

Country Report Slovakia



The present fiche aims to present, in summary, how youth-related projects and initiatives are supported by the Rural Development Programmes in a number of countries selected for the second phase of the research in the framework of the Youth and Young farmers Thematic Initiative.

1. Actors involved in youth related projects and main sources of financing

The main governmental actor involved in youth-related projects in Slovakia is the Slovak Youth Institute, Iuventa, which operates under the Minister of Education.

There are some private grant initiatives for community projects, also in rural areas, as part of the corporate social responsibility strategy of large private companies, such as SPP (Slovak Gas Enterprise), telecommunication operators (Orange, O2, T-Com) or banks (Tatrabanka).

In terms of civil society, there are only a few actors. The Association of Slovak Young Farmers, ASYF, is the only civic association at national level connecting rural youth. There are some local youth initiatives, such as Vidiecka asociácia mládeže VAM (a rural youth association) from Stará Ľubovňa. Some religious institutions in rural areas also support free time activities for young people.



LAGs have some youth-related actions and young people are involved in a number of LAG activities.

The main sources of financing rural youth-related projects are the ESF, Youth in Action, government funds, and private financing (e.g. corporate social responsibility schemes, private grant initiatives and 2% of income tax that can be granted by a tax payer to a chosen NGO/civic association), while the EAFRD contribution appears to be very modest.

KomPrax - Competencies for praxis

Financed by the European Social Fund (2013 – 2014)

The project aims at improving youth's employability and strengthening their managerial skills. The number of young people (youth leaders aged 15-24 years) involved in the project activities is foreseen to be 7 128. Together with youth coordinators, the total planned number of the people involved in KomPrax is 11 728. Each participant is supposed to develop a locally-based project that can be financially supported from KomPrax for a maximum of 200€. This means that almost 12 000 small locally-based projects should be implemented by young people by the end of 2014.



2. How RDP promotes youth initiatives/projects in rural areas

The Slovak 2007-2013 RDP does not specifically take rural youth into account. The SWOT analysis mentions youth only in terms of considerable rural out-migration and the need to ensure requalification especially to younger rural inhabitants.

This negligible role of rural youth in the RDP strategy and implementation might be caused by the insufficient activity of rural youth organisations, which were not very active in voicing their interests in the RDP preparation process. None of the youth organisations took part in the RDP consultations. As a result, no program priority/axis/measure is devoted specifically to rural youth.

Slovakia is one of the few EU countries where Measure 112 'Setting up of young farmers' was not included in the RDP. As a consequence, only Measure 121 'Modernisation of agricultural holdings' and the measures implemented through LEADER target young people by awarding young people extra points in the selection procedures.



a. Consultation process for the preparation of 2007/2013 RDPs

The Slovak RDP for the 2007-2013 period was developed by working groups, which were called by the Ministry of Agriculture. There was one main working group, as well as several sub-groups related to each axis and some of the measures. The members of the working group represented Ministries, counties, Agricultural Paying Agency, other governmental institutions, various research departments, interest groups and NGOs.

At the time, there was no organisation that could have represented rural youth or young farmers. Even though there were Iuventa, the Slovak Youth Institute, and the Youth Council-Association of Youth Organisations, none of them dealt specifically with rural youth issues or represented their specific interests. Later on, in 2008, ASYF was established and took part in the middle-term consultations and evaluations of RDP. As for rural youth in general, there is still no relevant organisation at the national level to represent their interest.

b. How the RDP targets young people

Young people are targeted with a limited number of actions in the Slovak RDP, namely M121 for young farmers and some axis 3 measures implemented by LAGs.

Provisions within M121 established that young farmers receive 10% higher support rate compared to other farmers. According to the recent statistics of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Agricultural Paying Agency, by the end 2012, 1 504 projects were supported by measure 121, 180 of which were started by young farmers, which count for approximately 12% of the total beneficiaries. Under axis 3, young people below the age of 30 may get an advantage by being awarded extra projects in the selection procedure. This advantage, however, does not significantly affect the selection as the additional points typically represent only a small share (between 2,5 and 10%) of the total score.

