

## FINLAND

Facilitating diversification, creation of new small enterprises and job creation

### Location

Rajamäki

### Programming period

2014 2020

### Priority

P6 – Promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas

### Measure

M16.2 - Developing new products and methods

### Funding (EUR)

Total budget 575 000  
EAFRD 241 500  
National/Regional 333 500

### Project duration

2015 – 2018

### Project promoter

Work Efficiency Institute (TTS)

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### Additional information

[www.facebook.com/greenca\\_relab/?fref=ts](https://www.facebook.com/greenca_relab/?fref=ts)

A Finnish NGO used EAFRD funds to develop a network of nature-based service providers and activities to support their development such as study trips and work groups.

## Summary

Demand for nature-based activities such as forest walks with animals has been growing. These 'Green Care' activities can help treat health and social-related issues. But new business start-ups often need advice and support in developing their activities. A Finnish NGO sought to develop a support network.



The Finnish NGO used EAFRD funding to develop a platform to mentor new businesses and allow them to share best practices. It also developed activities such as study trips, work groups and road shows to enable them to develop.

## Results

More than 100 Green Care service providers participated in the project events and activities during its first year.

Dozens of business start-ups participated in GreenCareLab, a platform for testing and developing business ideas and services.

Launch of four thematic groups for animal, farm, garden and nature-related Green Care services.

Service providers got to know each other and established new partnerships.

## Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ It can be difficult to get busy entrepreneurs and other service providers to commit to public development projects. But the project's biggest surprise was operators' keen willingness to join projects.
- ❑ Green Care actors share similar values and feel there is a growing demand for their services in today's hectic society.
- ❑ Due to high interest, the biggest challenge was to respond to everyone's individual needs properly.

## Context

Approximately 65% of Finland's land area is covered by forest. All of the country's forests are publicly accessible under laws, which guarantee all inhabitants the freedom to move around. Finns are fortunate to enjoy a pure and clean natural environment. Walking in Finnish nature not only refreshes and relaxes the brain, but can also free the spirit. Regular visits to forests have been proven to lower blood pressure, detoxify the body and improve people's overall mood. Nature's silence promotes relaxation and decreases stress. Lack of noise and especially the darkness during wintertime promotes good, reinvigorating sleep.

Green Care involves nature and rural-based activities to preserve and improve human well-being and quality of life. Green Care is based on a variety of nature-based methods that rely on animals and the natural world. Activities take place in rural and agricultural environments, but also in woods, gardens or even indoors and in urban areas. They may relate to health care, prevention of health problems such as mental fatigue and rehabilitation after long term illness. It uses an innovative and effective approach to rehabilitate vulnerable people such as getting the long-term unemployed back into the labour market. Green Care services and businesses have been booming over the past decade to balance our hectic everyday lives.

## Objectives

GreenCareLab aims to create a Living Lab test platform for Green Care business start-ups. It helps new entrepreneurs to develop their business ideas and services for customers. The project also surveys existing nature-based services and GreenCare cooperation between private, public and third sectors. GreenCareLab builds new networks and company clusters among businesses and spreads good practices between the participating four counties (Häme, Kaakkois-Suomi, Pirkanmaa, Uusimaa) in Southern Finland.

## Activities

The project target group consists of:

1. Green Care service providers: e.g. care farms, SMEs providing care and tourism services, third and public sector care service providers and entrepreneurs planning to set up their own Green Care business.
2. Green Care service users: private, public and third sector customers and private persons.

The project activities are divided into three categories:

1. Events and communication on Green Care business opportunities: a road show, partnership meetings, company visits and study trips, county level Green Care business networks, identifying and sharing good practices.
2. Work in thematic groups, which analyse what type of services already exist and what type of new services could be developed based on customer needs.
3. GreenCareLab: developing a Living Lab test platform linked with an experienced Green Care mentor – testing and developing business start-up ideas both with the mentor and customers.



## Main Results

More than 100 Green Care service providers from the private, public and third sectors have participated in the project events and activities during its first year.

Dozens of business start-ups, including students, have participated in the GreenCareLab, testing and developing their business ideas and services.

Four thematic groups on animal, farm, garden and nature-related Green Care services were launched and they developed service descriptions on Green Care products such as hiking with goats and forest walks with alpacas.

Service providers got to know each other and established new partnerships leading to new business group projects supported by rural development funds.

## Key lessons

It can be difficult to get busy entrepreneurs and other service providers to commit to public development projects, but the biggest surprise has been operators' strong willingness to join and advance projects.

Green Care actors share the same values and feel there is a growing demand for their services in today's hectic society.

Due to high interest, the biggest challenge is to respond to everyone's individual needs properly.