

## BELGIUM

### Fostering local development in rural areas

**Location**  
Gesves

**Programming period**  
2014 – 2020

**Priority**  
P6 - Social Inclusion and  
Economic Development

**Measure**  
M19 – Support for LEADER  
local development (CLLD)

**Funding (EUR)**  
Total budget 91 463  
EAFRD 39 329  
National/regional 52 134

**Project duration**  
2016 – 2020

**Project promoter**  
GAL Pays des Tiges et  
Chavées asbl

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Supporting the creation of a 41 km green lane linking up bends the Meuse river between the municipalities of Yvoir and Huy in Wallonia.

### Summary

The soft mobility scheme supports the creation of a 41 km green lane linking up bends the Meuse river between the municipalities of Yvoir and Huy. This area is going through the LAG area of Pays des Tiges et Chavées (Assesse-Gesves-Ohey). The new route is passing through a mix of public spaces (75%) but also requires the agreement of 31 landowners (25%).



With the support of LEADER, the feasibility phase led to a financial commitment of more than EUR 3 million to develop the green lane.

### Results

A budget estimate was prepared for the retained options, including, where appropriate, the buyback or expropriation of relevant plots.

The financial estimate led to a EUR 3.1 million budget, subject to a formal commitment from the various budgetary sources in November 2016 .

The second phase of the project started in 2017 with the assignment of a prime contractor, the validation of owners' agreements and the purchase of plots, a communication campaign at local and regional levels, public information meetings with the population, and the launch of the first calls for tenders for the green lane layout.

### Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ One of the most energy-intensive tasks was to meet and convince the many landowners potentially affected by the project. Nearly 35 owners were met individually, some several times, mostly at home, during the day, in the evening or on weekend.
- ❑ Each situation was analysed on a case-by-case basis and concerted management solutions were found in most cases. Agreements 'in principle' have been collected and recorded in the files.

## Context

Back in 2014, with the expansion of cycling as an alternative way to commute to cities, the lack of cycling paths to link up town centres with railway stations was identified as a problem during the preparation of the local development strategy of the LAG Pays des Tiges et Chavées. A working group was set up, gathering 35 persons. They met 4 times before submitting an action plan for the creation of a green lane that was endorsed by the LAG as one of its operational priorities.

This movement was concomitant to the fact that municipalities were willing to improve walking and cycling paths in order to improve their tourism offer; to do so, they had already developed partnerships with the local tourism boards. The natural assets in terms of landscape, biodiversity and the cultural heritage left by the old local railway line provided two good reasons to engage into this project.

The initial stage of the project put forward a specific land-planning feature of Wallonia: the country roads repository. It is a set of maps drawn in the years following the promulgation of the law of 10 April 1841 on local roads and trails. This law provided full legal status to a category of local roads. The aim was to map the public road network (as opposed to the rest that would be privately owned). The repository therefore is a legal proof that recognizes the rights acquired by public authorities on local paths and guarantees their protection. It is a patrimonial management tool for municipalities. The law of 1841 was for a long time the only one having legal value in the matter of roads and vicinal paths. It was amended by the decree of the Walloon Region in 2011 before being finally repealed by the decree on municipal roads, adopted by the Walloon Parliament and endorsed by the Government in 2014.

## Objectives

The aim of this project was is twofold:

- (i) To limit the ecological footprint of local citizens by setting up an alternative solution in terms of mobility within the area, by connecting better its town centres with local railway stations (Courrière, Yvoir, Huy), etc.;
- (ii) to improve the area's touristic attractiveness for walking and cycling all year round, and connect various leisure paths.

The development of the natural and cultural heritage is also at the heart of the project, together with an educational dimension.

## Activities

The project is divided in two strands: (i) a feasibility study and the concertation process; (ii) developing the green lane. The present description only covers the first phase.

The green lane partly follows the 19th century railway route between Courrière and Huy. It is also inspired from the ancient path taken by the boatmen returning back through an inland itinerary, after having pulled their boats along the hauling way.

A consultancy was appointed in 2016 to finalize the feasibility study in collaboration with the LAG and to draw up the cross-municipal development plan. The tasks described in the tender specifications included: analysis of the green lane layout, budget estimate, assessment of economic benefits, assessment of environmental impacts, communication plan, first draft plan.

LEADER support funded the study whereas the municipalities supported the cost of the LAG officers in charge of the project.

The project is fully mapped with the QGIS free and open source application to analyse and edit spatial information, in addition to composing and exporting graphical maps. Different layers allow to quickly extracting the desired information: length and status of any section of the lane, type of land, nature of the work to be carried out, etc.

Several maps are produced, including a map showing the status of acceptance by each landowner (including also the black spots encountered at this level), a map illustrating potential flood hazards, a map showing risks of soil erosion, etc. Many of these maps are subdivided in such a way as to refine the representation on an adequate scale.

For each section of the green lane (with a different landowner), several field measures are made, using a GPS. For each point of the survey, pictures are taken in order to allow a perfect orientation in space. A detailed description is also made, taking into account the survey point and the immediate vicinity of the latter, so that the whole of the green lane and the few hundred meters around it are integrated into the analysis.

The GPS data (coordinates, altitude, etc.), photos and other field information were then compiled in order to faithfully represent the future ViciGAL route. It is an essential decision-making tool as it allows to identify pros and cons for each option and to integrate all these elements into a broader reflection with the various stakeholders.

### Main Results

Along with the feasibility study, a budget estimate was prepared for the retained options, including, where appropriate, the buyback or expropriation of relevant plots. This budget appraisal includes several scenarios, conditioned by the different types of coating envisaged for the green lane. Each section has therefore been analysed, meter per meter, with a different coating option.

According to the scenarios, several types of developments are proposed:

- Simple mark-up;
- Markings on the ground (bike path marked or suggested);
- Elevated walkways;
- Rehabilitation of the existing hydrocarbon coating;
- Pavement;
- Concrete single-strip (with or without deforestation);
- Double band concrete (with or without deforestation).

The financial estimate led to a EUR 3.1 million budget, subject to a formal commitment from the various budgetary sources (rural development, transport, security, tourism) in November 2016 .

The completion of the feasibility study and the financial approval of its development plan by the various government authorities gave way to a press conference that was attended by the regional minister of tourism himself on 26 November 2016. Representatives of the

other funding ministries were also present, as well as members of the administrations concerned. LAG administrators, municipal councillors and private landowners: over a hundred people attended the press conference. A small tour by electric bike was proposed for the occasion. The press responded massively (RTBF television, RTBF radio, Must FM, Vers l'Avenir, Le Soir, Canal C, etc.).

The second phase of the project started in 2017 with the assignment of a prime contractor, the validation of owners' agreements and the purchase of plots, a communication campaign at local and regional levels, public information meetings with the population, and the launch of the first calls for tenders for the green lane layout.

### Key lessons

One of the most energy-intensive tasks was to meet and convince the many landowners potentially affected by the project. Nearly 35 owners were met individually, some several times, mostly at home, during the day, in the evening or on weekend. In some cases, group meetings and field visits were also organized. Among the owners met, some proved more difficult to convince, due to practical or personal considerations.

Each situation was analysed on a case-by-case basis and concerted management solutions were found in most cases. Agreements 'in principle' have been collected and recorded in the files.



### Additional sources of information

[www.tiges-chavees.be/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/RA\\_1\\_ViciGAL-version-du-08-02-17.pdf](http://www.tiges-chavees.be/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/RA_1_ViciGAL-version-du-08-02-17.pdf)