issues that really affect us and our lives.”*

**Eveliina**  
Participant from Finland

*“...we need to make sure these rural areas are places of opportunity for young people.”*

**Katie**  
Participant from Scotland

*“...The Committee congratulated us on the Manifesto and our presentation, but we were after something more concrete to help move things forward. The Authority now agreed to create a working group... Woop! Woop!”*

**Ethan, Cat and Matthew**  
Participants from Scotland

© Youth Board and Youth Manifesto



Engaging young people in locally important actions can help prevent out-migration.

<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Youth Board and Youth Manifesto</b>
Type of beneficiary	LAG
Period	2018 – 2020
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total budget: € 148 438</li> <li>• EAFRD contribution: € 62 344</li> <li>• National / Regional contribution: € 56 406</li> <li>• Private contribution: € 29 688</li> </ul>
RDP Measure	M07 – Basic services & village renewal
Further info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/youth-board-and-youth-manifesto_en">https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/youth-board-and-youth-manifesto_en</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.rieskaleader.fi">http://www.rieskaleader.fi</a></li> </ul>
Contact	<a href="mailto:rita.kovacs@rieskaleader.fi">rita.kovacs@rieskaleader.fi</a>

# Social farming in rural Belgium

**A Belgian organisation uses EAFRD funding to organise activities on farms for people who suffer from mental health and/or social issues. This strengthens participants' feelings of empowerment and self-confidence.**

The association Nos Oignons has supported social integration since 2012 by organising on-farm activities for people with mental health and/or social issues. Since 2017, Nos Oignons has been using RDP Measure 16 – Cooperation of the Walloon RDP to fund three projects that organise collective workshops and individual experiences at participating farms.

The project activities bring economic, social and health benefits to the participants and the community. Patients and beneficiaries learn, feel empowered, build new relationships, have a sense of purpose and gain self-confidence. Participants also tend to have fewer relapses and hospitalisations.

*“We go out of our daily lives, we meet people, we discover things. It does me a lot of good. (...) Little by little, it became almost a passion.”*

**Jeremy**  
Participant

The project has also been beneficial for farmers who often face high levels of stress, loneliness and a lack of recognition by the local community.

The exploratory stages of the project have helped estimate the typical cost of social farming at €80/day/patient, including the development of infrastructure and a small complementary income for farmers (max. €40/day). Thus, it is much cheaper than the average day care centre costs (ca. €190/day/patient) or hospitalisation (ca. €430/day/patient) in Wallonia.

A total of 2 000 ‘farm days’ for individuals and 900 days of collective workshops are planned to be delivered by 2021. By mid-2019, 1 060 individual farm days and 700 group days have already been delivered, exceeding the expectations so far.

Around 25 farmers have already been involved (an extra 14 have signed collaboration agreements) and 55 individuals have participated.

The projects have brought together various institutions in Wallonia to create an operational framework to address legal issues that hindered social farming. In 2018 the Code for Rural Law in Wallonia gave social farming its first legal basis. It recognised ‘rural social welcoming’ structures, i.e. farms and intermediary organisations that connect and support farms and social institutions engaging in social farming.

The association released practical political guidelines (a ‘Memorandum’) before the May 2019 Belgian general elections.



© Nos Oignons

Social farming empowers patients and is typically much cheaper than the average day care centre costs or hospitalisation in Wallonia.

Applying for the Rural Inspiration Awards was burdensome for the small association’s team, but it increased their self-confidence and attracted new private sponsors. Local administrations appreciated the European recognition of the projects’ worth.

<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Nos Oignons – Supporting social farming in Wallonia</b>
Type of beneficiary	NGO
Period	2017 – 2021
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total budget: €1 300 035</li> <li>• EAFRD contribution: €682 757</li> <li>• National / Regional contribution: €617 278</li> </ul>
RDP Measure	M16 – Cooperation
Further info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/nos-oignons-supporting-social-farming-wallonia_en">https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/nos-oignons-supporting-social-farming-wallonia_en</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.nosoignons.org">http://www.nosoignons.org</a></li> </ul>
Contact	<a href="mailto:Benoit.vantichelen@cspo.be">Benoit.vantichelen@cspo.be</a>

# Bridging the digital skills gap in rural Poland

**A LAG organised a series of tailored workshops to combat digital exclusion among people over 50 years old.**

People over a certain age often have very limited knowledge of how to use computers and access the internet. This causes a significant number of problems in their daily life, particularly for rural residents, as they cannot take advantage of simple online services, e.g. to make online payments, shop online, or access various sources of knowledge and information.

