



REINVENTING EUROPE THROUGH LOCAL INITIATIVE

# 25 Promising Initiatives

February 2014

# Local development in Finnish Lapland



29/09/2014

LAG Northernmost Lapland faces some highly specific challenges when organising local development work. Nevertheless, it is carrying out exemplary works in a very sparsely populated region.



## Welfare services

Local Action Groups (LAGs) are the mainstay of the implementation of the Leader approach: LAG Northernmost Lapland, comprising six municipalities, is the largest LAG in the European Union when measured by surface area (53 290 km<sup>2</sup>). The area is extremely sparsely populated (as low as 0.17 individuals per sq km in some municipalities). Considering also the great distances, this makes it a very challenging area in which to organise services and also for carrying out local development work.

Traditional trades are reindeer husbandry, agriculture, forestry and inland fisheries that are all still important livelihoods. Nowadays, tourism is also an important sector in rural areas. Finland, alongside the rest of Europe, is also hoping to benefit from new business opportunities offered by the exploitation of the North's oil and mineral deposits. In addition, there are growing expectations of new jobs (e.g. subcontracting for mining) offered by the growing economy of neighbouring Russia.

The local development work carried out by LAG Northernmost Lapland is very diverse.

Concerning welfare services, it has created a model, in which people are employed in their home villages for providing services for senior citizens, or families with small children. This activity is organised in the form of a cooperative, which was founded by developers of rural areas, professionals of social and health sector and the municipality of Sodankylä. It is very cost-effective, as the municipality does not need to hire new personnel, or pay the travel costs for reaching remote villages.

## Midnight rowing

LAG has also inspired various associations to start developing tourism and events. One example is the 'Midnight Sun Rowing Event'. This annual event attracts over one hundred participants, who row with large boats or paddle with kayaks 110 km along the River Kemijoki. Rather than a race, the aim is to enjoy a typical Lappish summer. The LAG is now funding a new project to develop this local event into an international tourism attraction.

Finally, to ensure that local towns and villages also benefit from the burgeoning mining sector, LAG has funded projects in which

villages are marketed as homesteads for the mine workers who migrate to the area. The multiplier effect of mining is also supporting local enterprises. Subcontracting for mines, services needed by new inhabitants and increased purchasing power can already be seen in the number of new enterprises and increased turnovers of all businesses.

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# Job opportunities for all



29/05/2014

An inspiring project located in the Thessaly region of mainland Greece has established a new social co-operative enterprise and in the process aims to create up to 90 jobs for local unemployed people.



'Employment opportunities for all' is a 2012-14 joint Greek and EU initiative being run by the Development Agency of Karditsa – one of three participating municipalities located in the administrative region of Thessaly. The other two municipalities are Mouzaki and Plastiras Lake. According to a study [Source: 'Analysis of the local market', 2011], carried out before the project started in September 2012, these areas have a combined population of around 91 000. Although there is no specific data covering these areas, latest (2013) data for the region puts the unemployment rate at 25.6%.

## Recycling discarded products

With an overall budget of €480 000, the project is co-financed by the EU's European Social Fund (80%) and the Greek Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Welfare. Its main objectives are to find jobs for up to 90 long-term unemployed people; and to create a social co-operative enterprise (SCE) – for the collection and management of old clothes and other discarded textiles that can be recycled.

There are two main actions for the project beneficiaries – all long-term unemployed people selected according to specific criteria (economic and social, length of

unemployment, work experience) and through interviews and evaluations. These cover 'mentoring' – including individual sessions with a social worker and psychologist at the start; and 'training' – on the reuse and recycling of clothing and on the management of the materials.

## Rags to rugs

Concerning the SCE, called 'I Change', the main objectives were to create a viable social business that would not only provide a collection service to meet the needs of the local market i.e. the collections and recycling of clothing and used textiles that are currently discarded, but would also produce products from the recycled textiles (carpets and rugs, bags, toys, pillows, patchwork quilts etc) and organise their sale, for example at local festivals and a Christmas market.

Although it is only at an early stage, the initiative has already had a positive influence on the people involved and it beginning to be known about and supported locally. There are currently 16 people actively involved (four men and 12 women, aged from 29 to 62 years). They've all worked in the past, but lost their jobs because of the economic crisis.

As the activity of the social co-operative is growing, new jobs will be created in order to covers its needs, contributing to the reduction of unemployment. Moreover, 'I Change' can serve as a model for other regions or Member States, using the same, or different materials, but based on the same concept i.e. the recycling/reuse of discarded products.

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# Cooperation, key to Limerick's Southill regeneration



29/09/2014

Southill Development Co-operative (SDC), recently renamed as 'Tait House', is a community-owned organisation supporting economic, social and community development in one of Limerick city's most disadvantaged estates.



## 299 shareholders

Southill in the south of Limerick was developed in the 1960's and 1970's to provide social housing for families and an industrial workforce needed for the new jobs emerging at that time in the city. Jobs were created as a result of a successful strategy to attract foreign direct investment and manufacturing enterprises. But, as the industries closed from the 1980's and 1990's, this impacted on the local population resulting in very high unemployment. While the situation improved slightly in the years of economic growth – 2000-2006 – it deteriorated greatly from 2008-09 with the economic recession. In 2011, Southill's unemployment rate was 47%.

Against a backdrop of high unemployment, SDC was set up in 1984 as a community-owned co-operative, with 299 shareholders. From 1988, its offices were based in Tait House, a listed historic building owned by the local authority that was in a state of disrepair. Over the years, the site has been transformed with the support of public agencies and the private sector.

## Social enterprises

Over the last year or so, the organisation's strategy is in a process of change linked to new challenges presented by difficult economic conditions and the need to adapt its financial structure to rely much less on grants from public funding sources and more on income generation. As part of this process, it changed its name to Tait House.

The main services it provides are centred on information to citizens on rights, entitlements and legal issues, information and community development services, training for the unemployed and business development, with a strong focus on social enterprise and access to educational opportunities. This includes outreach, further education and training targeting the development of job opportunities for young people (e.g. car maintenance apprenticeships and a community garage operating as a social enterprise).

More recently its active employment schemes for the long-term unemployed have been expanded. Currently, it has 103 staff of which 50 work places are on active employment schemes. In 2012, it generated an income of some €1.5 million

from a mix of grants to implement specific programmes (20%) and from income from its activities (80%).

Focusing on social enterprises, it generates a surplus that is reinvested into its operations including a children's nursery, home insulation and retrofitting services for households in the city and surrounding counties, and estate management (e.g. landscaping, grass-cutting and home repairs).

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# OCM broadens 'museum' concept for Alto Adige citizens



29/09/2014

Open City Museum (OCM) is a participatory and community-led initiative to promote the arts and a mutual understanding of the diversity of cultures of the people of the autonomous province of South Tyrol in northern Italy.



## Arts for social cohesion

South Tyrol, also known by its Italian name *Alto Adige*, is an autonomous province in northern Italy. The province covers an area of 7 400 square kilometres and has a population of around 500 000 inhabitants. The majority are of Austro-Bavarian heritage and speak German. Around a quarter speak Italian as their first language (mainly concentrated on the two largest cities Bolzano and Merano) and a small minority have Ladin as their mother language.

