

This series of informative fiches aim to present, in summary, examples of projects and practices that address or are driven by young people living in rural areas. These examples want to contribute to the understanding of what has worked well and less well in the delivery of the 2007-2013 RDPs in the view of supporting young farmers and rural youth, show how young people can be involved in policy design and implementation, raise awareness about possibilities offered by EU rural development programmes, and finally draw lessons in the view of future improvement of the policy.

JUnique: Youth is unique



The regional youth network Jugendtankstelle (JTS) thanks to this project motivated young people from the Upper Austria region to get involved in local and regional communities.

1. Background information: why the approach has been put in place

Youth and the need to involve young people in the decision-making process was perceived in the Upper Austria region as an important issue to address and discussed in many occasions. In spite of this interest, young people had never actively participated in the local development and had never been involved in the decision-making process.

The purpose of the JUnique project was to directly involve young people in the regional development process, making them a partner in the discussion and not just a 'discussed topic'. Furthermore, the project aimed to encourage young people to express their opinion, share information among them and with other organisations and improve the networking capacities of young people as well as other youth organisations.

JUnique was implemented by the Jugendtankstelle organisation, which represents an important contact point between young people, communities, schools, parishes as well as other youth organisations. Founded in 2004 by the civic association Verband Mühlviertler Alm, it supports young people in developing projects and promotes their involvement in the community. The project was implemented between 2009 and 2011 and received financial support from different sources, namely LEADER, national and private.



2. Description of the approach: how it was done in practice

Young people actively participated in planning the project and in designing its main actions, which consisted on the organisation of working groups, leisure activities, and awareness raising events.

A kick off meeting was organised in 2009 and young participants decided about the main areas of interest around which working groups should have been organised. Once the main topics were identified, young participants could decide to which one of them they were more interested in. Four main working groups were created:

- ◆ **"Youth & Work"** whose responsibility was the regular publishing of an updated brochure with available jobs in the region as well as the organization of a regional job fair;
- ◆ **"Youth awareness"** whose members published a magazine called "Bleifrei" and organized workshops on politics and other selected topics;
- ◆ **"Free time activities for girls"** whose main responsibility was to organize leisure activities for girls (such as tent camping) but also helped out with the activities organized by the "Youth awareness" working group;

- ◆ **“Social Engagement (SoSoKo)”** that organized social and cultural activities, such as a theater performance weekend, the production of a film “Vom FensterIn bis zum SMS” (free translation: From window to SMS) and raised awareness about the regional and fair-trade products.

Young people who did not want to be part of a working group on a permanent basis, had the opportunity to participate in activities and events organized by the working groups.

The groups were active during the period of the project implementation and continued after its completion. Administrative tasks and project coordination were assured by two Jugendtankstelle employees. The Verband Mühlviertler Alm association, schools, parishes and youth communities within the region helped with spreading news about the kick-off meetings and advertised the different activities of the project. More than that, all necessary information was available online through the webpages of Jugendtankstelle and Verband Mühlviertler Alm.

3. Conclusions/lessons learnt relevant for the future: what were the results

The JUnique project encouraged direct involvement of young people in the regional development process, gave young people the possibility to express their opinion in open discussion with local authorities, and supported the organization of free time activities and the improvement of information sharing.

“JUnique” is considered a success: the project was designed, managed and implemented by young people. Their participation in the kick-off meeting enabled them to contribute to the definition of the working groups’ areas of interest. Furthermore, during the various meetings organised by their working groups they had the opportunity to present their ideas and implement them. Young people’s ownership of the project was key for its success. Thanks to the project, young people were encouraged to participate in the regional decision-making process, to voice their ideas and opinions.

The involvement in this project enabled also the “most active personalities” among young participants to emerge and subsequently to represent youth’s interests in local and regional decision-making bodies. Moreover, the project strengthened a the networking capacity of youth organisations present in the region. The working groups are still active even after the project’s completion in 2012.

The implementation of such a project requires strong coordination and generates lot of administrative work. This implies that detailed planning of needed human resources must be done prior to the implementation phase. Besides, keeping young people permanently motivated could be difficult and time consuming; it requires a great effort in terms of animation and networking.

EAFRD can play an important role in supporting similar youth-related activities. The creation of a fund for financing small initiatives within the Rural Development Programmes combined with a simplification of administrative procedures would be helpful to encourage young people to implement their ideas.



Information included in this fiche is primarily coming from the case studies carried out within the ENRD Initiative on “Youth and young farmers in rural areas”. The fiche is compiled by the ENRD Contact Point on the basis of information collected in the EU Member States and Regions. The content does not necessarily reflect the official position of the EU institutions, national or regional authorities.

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