PRIP: Development of broadband connection infrastructure in rural areas

LITHUANIA

Improve the quality of life in rural areas

Location
Nation wide

Programming period
2007 - 2013

Axis / Priority
Axis 3 – Quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy

Measure
M322 - Village renewal and development

Funding (EUR)
Total budget 4 985 556*
EAFRD 4 487 000
Private 498 556
*Increased to 5.9 m EUR in 2015

Project duration
2014 – 2015

Project promoter
State-owned non-profit company 'Plačiajuostis internetas'

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The PRIP project extended the national fibre-optic network in Lithuania to some of the remotest rural communities.

Summary

Internet connectedness is a key element in stimulating growth, job creation and investments in rural areas. Internet access often serves as a pre-requisite for development opportunities, for example supporting short supply chains, accessing new markets, provision of services, education and training, and better quality of life.

PRIP extended Lithuania's national fibre-optic network to targeted rural communities. It laid 485 km of fibre-optic cable to connect remote communities with the nationwide cable infrastructure and established 426 additional broadband internet access points covering farms and rural tourism centres, etc.

Results

The 426 new internet access points provided by the project, reached out to around 100 000 residents in rural areas who previously had no access to high-speed broadband internet infrastructure.

Through the combination of RAIN and PRIP, 58.4 % of households had internet access by 2015 which is 12 times more than in 2005.

The project was (along with RAIN II) one of the first winners of the European Broadband Awards in 2015.

Lessons & Recommendations

❑ The project showed how EAFRD and ERDF can be used to complement each other in strategic ways to extend existing national programmes to remote rural areas.

Context

Back in 2005, Lithuania launched an ambitious programme to create a nationwide high-speed broadband fibre-optic network. The project 'Rural Area Information Technology Broadband Network' (RAIN) received ERDF support in two phases, laying over 9 000 km of cables and reaching around one million inhabitants.

However, the nationwide coverage provided was not able to reach all rural areas and the ambition remained to extend coverage further. The promoters of the RAIN project sought to use EAFRD support to extend Lithuania's fibre-optic network into some of the rural areas still without the high-speed broadband connection provided to much of the rest of the country.

Whilst much smaller than the RAIN projects in terms of scope and budget, it sought to provide targeted interventions to reach several harder to reach rural communities.

Objectives

By installing the physical infrastructure, the project hoped to encourage commercial internet service operators to invest and provide quality services to rural areas. In the longer term, the provision of broadband internet to previously unconnected areas hoped to provide new opportunities for business and community development in rural areas.

Activities

PRIP focused on extending Lithuania's national fibre-optic network to targeted rural communities. It continued the work and practices of the RAIN projects, laying 485 km of additional fibre-optic cable to connect remote communities with the established nationwide cable infrastructure.

Taking place from 2014 to 2015, it established 426 additional broadband internet access points in rural communities, using prominent rural buildings, such as farms and rural tourism centres.

Main results

The project estimates that the 426 new internet access points provided have reached out to around 100 000 residents in rural areas in Lithuania who previously had no access to high-speed broadband internet infrastructure.

In 2005, only 2% of villages - with less than 3 000 inhabitants - had broadband, and only 4.9 % of rural households were connected. Through the combination of RAIN and PRIP, 58.4 % of households had internet access by 2015; in other words, 12 times more than in 2005.

The project was (along with RAIN II) one of the first winners of the European Broadband Awards in 2015.

Main lessons

The project showed how effective targeting of EAFRD support can extend existing national programmes to more remote locations – in this case for the provision of internet broadband access. More specifically, it showed how EAFRD and ERDF can be used to complement each other in strategic ways.
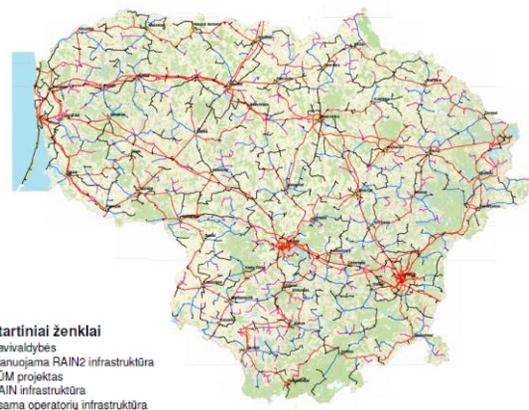
Additional sources of information
n/a