The percentage of people whose families have migrated to the region is around 9%, suggesting that the already diverse population has further diversified in recent years. The role of diversity thus has a strong influence in all aspects of everyday life and an important influence on youth and cultural policies.

OCM uses the arts as a key instrument to promote social cohesion in the province. It also broadens an understanding of the term 'museum' to include public spaces promoting active citizenship. It is mainly being promoted in the province's capital, Bolzano, and in the municipalities of Bressanone and Chiusa. It aims to involve all citizens, but particularly young people and those whose families have migrated to the region, and to promote mutual understanding through the arts.

## Cultural diversities

Funded by the municipalities, the University of Bolzano, particularly the Department of Education, and the private sector, the OCM activities include events promoting inter-cultural education, participatory art, public art initiatives, workshops, exhibitions and talks. To reach as wide an audience as possible, these take place not only in traditional venues such as the local museums or art galleries, but also on the streets and in other private and/or unused spaces.

OCM started in 2011 with a community-led art project 'Cultural diversities in Chiusa'. This was a photo-exhibition featuring people who have migrated to the city. It included tours given by young migrants in their mother languages, as well as a Henna painting workshop and a family photo-session on a public piazza.

In 2013 in Bolzano, OCM organised an arts-based community development project, which concluded with an open-air photo exhibition, in collaboration with the Oltrisarco civic centre. The exhibition combined portraits of unknown people from the archives of a local photographer with portraits of 'new' residents with a migrant background.

Finally, this year (i.e. 2014), OCM is launching a platform to encourage creativity, especially among young people: 'Young Futuremakers' will promote and celebrate diverse forms of active citizenship. For example, there will be a series of artistic outdoor events, organised by young people, in Bressanone.

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# Latvia's first Rural Communities Parliament gets underway



29/09/2014

Latvia's national platform of rural NGOs has started work on the introduction of a new participatory democratic process for rural areas – the 'Rural Communities Parliament'.



Over the past two decades or so, since the Latvian Republic regained its independence from the Soviet Union, its population of just over 2 million inhabitants has begun to benefit from a developing and more democratic society. Unfortunately, most of the positive signs of development have been experienced in the capital Riga and surrounding region, leaving behind the rest of the country.

Home to around half of the population, Riga and surrounding area has received most of the investment for socio-economic development. Reflecting this unequal society, Latvia has the highest Gini index (list of countries by income equality) in the European Union (35.9% in 2012). Moreover, it is among the top five EU Member States with the highest regional development disparities.

## Participation

To address such inequalities, the Latvian Rural Forum (LRF) has been looking at ways to increase activity and participation of rural communities in decision making and in policy development. In 2012, it decided to transform itself from a network of local action groups (LAGs) and rural non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to the

platform of rural civil society that promotes dialogue between rural communities and decision-makers.

Inspired by similar experiences in the Scandinavian countries and in Estonia, the LRF therefore organised the 1<sup>st</sup> Latvian Rural Communities Parliament on 6-8 June 2013. The event was held in Latgale – the country's most depressed region. During working groups and through shared experiences, participants devised an Action Plan for rural areas with 57 actions to be carried out by communities, municipalities and ministries over the next two years.

## 57 actions

The initiative receives financial support from national and regional associations, the local municipalities, the European Social Fund and the European Economic Area Financial Mechanism. Importantly, it is also supported by the many volunteers who will carry out the planned activities.

The Action Plan includes a resolution to conclude legislation promoting volunteering, exploring the idea of credit unions in rural areas, the training of community leaders in rural areas, raising awareness about benefits of local products, and pro-

moting 'life-long learning' geared at people living in rural areas. The meeting of the Council of the new parliament also agreed there will be a second meeting in 2015.

Although the process is still being developed, it has already resulted in several positive results for rural communities. These include more visibility and acceptance by ministries, even those not directly concerned with rural affairs or regional development issues. The process has also promoted an exchange of ideas and experiences between the rural communities throughout the country.

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# The Valley of the Carp



2009-2014

The 'Partnership for the Barycz Valley' is an association that implements strategies favouring local development in this region of Poland, notably in support of traditional farming of carp.



Traditional farming of carp fish, dating back to the Medieval Ages, is one of the main strengths of the Barycz river valley in south-western Poland. This centuries-long tradition of farming carp in the sizeable and numerous ponds, extended over the whole region, shaped the characteristic landscape and ecosystems. Today, the region's landscape, including ponds, meadows and wetlands, supports natural values of worldwide importance. Agri-tourism tourism is also a growing sector.

The partnership was started in 2008 by non governmental organisations and local individuals. It covers an area of more than 1 800 square kilometres over eight communes (with a total population of almost 100 000). The association currently has over 120 members representing the community, private and public sectors and is a Leader LAG (Local Action Group) and FLAG (Fisheries Local Action Group).

## Eco-friendly tourism

With private, EU and national funds [e.g. the total budget for 2009-2012 was 60 million zloties (15 million euros)] the association and its members and partners implements strategies and selects projects that contribute to the sustainable development of the region.

This includes supporting the traditional architecture of the Barycz Valley, developing environmentally friendly tourism and businesses based on traditional products and services, including in the fisheries sector.

The partnership also carries out activities to support local communities. One example is a competition for the 'most active village', whereby rural communities receive support for developing their village thematic offer through craft workshops, training, study tours, learning skills to promote their activities online etc.

Another popular initiative is the 'Barycz Valley Recommends', a project supporting small family-run businesses that produce or promote local products and services.

## Carp Days

In addition, the partnership supports a comprehensive promotion programme for the whole region, which comprises the creation of new tourism trails and offers, and, since 2006, hosts 'Carp Days' – an annual series of events, held in September and October, (the traditional carp fish harvesting period) promoting the Barycz Valley' cultural and culinary heritage (fish cuisine), products and services.

Finally, it is hoped – with their growing popularity, the involvement of the private, public and community groups, and increased numbers of tourists and of profits raised – these activities will continue to be supported. Importantly, with the necessary infrastructure now in place, together with lasting partnerships, it is also expected that some of the promising initiatives will increasingly be self-financing.

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## Building bridges in rural Röstånga



29 OCT 2014

Röstånga development company (RUAB) is a community-owned social enterprise responsible for several local initiatives that are at the heart of Röstånga a village in rural southern Sweden.



Röstånga is a small village, of 850 inhabitants, located on the slopes of the ridge of Söderåsen in the National park – an area famed for its natural landscape and popular for trekking and other outdoor activities. Because of its setting, there are good opportunities for tourism and other businesses. Nevertheless, the village was recently experiencing specific problems linked with a loss of vital services due to de-population (empty houses, vacant shops etc). In common with other rural areas, a growing vacuum had been created by the withdrawal of vital public sector services (schools, youth clubs, care services etc) and of the private sector with little prospects of investment due to limited revenue expectations and the low values of properties.