GemerNation

Agency for the Development of the Gemer Region, Slovakia

Funded by the Orange Foundation and the British Council

GemerNation is an educational board game, which is based on the history, traditions and local curiosities of the Gemer region. The Monopoly-style game is an effective educational tool as it offers information about the region in a non-traditional way. The game is very popular among other young people in the Gemer region, and it is gaining popularity elsewhere, too.

c. Role of the LAGs

The Slovak RDP targets youth mainly through LEADER. Given the fact that young people are not identified in the RDP as priority beneficiaries, a LAG's only tool to support directly young people is to award them a certain amount of extra points by the selection of applications for funding. However, some activities of LAGs are oriented towards youth, and young people are involved in a number of LAG activities (cultural events, field trips, exchange stays). The types of actions and number of youth projects vary between LAGs.

For this study, two LAGs, Vršatec and Malohont, were interviewed. Both of the LAGs take youth into account in their local development strategies and SWOT analyses. For both LDSs, the lacks of interest in rural development and youth's inactivity in common issues are seen as problems.

Both LAGs have implemented grant programmes based on small public contribution with the aim to encourage citizens' involvement in the community. The positive aspect of these grant schemes is that people are able to initiate and realize the project by themselves. It empowers them to do something concrete for their surroundings, makes them more active and more involved in their communities as well as motivates them to work voluntarily for the public interest.

LAG Vršatec has implemented some 15 youth-related projects since 2010. Most of the projects are infrastructure-related, such as renewal of a children's playground, reconstruction of a football field and painting of a village chapel. A lot of effort and work have been done in order to approach young people in the region and make them active. Such activities include, raising awareness about funding possibilities, grants or mobility programmes, organising hiking trips, "geocaching" hunt, "a night under the stars" (observing stars at a night sky), etc. Young people are also involved in the activities through volunteering. They help to organise an open air movie screening, assist to label cycling routes or clean an old castle. Some of them translate promo materials for LAG. However, in general, not many young people are interested in participating in local activities. The LAG management has the impression that, besides several active individuals, the majority of young people in the LAG area stay rather passive.

LAG Malohont included also in its strategy the importance to involve young people. It seeks to support grassroots initiatives through the grant programme "Citizens for the region-region for citizens". Foreseen activities include free-time clubs for children and youth, environmental and practical education courses for youth, organisation of festivals, cultural performances and sport events, motivating people via volunteering, etc. In addition, the LAG Malohont has implemented 10 youth-related projects, out of which 3 were initiated by youth.



Grant programme "Region for citizens – citizens for region"

Slovakia, Banská Bystrica county

Budget: € 83,000 municipal public funding + 10% private co-funding € 91,300

The programme, administered by the LAG Malohont, aims at activation of citizens by supporting local informal groups of people or civic associations. In this way, small youth initiatives such as folklore groups or free-time clubs are able to carry out a project benefiting whole local community.

To encourage applications, the administrative burden to the applicants has been minimised. The programme is funded by annual financing by all municipalities of the micro region.

3. Role of the NRN in supporting youth

The Slovak NRN (Agency for the Development of Rural Areas/ARVI) works with youth only marginally and does not implement special youth-related projects or activities. Currently the NRN does not have the capacity to initiate more youth-oriented activities on its own, but it is open to cooperate and join youth-related initiatives started by others.

Still, the NRN organises conferences/workshops, where young people are invited. Moreover, it closely cooperates with the Slovak Agricultural University through the student excursions and internships.

4. Role of youth and young farmers' organisations in supporting youth

There is a notable lack of youth organisations in Slovakia. ASYF, which was founded in 2008, is the main organisation for representing young farmers. The ASYF focuses on informing and educating young farmers, and advocating for youth's interests at the national level.

ASYF has implemented some projects for young farmers, such as the international project "Food chain management- European Experiences and Local Solutions", which was funded through the Leonardo da Vinci Programme. ASYF also implemented two projects jointly with the Hungarian Young Farmers' Association, AGRYA, such as the "Food and Traditions – Young farmers in globalized world" project, which was supported by the programme for a cross-border cooperation Slovakia-Hungary. ASYF has not used EAFRD funding for its projects, since the possibilities in the current RDP are limited.



5. Preparing the 2014-2020 RDP

The preparation of the RDP started in April 2012 at the intra-ministerial level, when the general needs and SWOT analysis were elaborated. In November 2012, the first meeting of working group representing various actors was organised. The consultation process continued and the working group met twice, in February 2013 and May 2013. Besides the main working group, smaller working sub-groups were established reflecting the foreseen measures for the future RDP. The sub-groups report the outcomes of their meetings to the main working group, which includes around 40 members and the Association of Slovak Young Farmers (ASYF). ASYF takes also part in the sub-group on young farmers, small farms and farm diversification.

At the time of this research, the drafting of the Slovak 2014-2020 RDP was still ongoing.

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