

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.

Youth Network and creative workshops “JuWeL”



The activity of the LAG Wels Land – LEWEL and the creation of the youth network ‘JuWeL’ contributed to enhance young people’s participation in the decision making process of the Upper-Austrian municipalities.

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

The Upper-Austria region was characterized by a poor level of young people’s participation in the community life. Young people were not involved in the political life of the region and also their interest to engage in voluntary work was progressively declining. In spite of this negative scenario, young people were willing to participate and be active in the political and social life but they did not know how to get involved, and they were also discouraged by the poor integration of youth-related topics in the political agenda both at regional and local level.

In order to reverse this tendency, LAG Wels Land- LEWEL started this project, in co-operation with regional and local authorities and some youth organisations already active in the region. The project was financially supported by EAFRD, regional and local as well as private funds, thanks to the participation of some regional companies.



The main objectives of the project, namely to better identify young people’s needs and foster their participation to the decision making process, were considered by the project promoters as the basis to create new opportunities for youth, thus reducing their migration to urban areas. On this respect, a specific objective pursued by the project was to support the municipalities in the implementation of activities directed to involve young people. Furthermore, another specific objective was to facilitate linkages and co-operation between different youth organisations active in the region, in order for them to plan and implement their activities in a more coordinated and efficient way. The final goal of the project was the establishment of a youth network, starting from the structures and experiences already existing at regional and local level, in order to transform youth involvement into a constant element in the political and community life of the region. Among the organisations involved in the implementation of the projects, other than the LAG and local authorities, were the young firemen association (Junge Feuerwehr Fischlham); the youth groups ‘Jugendgruppe Krenglbach’, ‘WIR! Junges Thalheim’, ‘Spieletreff Sipbachzell’, ‘Jugend kocht-Team’, ‘Fresh Weißkirchen’; the girls’ club ‘Offener Mädchentreff Marchtrenk’.

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

The activities of the projects started in 2009 when a regional study about youth was carried out by the LAG in co-operation with local authorities. Based on this study the youth network JuWeL was created. In 2010 the youth conference JuKon 10 ‘Youth meet politics’ was held and later awarded as ‘UNESCO project of 2010’. Between 2011

and 2013 several 'creative workshops' were organized by JuWel, in support to regional youth initiatives. During the workshops young people were involved in community development sessions; they had the opportunity to plan and organize their own events and improve their knowledge on the use of social media. The activities of the project were also combined with the use of a range of communication tool, to raise awareness about the importance of the project and to involve as many young people as possible. A website of the project was created and a Facebook page opened; the project was also advertised in many regional newspapers.



The main result of the project was a better understanding of young people's needs in the region. The regional study provided useful insights about how to target youth's needs and how to involve young people in the community life. Based on these results, 'youth teams' were set up in three municipalities and they functioned as direct contact and knowledge hubs in relation to youth initiatives for local institutions. The teams are still active and directly involved in the decision making process and planning activities, ensuring that young people's voices and needs are taken in consideration.

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

The strong commitment of the municipalities since the first phases of the project implementation was key for its success. Moreover, the involvement of private companies in the JuWel network enabled young people to establish direct contact with them, increasing their opportunities to find jobs and improving labour matching. Consequently, the activity of the JuWel network became important in terms of young people's involvement in the community life and in terms of capacity to positively contribute to the regional employment trends. The advertisement of the project in different regional media increased its visibility at regional and local level.



The positive results of the project in this first phase convinced the JuWel network to continue the activities also in the 2014-2020 programming period. The aims for this programming period are to stabilize the youth teams at municipal level and to set up a 'youth competence center' in the region, as a main reference for all young people who want to get involved and participate in the development of their region.

Some difficulties were encountered during the initial phase of implementation of the project, related to the general lack of trust towards young people and a poor culture of inclusion of young people in the consultation and decision making process.

The implementation of the project taught useful lessons to project promoters, to be used to plan new activities and enhance their benefits. In particular, it was highlighted that the presence of a contact person for young people, available to discuss with them specific issues or to give advice on different matters could help attracting young people and facilitating their participation. Peers-to-peers exchanges were also considered important to share experiences and create links between generations. Furthermore the availability of a specific budget for youth initiative at local level can play an important role in the process of involving young people in the community life.

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. Updated: February 2014