### Grass root members

To overcome this, the people of Röstånga recognised that they needed to reorganise themselves and re-consider both their role in the community and their capacity to run certain services. As a result, the RUAB development company was founded by its largely grass root membership. It is a social enterprise run by its locally-based members as a co-operative and non profit-making business (i.e. any revenues are reinvested into the company).

With over 400 shareholders, RUAB is responsible for the creation of several important businesses/ services for the community. One example, is the Old Train Station Restaurant. The former station building, which had been empty for many years, was bought by the community in 2012. After raising more than €45 000 of local private capital, it was renovated and sub-let to a local family who have been running it as a successful restaurant since April 2013. After its first season, the rental income has brought a revenue of €12 000 for the development company and the restaurant business has meant three new full-time jobs in the community.

### Success stories

Another success story is Röstånga's Museum of Modern Art. This once run down building, adjacent to the village mill-pond, was bought and renovated in 2010. It now houses one of the country's smallest museums of modern art which, when necessary, also acts as an exhibition hall.

Another plus is a new community bus (owned by the RUAB) – whose benefits are twofold: Firstly, its use allows energy savings by avoiding the need for individual cars for transport to sports and cultural events; and secondly, there's a social aspect as the bus brings people together – acting as a 'meeting place on wheels'.

Finally, two other services are being developed in 2014 – a local home-care service and a service for the elderly organising social and other events in the local municipality. The idea is to employ local people to take care of the elderly people, thus also helping to bridge any age/ social barriers in the community.

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# Transition Town Totnes – a world first



29/09/2014

Based in Totnes (population c. 7700) in Devon, England, Transition Town Totnes (TTT) was the world's first Transition initiative. It began in 2006 when local people came together to tackle the combined threats of diminishing oil reserves, climate change and economic uncertainty.



TTT is a community-driven process of creating a new infrastructure of businesses and initiatives that are more suited to a lower-carbon, more resilient world. It integrates the creation of a new physical infrastructure (energy, food production, construction), economic structures that enable a community to spend money locally and strengthen its local economy, and social systems, designed to ensure social justice and fairness.

## Ownership

In practice, this works by inviting people to take ownership of the process, encouraging creativity and by building networks. The last eight years has seen an empowering community-building process, engaging a significant proportion of the community, generating a diversity of projects – in the fields of food, building and housing, energy and the economy – which have yielded some extraordinary results for the mainly volunteer-led organisation.

TTT does not receive any funds from the state; rather it has a diverse funding base (private donations, a range of trusts, events and workshops etc) which enables it to be financially independent and sustainable.

## SME Blueprint

Among several very successful initiatives, TTT carried out a study into the potential of what the food, renewable energy and retrofitting sectors could be worth to the local SME economy. If more demand was developed for local products and services, delivered by local, independent businesses. Its result indicated that developing just 10% of this opportunity could be worth over £5m over the next 1-2 years – and could be even higher with the local multiplier. This work led to networking and information events for each of the sectors to show the potential to existing and fledgling SME businesses.

Another noteworthy example is the Totnes Food-Link project that is working to strengthen the links between local food producers and its retailers and restaurants. Since its inception in 2011, trade links have grown, new producers have emerged and new plans to develop the local food economy are in under way. Some 400 businesses are on the mailing list and producers report an average 30% increase in their supplies to local retailers/restaurateurs. Moreover, all of the town's seven restaurants have one or more locally sourced 'specials' on their menus.

And on a more practical level, Transition Streets is a scheme whereby groups of friends and neighbours meet every few weeks with a practical workbook to make simple changes in how they use energy, water, food, packaging and transport. So far, 63 groups involving over 550 households have participated with each household saving on average £570 pa off their household bills and 1.2 tonnes of carbon overall.

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# ECOLISE: Local communities leading the way to a low carbon society

ECOLISE 

29/09/2014

ECOLISE, the European Network for Community-Led Initiatives on Climate Change and Sustainability, is a coalition of organisations engaged in promoting and supporting local communities across Europe in their efforts to build pathways to a sustainable future.

## ECOLISE member organisations/groups

01. Transition Network
02. Transition Research Network
03. Transition Germany
04. Transition France
05. Transition United Kingdom
06. Transition Ireland and Northern Ireland
07. Transition Spain
08. Transition Netherlands
09. Transition Italy
10. Transition Sweden
11. Transition Wallonia-Brussels (Belgium)
12. Lisbon University, Portugal
13. Schumacher Institute for Sustainable Systems (UK)
14. Centre for Ecological Learning Luxembourg (CELL)
15. Polish Institute of Sustainable Development
16. Global Ecovillages Network (GEN)-Europe
17. GAIA Education
18. Permaculture Association (UK)
19. Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI) Europe
20. The European Association for Information on Local Development (AEIDL)
21. ZMAO - Green Network of Activist Groups, Croatia



The members of ECOLISE include international, national and sometimes regional networks of community-based initiatives, as well as other bodies engaged in European-level research, training, communications or other activities to support community-based action on climate change and sustainability. By bringing these organisations together, ECOLISE seeks to establish a common Europe-wide agenda and a platform for collective action.

## Working towards a Europe of dynamic, resilient communities with a net zero carbon footprint

The ECOLISE vision is of a Europe where the members of every local community play a lead role in ensuring local economic, social and environmental sustainability. Through their actions, they have helped their communities to achieve a net zero carbon footprint and in so doing have made a major contribution to the establishment of a post-carbon, ecological society in Europe.

To support its member organisations in achieving this vision, the mission of ECOLISE is to be a shared platform for learning, action and advocacy of community-led initiatives on climate change and sustainability in Europe.

Through its activities, ECOLISE seeks to raise the profile of community-based action on climate change and sustainability in Europe, to facilitate exchange, cooperation and knowledge development and sharing among stakeholders across Europe, and to strengthen the collective influence of its members in EU, national and local policy making. ECOLISE draws on experiences from other parts of the world and, where possible, seeks to be a source of inspiration and support for similar initiatives outside of Europe.

ECOLISE emerged from a study undertaken by AEIDL in 2012/2013, which sought to assess the status of community-led action on climate change and sustainability in Europe. The study identified in excess of 2,000 local, community-led initiatives directly engaged in activities in this area. It also brought together the key stakeholders from across Europe for a discussion on

the establishment of a European network to support cooperation and exchange between these initiatives. A first meeting of stakeholder representatives took place in Brussels on the 13-14 June 2012.

## ECOLISE

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# 'Le Zeybu solidaire', a fair trade market for Eybens



29/09/2014

To combat the closure of their food stores, residents of a district in the town of Eybens (France) have launched a cooperative, fair trade market for local farm produce. The project was a winner of the 2013 REVES European Excellence Award.



Eybens is a town of some 9,000 inhabitants, near Grenoble, in the department of Isère in south-eastern France. Faced with the closure of many of their local food shops, residents of the Maisons Neuves district started the community-led co-operative project, "Les Amis du Zeybu".

Launched in 2009, the concept is simple: namely it aims to meet a demand locally, for quality food produce at reasonable prices. Additional goals are to ensure 'fair trade' for both producers and purchasers and to be environmentally sustainable e.g. by keeping transport costs to a minimum and ensuring the good management of any waste.