People who are not up to speed with technological progress are often afraid to use a computer and they often do not have the financial means to purchase one. On the other hand, online services have the potential to overcome problems related to geographical isolation and remoteness of rural areas.

The LAG Northern Jura Partnership Association in eastern Poland used EAFRD funding to organise a digital training programme to combat digital exclusion among people over 50 years old.

The 90 participants received group training with peers who face the same challenges. They learned how to carry out simple, everyday activities such as finding information on the web, searching for job offers, making electronic payments and online purchases or sending e-mails.

Ninety tablet computers with keyboards were purchased through a competitive bid process. These were to be used as training material and then loaned out to the participants. However, in order to keep the tablet, participants were obliged to pass the competency test and to have attended all the training sessions.

The training format enabled participants to continue practicing and developing their computer skills.

The new digital competences helped improve the participants' quality of life and contributed to building social capital in the LAG area.

*"I will no longer have to be ashamed when dealing with my grandchildren."*

**Participant**

The project is an example of good practice that other organisations can look at when organising similar initiatives for digital education. The format can apply to any target age group.

The project has already become an inspiration for one of the non-governmental organisations operating in the LAG area. The NGO also delivered digital workshops for children and young people.

The Rural Inspiration Awards motivated the Northern Jura Partnership Association to work harder and become more ambitious. A second series of workshops for people over 50 years old is planned in 2020.

<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Workshops to combat digital exclusion in rural areas</b>
Type of beneficiary	LAG
Period	2017 – 2018
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total budget: € 10 394</li> <li>• EAFRD contribution: € 6 614</li> <li>• National / Regional contribution: € 3 780</li> </ul>
RDP Measure	M19 – LEADER/CLLD
Further info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/workshops-combat-digital-exclusion-rural-areas_en">https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/workshops-combat-digital-exclusion-rural-areas_en</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.jura-ppj.pl">http://www.jura-ppj.pl</a></li> </ul>
Contact	<a href="mailto:aleksandra.stachura@jura-ppj.pl">aleksandra.stachura@jura-ppj.pl</a>

© LAG Northern Jura Partnership Association



The new digital competences helped to improve the participants' quality of life and contributed to building social capital in the LAG area.

# Theme 5: LEADER

After over 20 years supporting bottom-up rural development initiatives across Europe, there is widespread recognition of the relevance of the LEADER/CLLD approach for rural development.<sup>(1)</sup> The RIA 2019 were an opportunity to highlight the inspiring use of the LEADER approach in a number of areas, including support to youth entrepreneurship, the visibility of rural areas, forest management, depopulation and development of community infrastructures.

The LEADER method is currently implemented by some 2 800 Local Action Groups (LAGs)<sup>(2)</sup> across Europe, covering 61 % of the rural population in the EU and bringing together a partnership of public, private and civil society stakeholders in a particular area.

The LEADER method is based on seven features: bottom-up approach, area-based approach, local partnership, an integrated and multi-sectoral strategy, networking, innovation and cooperation. The projects shortlisted for this RIA category show how LEADER can be used to catalyse the energy and resources of local people and organisations and empower them as development actors.

Environmental concerns are a priority for European society, and rural communities are at the forefront of many environmental actions. LEADER can be used to improve the environmental conditions of rural areas, whilst also delivering economic or social benefits.

*In Belgium, the LAG Tiges et Chavées is using LEADER to promote the sustainable management of small, privately owned forests (page 29).*

*In the UK, Castlebank Park Horticultural and Environmental Training Centre turned an abandoned park area and its gardens into a community hub to create opportunities for social interaction, training and employment (page 30).*

LEADER is all about giving voice to local communities. LEADER is the key EU tool for supporting social aspects of rural development.

*Pueblos Vivos is addressing depopulation and attracting new settlers in rural areas of the Aragon region, Spain (page 31).*

*A Swedish newspaper used RDP support to offer training and mentoring, so that local people could become correspondents and give visibility to the daily life of small rural communities (page 32).*

LEADER is a flexible rural development tool. It can also be used to test the feasibility of innovative ideas on a small scale, before upscaling them using the EAFRD or other EU or non-EU funding sources.