## Solidarity

Held on two Tuesdays per month the Zeybu market sells certified locally-produced farm food. Distribution is organised by member volunteers. Meanwhile, customers who are all Zeybu members, collect their pre-ordered goods (selected in advance via the Internet). They use a special credit card and 'currency exchange' system.

An innovative social aspect is that as well as supplying the ordered goods, producers can, if they wish, also donate an additional 10% of their products free of charge. If requested, this can be added to a customer's original order and paid for at the market with the card. Any money raised is then donated to a local association that credits the accounts of local people in difficulty. This means they too can collect pre-ordered items on market day using the card just like any other member. Importantly, there is no stigma attached as they are not identified.

## Widening social links

Various other social activities have been developed around the Zeybu fair trade market. These include workshops focused on bread making (the Zeybu bakery), events such as a Christmas market and music festival and training courses to teach children about environmental issues.

Finally, the project has attracted widespread interest and support regionally, nationally and internationally. It was a winner of the 2013 REVES European Excellence Award, organised by the

European Network of Cities and Regions for the Social Economy. It was also recognised as a 'Social Innovation Village' at the Social and solidarity economy (ESS in French) convention held in Paris, in June 2011.

## 'Les Amis du Zeybu' (Rhône-Alpes, France)

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# Promoting Sustainable Neighbourhoods in Brussels



29/09/2014

Residents and users of more than 40 separate districts in Brussels (Belgium) have embraced a sustainable, citizen-led initiative, '*Quartiers durables citoyens*', aimed at improving their neighbourhoods.



The initiative is being run by the Capital region administrative authority for the environment, Bruxelles Environnement. Since 2008 it has launched annual calls for a diversity of local community projects. The idea is to encourage those living or working in Brussels' districts to become collectively involved in projects promoting various environmental or urban improvements. Among others, these issues cover energy conservation, waste reduction, air quality, more efficient use of spaces, greener areas and strengthening social cohesion.

## Greener and more friendly

To date, around 40 Brussels' districts have signed-up to the process, which is open to all citizens of a particular neighbourhood, as well as representatives of the public and private sectors locally. There are various types of support for the projects. Neighbourhoods can, for instance, benefit from the services of a professional coach to help them develop a collective approach or to establish an action plan. Communication tools and financial support and/or expertise are also available.

Neighbourhoods are supported in different ways, depending on their needs, over a period of approximately 24 months.

Examples of actions include a neighbourhood trading and recycling centre, a shared facility for bread-making as well as a variety of schemes to encourage 'urban walking' and the shared discovery and exploration of local areas. Elsewhere, there have been projects to develop greener spaces through, for example greening of roof areas, meeting areas or various improvements to social housing – saving energy, or transforming a into a vegetable garden promoting organic produce.

## Collective action

The neighbourhood projects are typically managed by a group of five to 10 highly motivated local residents. This core team is then usually extended by a further 20-50 people who are regularly involved at different stages (e.g. the call for tenders for projects, mobilisation phase, project development etc). Collaboration is actively encouraged e.g. developing projects with public partners, local associations, cultural centres local shopkeepers etc. Such partnerships are a key element of the call for proposals for projects. Moreover, the shared involvement of as many stakeholders as possible will help to assure the sustainability and stability of actions and to generate innovative and creative ideas.

Finally, in order to ensure support for the maximum number of initiatives within the limits of available resources, a participatory budgetary system has recently been introduced for the exploration and allocation of available financial resources and other aid to the districts. Every year this process is enriched by the sharing of experiences and best practices of previous projects.

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# Samsø: Europe's Renewable Energy Isle



29/09/2014

Citizens of the central Denmark island of Samsø have fulfilled their goals of becoming energy self-sufficient: All of their electricity comes from wind turbines; while more than 70% of their heating needs are met using renewable technologies.



In 1997, the island, whose population numbers just over 3,000 inhabitants, was named Denmark's 'renewable energy island', based on ambitious goals to become energy self-sufficient by 2008. Two years earlier than envisaged, i.e. in 2006, using 11 onshore wind turbines this target had already been reached. The network of turbines generate enough clean energy annually to meet the Samsø community's entire electricity requirements. On still-wind days, when the turbines can't generate enough electricity, energy flows from Denmark's main energy grid to the island's network.

## Net electricity balance

In turn, on windy days Samsø exports wind-generated energy to the national main system. Indeed, the island has a positive annual net electricity balance, as it exports far more energy to the mainland than it receives. (Each turbine produces enough electricity to power 2,000 homes per year.)

Meanwhile, homes and businesses in the larger towns draw their heat and hot water from renewably-fuelled district heating systems. On the northern end of the island, between the villages of Nordby and Maarup, a system of 2,500 m<sup>2</sup> of solar panels heats

water that in turn warms the village's homes. A woodchip burner that uses waste wood from Samsø's Brattingsborg Forest backs up the solar heating system. On the southern side of the island, the towns of Tranbjerg, Onsbjerg, Brundby and Ballen are heated by district heating plants. Moreover, a number of private homeowners have replaced their oil burners with solar panels, ground-source heating and woodchip and pellet stoves. Altogether, these efforts have replaced more than 70% of heat generation with renewable technologies.

## Energy Academy

The innovative islanders also have their own Energy Academy and energy office which provide them and visitors with information on renewable energy technologies and energy savings. Samsø has received several awards for its achievements in switching to renewable energy. Currently, a trial project is underway at the academy investigating the use of rapeseed and elephant grass for heating purposes.

The growing trend towards more sustainable solutions doesn't just concern renewable energy, as the academy is also investigating greener technologies for the transport

sector, including powering motor vehicles with rapeseed oil and hydrogen fuel. Some foresee a future where cars and trucks will be powered by hydrogen generated by wind turbines. In the meantime, the majority of island vehicles consume traditional petroleum-based fuels, but these emissions are offset by the offshore turbines, including for the three ferries that connect the island to the country's mainland.

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# Community-led 'Locality' development



29/09/2014

Responding to the needs of local communities in England, Locality is a leading UK network of community development trusts, social action centres and community enterprises.



The member-led organisation was created in 2012, through the merger of two long established membership organisations, the Development Trusts Association and the British Association of Settlements and Social Action Centres. It has over 480 members who jointly share a combined annual income of some €389 million (over two thirds of which is generated through trading activities) and total assets worth over €784 million.

Locality considers communities as places of many possibilities – from the provision of services, shops, housing, parks etc to places of empowerment, wealth generation or social justice. Its overall aim is to build a movement that is based on the values of social justice and community self-determination.

## Spirit of innovation

The organisation believes in fostering a new spirit of innovation and enterprise to build resilient communities where people are proud to live and work.

Its membership varies considerably in terms of the scope and scale of their activities. Responding to local needs, these typically include initiatives for recycling, environmental improvements, the management of public spaces, micro credit and advice and debt counselling. Other areas of

interest include: family support, child care services, festival and arts events, community grants schemes, affordable housing, volunteering and job training.

Driven by a social justice agenda, the members also largely operate in areas of market failure, where the state and the private sector have struggled. Importantly, members believe that the starting point for overcoming many of the entrenched problems faced by our society is at the neighbourhood level.