*The 'SILTA' project supports entrepreneurship among young Finnish people by providing a cooperative structure through which they can grow their business ideas and receive training, mentoring and peer support (page 33).*

(1) The upcoming EU Rural Review 29 will look at the achievements of LEADER/CLLD and will be available in early 2020 at [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/publications/search\\_en?f%5B0%5D=im\\_field\\_enrd\\_publication\\_type%3A20482](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/publications/search_en?f%5B0%5D=im_field_enrd_publication_type%3A20482)

(2) See ENRD LAG Database, [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/leader-clld/lag-database\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/leader-clld/lag-database_en)



# Promoting sustainable forest management in Belgium

An EAFRD-funded project promoted the sustainable management of small, privately owned forests in Wallonia, Belgium.



When private forests are very small and fragmented, they contribute very little to the local economy as it is difficult for owners to perform effective forest management on small plots.

Facing such a situation, the Belgian LAG Tiges et Chavées decided to collaborate with a support unit developed by the Wallonian government and specially dedicated to small private forests. The LAG was the ideal partner for the support unit to reach small forest owners thanks to its links to both local authorities and associations.

A LEADER project started in 2016 with the aim of supporting the sustainable management of these local private forests. The project includes training, tailored advice and awareness raising for forest owners. It facilitates forestry work, promotes the collective management of small private forests, develops local value chains and creates partnerships between landowners and experts.

The project has already mobilised 55 forest owners, of which 45 received a visit to assess the short-term needs of their plot. It supported the establishment of 27 service agreements between owners and forestry experts to organise the marking of trees for harvest and established a common sales catalogue of local wood.

Grouped sales of wood organised with help from the support unit resulted in the sale of 25 lots of 2270m<sup>3</sup> of hardwood, softwood and firewood lumber for a total of €76 000.



© LAG Tiges et Chavées

The project has already mobilised 55 forest owners.

*"I have inherited a small plot of forest from my parents, but I had no knowledge on forest management. The project has helped in this. It's a pleasure to give life again to this small part of forest linked to the history of my parents!"*

**Christian Houzard**  
Forest owner

In autumn 2018, the project organised a collective 'clean-up' initiative to help small properties to remove wood attacked by bark beetles (*Ips typographus*).

Four forest guides were trained to welcome visitors to the territory.

The LAG is creating a social enterprise for construction work using local wood and is developing links with training enterprises that are active in the forestry sector. It aims to carry out non-profit actions with a positive societal and environmental impact.

The Rural Inspiration Awards enhanced the project's visibility and helped connect with other relevant projects.

Project Name	<b>Sustainable management of private forests</b>
Type of beneficiary	LAG
Period	2016 – 2019
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total budget: €203 550</li> <li>• EAFRD contribution: €73 278</li> <li>• National / Regional contribution: €109 917</li> <li>• Private contribution: €20 355</li> </ul>
RDP Measure	M19 – LEADER/CLLD
Further info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/tiges-et-chavees-sustainable-management-private-forests_en">https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/tiges-et-chavees-sustainable-management-private-forests_en</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.tiges-chavees.be/project/forets-filiere-bois/">http://www.tiges-chavees.be/project/forets-filiere-bois/</a></li> </ul>
Contact	<a href="mailto:xavier.sohet@tiges-chavees.be">xavier.sohet@tiges-chavees.be</a>

## Growing a rural community in Scotland

**With support from LEADER, a Scottish project turned an abandoned park area and its gardens into a community hub to create opportunities for social interaction, training and employment.**

South Lanarkshire is one of the most deprived rural areas in Scotland. There are high unemployment rates among Lanark's young people, a growing and isolated older population and a lack of services and community facilities to cope with the increasing needs of the population.

Supported by the local Lanarkshire LAG, the Lanark Community Development Trust identified the need to regenerate Castlebank Park, a council owned area, which had been slowly falling into disrepair from the 1960s. In 2012 over a quarter of Lanark's population signed a petition to signal their desire for Castlebank Park to be brought back into public use. After an extensive period of community consultation and project development it was decided to convert derelict, listed estate buildings at Castlebank Park into a community hub from which training and volunteering opportunities can be delivered. This was to become the Castlebank Horticultural Centre.

The project run in 2017-2018 and included the renovation of a derelict sawmill building within the Horticultural Centre compound. Funding from RDP Measure 19 – LEADER of the Scottish RDP helped transform the building into a dedicated community learning and meeting space. The centre became operational in 2018 and since then it is providing training and volunteering opportunities in the fields of horticulture, environment, hospitality, event planning, marketing and administration. Around 2 390 volunteer hours were recorded in 2018 alone.

*"This project is a great example of how the LEADER approach works in practice. The journey was not always straightforward, however the project's core strength was that it was embedded in and supported by the local community."*

**Chris Parkin**  
Lanarkshire LEADER Programme Manager

The project engages with vulnerable adults, some of whom are now regular and enthusiastic volunteers. These include local people with mental health issues and learning disabilities, a local parent and toddlers group and a small group of pupils from Lanark Grammar School's severe learning disabilities unit.

Since the project, over 600 people have participated in courses and workshops held at the Castlebank Horticultural Centre.



The project brought an abandoned park back into public use.

The centre has developed a mini orchard, engaged in composting schemes and delivered workshops on locally produced food. Food is grown in polytunnels and raised beds. Most of the food produce is donated to the local food bank, but the centre also has a contract with two local cafes to supply them with weekly vegetable boxes.

Future events will provide employment opportunities for local musicians, storytellers, caterers and other local suppliers.

Project Name	Castlebank Park Horticultural and Environmental Training Centre
Type of beneficiary	NGO
Period	2017 – 2018
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total budget: €210 307</li> <li>• EAFRD contribution: €124 912</li> <li>• Private contribution: €85 395</li> </ul>
RDP Measure	M19 – LEADER/CLLD
Further info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/castlebank-park-horticultural-and-environmental-training-centre_en">https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/castlebank-park-horticultural-and-environmental-training-centre_en</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.lanarktrust.co.uk">http://www.lanarktrust.co.uk</a></li> </ul>
Contact	<a href="mailto:melissa@lanark.co.uk">melissa@lanark.co.uk</a>



# Tackling depopulation in rural Spain

An inter-territorial cooperation project used EAFRD funding to test ways to support the population and attract new settlers in Spanish rural areas.

Keeping the population in rural areas is a fundamental challenge for many areas in Europe, as it relates directly to sustainable development. The Aragon Region, in north-eastern Spain, is one example of a rural area suffering from depopulation.

To address this issue, the local development associations working in three villages – Somontano de Barbastro, Cinco Villas and Teruel Mountains – set up the project 'Pueblos Vivos' (Living Villages). This LEADER inter-territorial co-operation project between the three LAGs aims to raise awareness of the problem of depopulation and of possible strategies to fight it, including supporting potential newcomers.

The project provides the local population with training and information to make them feel involved in preparing the villages to welcome new settlers. Residents collect information about housing, jobs, health care services and internet connections, which are relevant for potential newcomers. Information is shared via a website and a digital bulletin disseminates local job and training opportunities.

Pueblos Vivos collaborates with municipalities, for example advising them on new tools for disseminating information and signalling inspiring initiatives for the revitalisation of other rural areas. The project also designed a specific procedure for assisting potential newcomers.

At the same time, the project encourages current residents to remain in the area, for example by organising training and meetings for local associations.

A network of 100 volunteers takes part in the project's activities.

The project makes use of various media, including social networks and advertising campaigns, to promote the attractiveness of the villages.

*"It is of vital importance that the inhabitants of our villages are aware of the problem of depopulation, that initiatives arise from the local population."*

**Carmen Sahún**  
Mayor of Estadilla

The Pueblos Vivos' approach is transferrable and can be adapted to the specific situation of other territories.

The project operated between 2016 and 2019 and involved 28 municipalities and city councils. Its success motivated the project holders to apply for another LEADER project involving seven LAGs in total.

*"The participation in the Rural Inspiration Awards made local people realise that 'Europe' recognised the worth of the project. They felt proud, motivated, and more confident to continue. Taking part in a European award also showed local people that the EU adds value to rural areas and supports sustainable development."*

**Paloma Fábregas Martínez**  
LAG Centro de Desarrollo del Somontano



© Pueblos Vivos

This project aims to raise awareness of the problem of depopulation and of possible strategies to fight it.