## Case studies

Examples of member case studies are:

- **Coin Street Community Builders:** based at London's South Bank, the enterprise has a turnover of some €9.7m and assets of over €36 m. It runs a neighbourhood centre, a children's centre, 320 housing units, a large retail and office complex (including the iconic landmark Oxo Tower) and arts and cultural events. [www.coinstreet.org](http://www.coinstreet.org)
- **Goodwin Development Trust:** based in Hull, in the north-east, the trust owns and manages 14 buildings. Employing over 300 people, it is the largest non-public sector employer in the city. Managed entirely by residents of a large social housing estate, it runs a wide range of

services including children's centres, training & enterprise programmes and health & well-being projects.

[www.goodwintrust.org/](http://www.goodwintrust.org/)

- **Glendale Gateway:** based in rural north England, Glendale manages a community centre, a library, youth hostel, nine housing units and several shops. It also runs business support services, the local tourist information centre, a community website and various leisure projects. [www.wooler.org.uk/glendale-gateway-trust](http://www.wooler.org.uk/glendale-gateway-trust).

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# 'Union Gewerbehof' – A cooperative business centre



29/09/2014

A group of unemployed people in Dortmund (Germany) have come together to create their own jobs by converting derelict industrial buildings into a successful cooperative business centre.



Since the middle of the 1980s, "Union", the western suburb of the Dortmund inner city district suffered from the gradual closure of a steel factory and breweries. Many people left the suburb, blaming poor housing conditions; and of those who remain, a high proportion (38%) is on social welfare while more than 50% belong to ethnic minorities, or non-German nationalities.

The Union Gewerbehof was started in 1986 by a group of 13 unemployed people, many of whom had previously taken part together in an earlier job creation scheme (ABM, or *Arbeitsbeschaffungsmaßnahme*). Building on their experiences, the group decided to create jobs for themselves – firstly by renovating an abandoned industrial building and secondly by converting the premises into shared (low-rent) business units for local small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Another goal was to incorporate, where possible, environmental aspects into the project through for example, the use of greener building materials and low energy heating systems.

## Power of self-help

In a remarkable demonstration of the power of self-help, almost all the start-up capital for the initiative came from the members them-

selves – who between them raised a total of €51000 via 67 shares of €767 each. A further €10000 was invested by a trade union.

To cover the costs of the renovation of the building, which was completed in 1992, the project also received a regional grant of €2 million. In addition, it received minor assistance from the city's economic development department.

Today, the centre houses 90 businesses employing a total of 270 people. Although it includes some larger companies, the majority of tenants are micro-enterprises or single self-employed people, many of them in sectors such as creative industries, training and consultancy.

## Simple model

The Union Gewerbehof has a very simple operating model. It does not need to advertise for tenants, and despite a higher than average turnover of tenants, space rarely stays empty for longer than a month or two. The only services formally on offer, apart from space and utilities, are meeting rooms, toilets, photocopier and coffee machine. There is also a vegetarian canteen and a coffee shop, but that is run as separate self-supporting business.

And this is a model that works: With an annual income of around €500000, the Gewerbehof supports itself financially. Rent averages €5 (plus approximately €2,4 for charges) per month and square metre. Crucially, tenants do not need to put up a guarantee to secure a space, making the centre accessible to all entrepreneurs.

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# REALIS, a support network for social innovation



22/03/2014

In 2006, the union of production cooperatives in Languedoc-Roussillon (SCOP) began putting together a set of complementary measures, which now provide a framework to support social innovation and the development of the social economy in the region.



Languedoc-Roussillon, in the south of France, has two distinguishing characteristics: a rapidly growing population, with many people attracted by the region's climate and quality of life; and a high rate of unemployment, about 14.5% of the workforce.

## Non-traditional activities

In 2006, activists in the social economy identified a significant cohort that had the desire to create new activities, but without wanting or being able to create traditional businesses. Recognising that the appropriate tools did not exist to support these activities, which demonstrated considerable potential for job creation and for addressing unmet social needs, this "cooperative activists" group decided to work together to build a new set of tools and services.

## A supportive environment

Seven years later, and with the benefit of EU and regional support, the following instruments have been established:

- ALTER\*INCUB, a social economy project incubator, which supports about a dozen new projects every year. Since its inception, ALTER\*INCUB has facilitated the creation of around 30 social enterprises,

operating mainly in the environment, ICT, health and culture sectors.

<http://www.alterincub-lr.coop/>

- REPLIC, a cooperative with public and private members that creates social and environmental businesses in response to identified needs in the area. It has so far established eight cooperatives, operating in the areas of recycling, transport, eco-mobility and hospitality. Together they employ 70 people, including 35 who are in professional insertion.

<http://www.replic.fr/>

- COEPTIS, a school of cooperative management, which seeks to strengthen the managerial and governance practices of companies in the social economy. With its ten permanent and 45 consultant teachers, COEPTIS offers three curriculums and accepts 200 trainees per year

<http://www.coeptis.coop/index.php>

- COVENTIS is an annual business convention for businesses operating in the social and solidarity economy. Targeting both professionals and the general public, it brings together more than 130 exhibitors to present their actions, services and solutions.

<http://www.coventis.org/>

- The REALIS Business Hotel was opened in December 2013 at a cost of around €10 million, which was financed by the Region and the EU. It can accommodate 30 to 50 social economy enterprises and is also the main meeting point for social economy stakeholders in the region.

To complement these tools, specific funding has also been put in place to support the creation and development of social economy enterprises. REALIS was one of five projects selected by the REVES Excellence Award. REVES is the European Network of Cities and Regions for the Social and Solidarity Economy. It has also inspired social economy policy in several other French regions.

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# Tot Raval promoting social cohesion in a district of Barcelona



29/09/2014

Tot Raval is a community-based foundation working on numerous projects to improve the quality-of-life and social cohesion among the inhabitants of Raval, one of Barcelona's most disadvantaged districts.



The Raval district of Barcelona is one of the neighbourhoods with the highest population density in Europe: 50 000 people live in an area of just over one square kilometre almost half of whom are of foreign origin. The socio-economic situation of the population is among the lowest of the city.

On the other hand, the community has a vast network of services, associations and collectives that for a number of years, have invested and worked to improve the area and adapt to its constant evolution and diversity. Its model of evolution serves as a demonstration for other territories and European cities that share similar challenges.

## Mutual respect

The Tot Raval foundation's main activities are focused on the development of community work in various areas including social, educational, cultural, occupational, economic and commercial. Key priorities are to promote mutual respect among the different communities living or working in the community and, importantly, to fight against any perceived xenophobia.

Tot Raval pursues its shared community work (e.g. in 2012 it ran 25 projects and sponsored 55 others) with innovative strate-

gies to contribute to the local development and generation of a social economy through the involvement of everyone in the neighbourhood. For example, in one year alone (2012) more than 300 organisations and over 5000 people were directly involved in its projects. An estimated 39 000 people benefited from these activities.

## Quality-of-life

Among various actions, a priority objective is the improvement of the quality-of-life of Raval's children and teenagers, and in particular, fighting educational failure. This is an activity that brings together more than 30 groups working jointly in areas such as improving reading and supporting schools.