<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Pueblos Vivos – Living Villages</b>
Type of beneficiary	LAG
Period	2016 – 2019
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total budget: € 100 063</li> <li>• EAFRD contribution: € 64 040</li> <li>• National / Regional contribution: € 16 010</li> <li>• Private contribution: € 20 013</li> </ul>
RDP Measure	M19 – LEADER/CLLD
Further info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/pueblos-vivos-living-villages_en">https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/pueblos-vivos-living-villages_en</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.cedersomontano.com">http://www.cedersomontano.com</a></li> </ul>
Contact	<a href="mailto:palomafabregas@cedersomontano.com">palomafabregas@cedersomontano.com</a>

# Promoting citizen journalism in rural Sweden

**A Swedish newspaper used EAFRD funding to offer training and mentoring in journalism to local citizens interested in becoming local correspondents.**

Local people tend to be far better informed about everyday local news than an external or broader area newspaper correspondent might be. The Swedish newspaper Kristianstadsbladet decided to provide reliable news coverage and visibility to its rural area by engaging local people who wanted to act as correspondents for their communities. It turned to its local LAG Skånes Ess for support.

The LEADER project 'Reportrar' started in September 2016. By October, five start-up meetings were held in five different villages in the municipality. The meetings, which were open to everyone, aimed to make the project visible and to find local individuals and representatives of associations who might be interested in writing articles about their community.

The meetings were organised by the project leader, a journalist at Kristianstadsbladet. They resulted in the establishment of a network of 20 correspondents interested in doing journalistic work.

The local reporters started their work and the cooperation with the newspaper evolved organically. The project leader was constantly in contact with all the correspondents and supervised their work, often offering individual support. Quick individual feedback proved to be very effective. Furthermore, quarterly meetings with all correspondents allowed to share experiences and knowledge.

Every week, the newspaper featured articles written by the local reporters in its paper version, website and a Facebook page set up for the project.

Over 400 articles written by the local reporters were published and they were viewed online 49 450 times between January and July 2018. The newspaper has 109 000 unique readers per day.

The project increased the visibility of, and awareness about, rural areas and established a platform for rural news and rural perspectives.

Even though the project ended in 2018, the local reporters still write about their communities – with guidance from the newspaper – on a voluntary basis.

The project made some participants discover their talents as reporters or photographers, sometimes leading to professional contacts and occasional assignments for the newspaper and local events.

*“Working in the project increased our self-esteem and confidence in our skills. And we were a fantastic group of local reporters.”*

**Yvonne Kievad**  
Project participant



© Annelie Worgard

The project established a network of 20 local correspondents interested in doing journalistic work.

Project Name	Reportrar – Local reporters serving rural areas
Type of beneficiary	Private company
Period	2016 – 2018
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total budget: €96 822</li> <li>• EAFRD contribution: €48 411</li> <li>• National / Regional contribution: €16 460</li> <li>• Local contribution: €31 951</li> </ul>
RDP Measure	M19 – LEADER/CLLD
Further info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/reportrar-local-reporters-serving-rural-areas_en">https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/reportrar-local-reporters-serving-rural-areas_en</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.kristianstadsbladet.se">http://www.kristianstadsbladet.se</a></li> </ul>
Contact	<a href="mailto:lukas.emryd@kristianstadsbladet.se">lukas.emryd@kristianstadsbladet.se</a>

## A 'bridge' for young Finnish entrepreneurs

EAFRD is supporting young Finnish entrepreneurs by providing a cooperative structure through which they can grow their business ideas and receive training, mentoring and peer support.

Today, there are opportunities for young people to trial their business ideas in various practical experimental business programmes. However, after the end of these programmes, young entrepreneurs often do not have access to the support and advice needed to continue growing their businesses. The 'SILTA' ('bridge') project sought to bridge this gap.

LEADER support from the Keskipiste LAG was used to set up a cooperative called Versosto through which young entrepreneurs (16-21 years of age) can run a business alone or in groups, get mentoring and training, develop their businesses and encourage each other.

Members of Versosto democratically decide how to run the cooperative and keep in touch through a dedicated WhatsApp group, organise sparring weekends (structured collective feedback and brainstorming sessions) and other activities.

The businesses that have been created are very diverse. The largest one was a call-centre that eventually grew so big that it became necessary, for risk management reasons, to sell it to a client company. The call-centre was run by three members of the co-op and employed 40 other young people. It now has its operations in Oulu and Fuengirola.

The members of the cooperative offer a range of services such as filming, photography and the creation of marketing materials. Members of the co-op have also been contracted to create murals for municipalities.

The cooperative has launched another innovative business idea: capitalising on their experience in engaging and inspiring young people, they now provide motivational speakers for events.

The group started with 20 founding members and now has about 70 members.

In the first year of operation, the turnover of the cooperative was approximately €240 000.

The project has increased the young members' interest in entrepreneurship and has motivated some of them to stay in, or later return to, rural areas.



© Silta

The project has increased the young members' interest in entrepreneurship and has motivated some of them to stay in, or later return to, rural areas.

*"As a young person, beginning my own business feels a bit scary. The Versosto cooperative was a great solution for me – they helped me understand how to get my business to work and so I went ahead and did it! My aerial photogrammetry business will soon start cooperating with a big rural advisory organisation."*

**Member of Versosto**

Project Name	Silta – a bridge for youth entrepreneurship
Type of beneficiary	NGO
Period	2017 – 2019
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total budget: €56 620</li> <li>• EAFRD contribution: €19 024</li> <li>• National / Regional contribution: €26 272</li> <li>• Private contribution: €11 324</li> </ul>
RDP Measure	M19 – LEADER/CLLD
Further info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/silta-bridge-youth-entrepreneurship_en">https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/silta-bridge-youth-entrepreneurship_en</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://silta.rkropisto.fi">https://silta.rkropisto.fi</a></li> </ul>
Contact	<a href="mailto:ville.laitila@rkropisto.fi">ville.laitila@rkropisto.fi</a>

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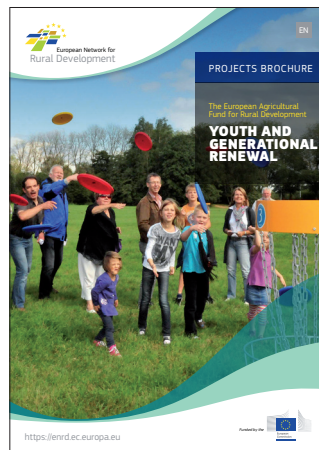
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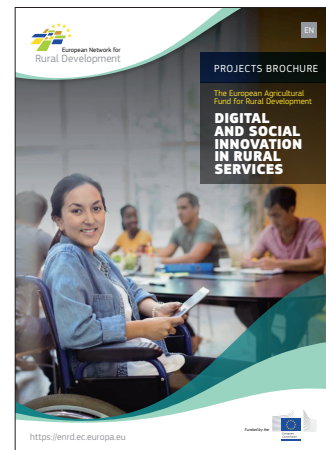
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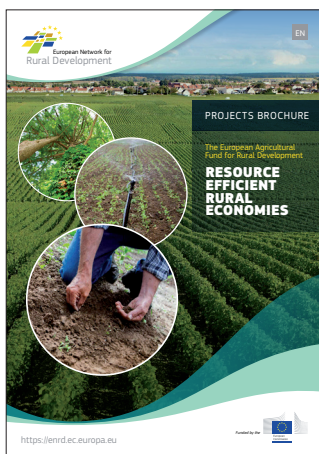
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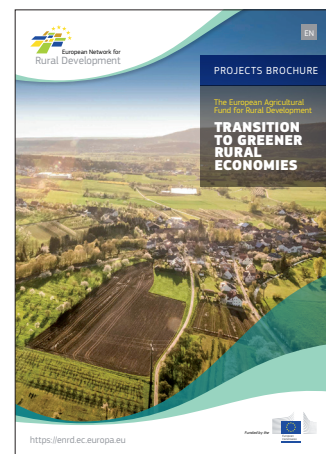
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ENRD Contact Point  
Rue de la Loi/Wetstraat, 38 (bte 4)  
1040 Bruxelles/Brussel  
BELGIQUE/BELGIË  
Tel. +32 2 801 38 00  
[info@enrd.eu](mailto:info@enrd.eu)