Enhancing job opportunities is another focus. Here a work network, "Xarxa Laboral del Raval" has been established involving over 50 businesses and/or potential employers. The aim is to encourage job placements and mentoring etc.

Among others, the foundation places great emphasis in steering the dynamics and social cohesion of the community through participation in the design and execution of various cultural activities. A notably success is the Raval culture festival "Festival de cultura".

The foundation also places a high priority on inter-cultural work through work groups and, for instance, the shared celebration of different religious festivals.

Finally, another important focus is on improving healthcare in the community. Here, the foundation is working on the development of an action plan promoting healthcare for Raval's residents. More than 350 healthcare professionals are involved in this initiative.

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# Together for each other



2009 2014

Imre 'Zorro' Mata is leading a community-based local initiative that has established a social cooperative in the heart of Cserehát, one of Hungary's poorest regions. The project aims to improve the standard of living of the local people, mainly Roma, by carrying out community activities, providing educational opportunities and creating jobs.



In 1995 Zorro and his wife Katalin started to cooperate with a foundation of Dutch origin that supports local development in the region. The Dutch foundation gave potatoes to Zorro for the Roma population to grow on his land. Three years later, however, the husband-and-wife team both lost their jobs. Their best option now was to focus on those activities, such as agriculture and forestry, which were formerly secondary occupations. Successful cooperation over the next two years led to the establishment of their own foundation, 'More Together For Each Other', which has served as the parent organisation for all their initiatives since this time.

## School for Roma children

One of the foundation's first tasks was to clear away the 'worthless' wood from the forested areas, ahead of distributing the wood among the families of the workers. The foundation also started a Saturday school for Roma children and offered scholarships for Roma and non-Roma young people. It also launched several programmes, including a 'Milk for the child' initiative, classes for women on household skills and weaving, and a community donation scheme (potatoes, beans, shoes, etc.).

In 2005, the foundation became involved in the UNDP-Cserehát programme. Under this programme and in cooperation with the

UNDP resource centre and the community coaches, the foundation was able to develop the skills and capacity of local actors in the area and draw up strategic goals for the future in line with market demands.

## Social cooperative

In 2010, following decade of hard work, it became necessary to establish a social cooperative and the team applied successfully for a European Social Fund (ESF) grant. With the help of the EU-financed programme they were able to renew the headquarters of the social cooperative, give the required instruction to workers, purchase new equipment for large work orders, and employ 10 people for a year.

Last year, under another ESF supported programme, the alternate-evening school managed by Zorro's foundation took a major step forward. The school for Roma children became available every day. Today, the social cooperative accounts for 8-31 (depending on the season) jobs in the local community and the alternate-evening school is attended by 45 children.

The social cooperative has also successfully applied for an EAFRD-LEADER grant, which is currently being implemented. The cooperative will use the grant to buy a new tractor, a trailer and a machine for chopping wood. The next step would be to install a

small factory for producing briquettes for the inhabitants of the Cserehát. The main goal is to be able to employ 30 people throughout the year.

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# TSI promotes social innovation among Turin's young entrepreneurs



29/09/2014

Twenty-six partner organisations have joined a new initiative that supports fledgling social innovation businesses in Turin (Italy) run by young entrepreneurs. More than 30 SMEs look set to benefit.



Cities face new challenges due to economic, environmental and demographic changes. However, they also have enormous potential as centres of innovation due to their concentrations of diverse skills, highly-educated people, resources and networks. In order to support sustainable, intelligent and inclusive growth, cities need to develop new models.

One such model is being promoted by the municipality of Turin in northern Italy (population c. 900 000): "Torino Social Innovation" (TSI) is a set of strategies and instruments to support new young enterprises addressing social needs (e.g. education, employment, mobility, health) as well as representing economic and social value.

Its main objectives are to:

- Foster a culture and awareness of social innovation;
- Attract young innovators through the development of creative communities; and
- Sustain new forms of collaborative economy.

The TSI programme, supported by Italy and the European Union (i.e. it is a part of the EU's URBACT programme), brings together a multi-stakeholder platform of more than 26 partners – representing the city, region and province, other public and private sector organisations and the University of Turin.

## Partner expertise

Each partner has agreed to help promote 'social innovation' in its particular area of expertise. Together, the partners provide a wide range of services covering six areas:

1. Space – including office space for co-working, but also providing social housing to accommodate young workers coming from outside the municipality;
2. Information – training, including social innovation workshops, courses and special events;
3. Technical support – integrating testing procedures, prototyping support;
4. Mentoring – covering legal and economic, financial consultancy, market analysis;
5. Financial resources – public grants, private loans, public guarantee funds, new innovative financial instruments as social equity; and
6. Monitoring and evaluation – examining the social impacts of measures.

The first action of the TSI programme is "FacilTo Giovani" an initiative, which runs until end of 2015, aiming to sustain social innovation businesses. The beneficiaries are all young people between aged 18- 40 years, aspiring entrepreneurs or perhaps running spin-off enterprises launched in the past four years (with the proviso that the majority of shareholders and/ or legal representatives are young people).

## Identifying good business plans

Among other benefits, the initiative provides a mentoring service in order to help develop the ideas contained in good business plans and to provide grants for social and innovative businesses. The mentoring is provided by four partners (the city's polytechnic and university, the municipality and the province of Turin).

The total public budget allocated for this is €1.65 million, of which €200 000 covers services, €650 000 is available for grants (providing up to 20% of eligible costs per project) and €800 000 is available to guarantee up to 80% low-interest private-sector loans.

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# SEWA: Serving the needs of self-employed women



29/09/2014

SEWA, the Self-Employed Women's Association, has drawn inspiration from the values promoted by Gandhi – such as community mobilisation and self-help – to promote the empowerment of disadvantaged women in all spheres of life, both private and public.



The association was established in 1972, as a trade union to represent the rights of women who are working, but without any formal contract. These workers tend to have irregular low-paid work and no social security provisions. One of SEWA's main objectives is to help them improve their working conditions and to negotiate better rates of pay.

Based in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, the independent association has over 350 000 members in this, and other Indian states. It has also provided expertise to set-up similar schemes in other countries such as Afghanistan and Sri Lanka. Apart from organising workers, it works to help members improve their living conditions, and especially to alleviate the extreme poverty that many suffer. Thus SEWA has developed other activities (banking, micro-finance and pensions, literacy training, fair-trade marketing of handicrafts) based on the needs of their members, throughout their lives.

## Co-operative bank for women

This 'life-cycle approach' includes, for example, a women-only banking service developed because the traditional banks did not want to cater to the demands of

women who needed, for example, small loans to buy raw materials/goods to sell. Moreover, many of the women felt that the banks treated them with contempt because they were poor. The service provides products and services for specific requirements such as capital needed to buy stock to resell, births, weddings, training for a job, buying a house, funerals, etc.

To ensure financial autonomy from money lenders, SEWA encourages its members to save for the long-term as a condition for granting of micro-finance loans. The bank also has a fixed term deposit account that gives compounded interest. Since many members are illiterate, videos are used to teach women how to calculate interest rates.

In 2010, the SEWA bank had 330 000 clients who saved together over 1 billion Rupees (around €20 million). Its success has also inspired the Indian government to look into the establishment of a women-only bank (for all sectors).

## SEWA resource centres

Outside of Ahmedabad, SEWA is looking to provide various services for women in deprived areas: A community centre in the rural area of Pij, for example, provides

support for the organisation of those working in the tobacco sector. Training is offered in using computers and a workshop has been set up for the processing of local products such as spices and pulses. Similar centres are established throughout Gujarat, sharing resources provided locally, but also by SEWA's regional centres.

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# Gardening for good in Porto



29/01/2014

Residents and local communities have joined an innovative and practical scheme to help create numerous new kitchen gardens in the suburbs of the region of Porto (Portugal).



The 'Horta à Porta' collective gardening project for the growing of organic vegetables, fruit, flowers and herbs etc is the brainchild of LIPOR – a waste treatment organisation for eight of the region's 11 municipalities. The idea is through gardening to encourage people to return to their roots (i.e. to traditional values and cultures of the land) to build active involvement and to mobilise and engage local communities.

Launched in 2004, the new community gardens are found mainly in the northern suburbs of the metropolitan region of Porto (population c. 2 million) in Porto, Matosinhos, Maia, Póvoa do Varzim and Vila do Conde.

## Waiting list

With a total budget of around €240 000, the project is co-financed by the EU's LIFE+ programme and Cohesion Fund and by LIPOR. To date, there are 23 gardens covering a total of four hectares – with a large-scale increase forecast in the near future as more and more local residents and communities express an interest in becoming involved. According to LIPOR, there are more than 1 000 people on a waiting list to become involved in one or other of the green areas.

The project works on the basis of an expression of interest from local individuals, communities or associations to form a new 'Horta à Porta' garden within the network. Once accepted onto the scheme, each garden is then run as a separate entity i.e. with its own specific objectives and spatial context. Importantly, however, strategies are developed in partnership with the other gardens and with technical guidance, support and training from LIPOR. For example, professional gardening and composting experts are available, as well as recycling training and assistance in decision-making.

## Community dynamic

There is a strong community dynamic throughout the network of gardens. While the production and management of each individual plot are individual responsibilities, overall responsibilities are collective and, in some cases, virtually self-managing. Exchange of produce between growers is also encouraged, rather than their sale – helping to promote mutual recognition and an overall enhancement of gardening.

Finally, the gardens have been very well-received by the public and by local communities. Residents in the district of

Maia (on the edge of Porto), for instance, were interviewed about their user satisfaction. Many families emphasised their importance to the community. Moreover, one interviewee reported that she had become increasingly estranged from her daughter over a period of 25 years. The garden, however, has changed this and brought them back together in a new context.

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# 'Spazio Ragazzi': Social agriculture for young people



29/09/2014

The Italian 'social agriculture' model was introduced in the province of Grosseto, Tuscany, in 2009. One of the model's initiatives focuses on children and young people.



In Italy, social agriculture refers to a range of services available to people in rural and peri-urban areas including: rehabilitation/therapy for those with disabilities; training and job placement; and training and education for underprivileged groups (youngsters, migrants, etc.). Social agriculture relies on the government support and on the participation of the private sector and individuals. Social agriculture is very innovative: it is linked to the management of crops and animals, food production and the provision of services to people and communities.

The 'Amiata Responsabile' programme was launched in 2009 in several municipalities located at the foot of Mount Amiata to implement several social agriculture initiatives.

## Space for youngsters

One of these initiatives is 'Spazio Ragazzi' (Space for Youngsters) which has a budget of €295 323. It is being implemented by the Leader local action group, Fabbrica Ambiente Rurale Maremma, and helped set up a rural community centre for youngsters aged 6-14 in the Municipality of Roccastrada.

The centre, which is now a hub and connecting point for the two involved farms, organises recreational activities for discovering rural life and production cycles.

An 'educational' farm explains the productions of vegetables and other agricultural products. The centre also focuses on promoting ways to enhance the landscape, environmental protection, the conservation of biodiversity and the production of electricity from solar energy.

The project also offers summer activities, such as rural camps, and opportunities for children and youngsters to experience first hand the relationship between agriculture and nature during holiday periods. 'Rural laboratories' or workshops teach up to 65 young people about the cycle of plants and animals, gardening and beekeeping.

## Bottom-up

Spazio Ragazzi is a bottom-up initiative, having its roots in the local community (families and associations). Public bodies, the FAR Maremma local action group and the University of Pisa are also involved, along with the two farms ('Pietratonda' and 'Panierino') and the social cooperative that manages the rural centre. Several agricultural organisations and associations have also been involved in the project. The structure itself is owned by the Municipality of Roccastrada and it will be managed by Coeso, a consortium made up of public and private bodies, together with the private social cooperatives.

Social agriculture has led to the diversification of farm activities and the engagement of young people in areas of life that they might not come across otherwise. Moreover, the model can be transferred to other rural areas.

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# Empowering rural women in Kavar



29/01/2014

In one of Turkey's poorest regions, the Kavar Basin Rural Development Project has enabled hundreds of women to not only earn an income but take an active role in the designing and management of local initiatives themselves.



In Turkey, 39% of the population in rural areas live in poverty (less than €3 a day). The Husnu M. Özyeğin Foundation set out to address this issue and demonstrate a viable model of creating sustainable rural living through an integrated, multi-sectoral and multi stakeholder approach.

The Kavar Basin Rural Development Project was launched in the autumn of 2008 in six villages and five hamlets of the province of Bitlis in south-eastern Turkey. The area is one of the poorest in the country. Half of the population is under 15. The region was evacuated in the 90s during the armed conflict between Kurdish militants and the Turkish army.

## Integrated local development

The specific objectives of the project were to build economic capacity, improve social welfare, empower women, increase sustainable use of natural resources, build multi stakeholder partnerships and change rural policies through a participatory model.

Under the project, a range of initiatives were carried out, including:

- The provision of bee-keeping training and equipment for 40 women in Kavar (In 2013 the women produced 4.5 tonnes of honey).
- The founding of a cooperative which has organised the daily collection of the milk and its sale to a dairy farm in Van.

- The establishment of walnut and cherry orchards for 124 families. All the farmers received training on managing orchards, pruning and tree inoculation.
- Improvements to sanitary conditions of the animal barns.
- The creation of 5 village rooms in Kavar. A community centre was also built as well as 2 communal bread ovens to decrease the workload of women.
- The construction of a primary school to increase the levels of school enrolment. Two kindergartens, children's play-grounds and a teachers' dormitory were also built.
- The provision of scholarships for university students as well as computer training and university preparation courses for young people.
- The setting up of a children's choir and the organisation of summer festivals.
- The offer of literacy classes and women's support trainings.

## Sustainability

Through its 'economic' activities, the project has enabled hundreds of women to not only earn an income but take an active role in the designing and management of these initiatives themselves.

Finally, the project helped construct water ducts in grazing lands and trained shepherds in pastureland protection and reformation. Moreover, through the workshops tree planting and seed festivals, it is hoped that the raised environmental awareness of young people will ensure that know how is transferred to future generations.

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# Solidarity with evicted Roma families leads to local development initiatives



29/09/2014

Following the eviction of 73 Roma families in Cluj-Napoca, northwest Romania, a set of coordinated interventions were developed. These were initiated in cooperation with a wide range of local development actors, including, most importantly, the communities concerned.



Pata-Rât is a spatially segregated, informal, urban settlement near the landfill on the outskirts of Cluj-Napoca (population: 300 000) where currently around 300 families are living. It is composed of four separate parts that were formed during the last 20 years through repeated evictions of poor, mainly Roma families, from central areas of the city. Some of these families were originally from rural areas, but migrated to the city for work. For more than half of them, working in selective waste collection on the landfill provides their main means of subsistence.

## Combating ghettoisation

On the 17 December 2010, almost overnight, 73 Roma families were evicted from the city centre and relocated in Pata-Rât, and their old homes demolished. A strong civil movement was catalysed around the Foundation Desire and the Association Amare Phrala in opposition to such 'Roma ghettoisation' in the city and demanding social justice. With the support of activists and academics, this movement led to the creation of the Working Group of Civil Society Organisations ([www.gloc.ro](http://www.gloc.ro)) in January 2011. The following year a set of

coordinated interventions were launched under the coordination of the Municipality of Cluj and a local team from United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

A strong grassroots initiative formed in response to the most urgent needs, namely to offer support and safety to the children living near the landfill. A volunteer group made up of students and experts organised the first Children's Tent on the landfill in 2012 and offered regular educational and leisure activities to the most vulnerable children in the area. The initiative was supported by the Social and Medical Services Directorate of the Municipality.

## Education and community-centred activities

In the summer of 2013, Fundatia pentru Dezvoltarea Popoarelor launched a project for the children from the landfill and the two teams merged. Currently, they offer educational and childcare activities in a mobile day care centre run by the municipality near the landfill.

Moreover, in 2012 the community evicted from the city centre established an NGO, the Community Association of Roma from

Coastel, with the support of activists and human rights organisations, and took concrete steps to improve their living conditions. Among other successes, the NGO constructed a community centre in only three weeks, using their own resources, manpower and mostly local donations.

## UNDP Project for Area-based Roma Inclusion in Cluj (Cluj-Napoca, Romania)

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# Regional brand boosts rural development



29/09/2014

The Nitra-Self Governing Region is the first region in Slovakia to have established its own financial instruments to support the implementation of LEADER-type integrated strategies on rural development. A good example of the success of these initiatives was the creation of a regional brand.



The Nitra Region in southwest Slovakia contains 354 villages and has a population of 700 000. The region has the mildest climate and the most productive agricultural centres in the country. In 2006 to 2008, the regional authorities created the conditions for the implementation of integrated strategies of territorial development in rural micro-regions. In particular, they provided training, increased professional capacities to mobilise local potential, and prepared for the implementation of LEADER-type strategies. Five LEADER local action groups (LAGs) were approved but the regional authorities decided to launch an additional programme to finance 15 other public-private partnerships operating outside of the LEADER areas. In 2013, up to 116 projects were implemented in the areas concerned.

## Regional brand

This specific regional programme has supported a regional branding project that aims to promote the area, build capacities and introduce regional branding of products in villages. One positive outcome was the brand, 'Regionálny produkt PONITRIE' ([www.produktponitrie.sk](http://www.produktponitrie.sk)), which was set up to denote quality, respect for local culture and traditions and green values. A network of local producers and service providers are involved in the brand's production. The project concerns three

LEADER groups and three other public-private partnerships.

Adopting a 'bottom-up' approach, the regional authorities worked with representatives of craftsmen and producers from the area, whose knowledge and experience were reflected not only in the brand's design, but also in the devised criteria for evaluating the quality of products and granting certificates. Such cooperation also ensured the successful marketing of the brand and the distribution of products.

Partnerships were forged in a wide range of areas: painting on canvas, silk and glass; production of high quality replicas of contemporary weapons; production of utility and decorative ceramics; creation of miniature folklore costumes; wood-carving, macramé, engraving and Easter egg decorating; ornamented honey-cakes; grape cultivation and wine production; bee-keeping and bee products (e.g. candles from beeswax); production and sale of mead wine; animal husbandry and horse breeding; operation of a teahouse; agri-tourism accommodations; boarding and conference services and summer camps.

## Certificates

In December 2013, certificates were delivered to the first users of regional brand. These included a tourism operator, food

producers (pumpkin seed, beeswax, mead wine, goat's milk and cow's milk), traditional crafts producers (boxwood, decorative ceramic subjects, wooden statues and reliefs, dolls in folklore costume, landscape oil paintings), and accommodation and boarding providers.

In short, the brand is adding real value to the local products of the region, boosting local sources, creating new job positions and connecting individuals and groups.

## Regionálny produkt PONITRIE® (Nitra, Slovakia)

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# Supernatural transforms a landfill into a park



29/09/2014

A sustainable community project run by a Serbian environmental NGO and supported by public and private funds has restored a degraded former river Danube beauty spot, close to Belgrade. There are significant environmental and social benefits.



Ada Huja, once an island on the river Danube – situated just four kilometres from the centre of Belgrade – used to be known for its lush vegetation and as an important site for wild birds. However, in the 1980s the site began to be used as a landfill tip.

## Industrial waste

As a result, the free flow of fresh water from the Danube was blocked from entering this section of the river branch. For many decades, communal and industrial waste waters were being dumped on the other side of the river, turning it into an ecological and health hazard for the local population. Additionally, the tip of the newly formed peninsula served as an illegal depot for industrial rubble, thus, completely devastating the delicately balanced ecosystem of Ada Huja.

In October 2011, on behalf of the municipality most concerned (i.e. Palilula) the Serbian environmental non governmental organisation (NGO), Supernatural, began the project to clean-up the section of the Ada Huja; and to establish the 'Supernatural Park'.

The main objective was to restore the Ada Huja ecosystem, one of the most polluted water areas around Belgrade. This would be achieved by ending the dumping of illegal waste; carrying out hydrological works to clear the toxic sludge from the site; and by restoring the natural flow of water back into the original river branch. Another objective was to create an environmental centre.

## Think tank

At the same time, a 'Think Tank' was created to oversee the works, comprising of representatives from national and regional authorities, water and environmental protection agencies and other experts. Funding for the project has been raised primarily from the private sector, including support from multinational companies, as well as public sector grants, including EU-Youth in action.

By April 2012 some 2,000 cubic metres of waste have been cleared from the site. Following on from this during 2012-13 an area once inaccessible to the public, has been transformed into the Supernatural Park, with the creation of five direct jobs and a further 10 created indirectly.

Over 3,000 square metres of gardens has been created, including a kids play area. In addition, a green classroom – to educate young people about environmental protection, and a green house – for the experimental cultivation and exhibition of plants have been created.

To date, more than 20,000 people have visited the park.

## Supernatural Park (Belgrade region, Serbia)

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