

SLOVENIA

Cooperation

Location

Krško

Programing period

2014 – 2020

Priority

P6 – Social inclusion & local development

Measure

M19 – LEADER/CLLD

Funding (EUR)

Total budget 444 331

EAFRD 269 450

National/Regional 67 363

Private 107 518

Project duration

2019 – 2020

Project promoter

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An interterritorial cooperation project to address the challenges of outmigration and ageing in rural areas by investing in new technology solutions.

Summary

The Smart Villages for Tomorrow project aimed to systemically address the challenges of outmigration and ageing in Slovenian rural areas. New approaches were designed for the development of rural areas by taking advantage of innovative technology solutions.



The project was based on the cooperation of five partner LAGs who created pioneering models using smart solutions. The LAGs exchanged best practice and carried out a common analysis of the situation in their areas. They developed new concepts to preserve the vitality and attractiveness of rural areas, as well as organising study trips and a communication campaign.

Results

The participating LAGs developed five models of smart solutions for ageing rural communities.

They established six places for socialising, purchased a vehicle for the transportation of elderly residents, and carried out more than 50 workshops. The online workshops were attended by 197 young and elderly people.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ In order to attain the planned objectives and results, it was crucial that different LAGs would work together, contributing their unique insights derived from their specific circumstances. The LAGs exchanged best practices and knowledge, which was key to the preparation of the innovative models.
- ❑ Networking and establishing connections with stakeholders was crucial. Young qualified volunteers transferred their knowledge and experience of digital tools to the elderly. The project is an excellent example of cooperation between all rural stakeholders.

Context

Like many rural areas in Europe, Slovenia's countryside faces the challenge of ageing populations. Rural areas also suffer from a lack of services and development programmes. As a result, young people have been leaving rural areas to find new career opportunities in urban areas. In order to reverse this situation, it is important that people, knowledge, and the potential that exist in rural areas are better linked.

New approaches are necessary for the establishment of smart 'silver' villages. Key issues to be addressed include providing transport for the elderly and connecting towns and villages, improving digital literacy, developing appropriate digital technology for all age groups, establishing suitable spaces for socialising, and designing free time activities for rural people. Each one of these actions can contribute to keeping rural areas vibrant and reducing outmigration of young people.

Objectives

The overarching objective of this project was to preserve the vitality and quality of life in rural areas by investing in smart solutions.

Activities

The project Smart Villages for Tomorrow was a cooperation between five LAGs. The activities carried out involved:

- Conducting a common analysis of the opportunities that exist in a rural setting for the elderly, and of the demographic projections related to ageing in rural Slovenia.
- Devising and implementing five models of Smart Villages for Tomorrow.
- Organising two study trips, and the exchange of best practices.
- Organising a communication strategy, which involved 20 publications in various media, setting up a social network, and delivering a common final press conference.
- Producing a promotional film about the project.

Each of the participating LAGs were assigned to develop one of the five models:

LAG Obsotelje and Kozjansko worked on a socialising model. This included designing training approaches for reusing previous local knowledge and transferring it to the younger generations, managing age-related difficulties, do-it-yourself, promoting healthcare self-sufficiency in retirement homes, and developing culinary services.

LAG Goričko worked on sustainable mobility for the elderly. They examined different options to improve their access to healthcare, social, cultural, and other leisure activities.

LAG Prlekija worked on digital technology solutions in rural areas. This model focused on how to develop digital skills for the elderly using advanced information and communication technology. It also looked at how to promote volunteering for knowledge transfer.

LAG 'With the kind people 2020' worked on approaches to connect rural food and tourism providers in combining traditional crafts and modern design, following the principals of circular economy.

LAG Posavje focused on how to establish silver smart villages. The LAG developed guidelines for the spatial planning of silver villages, or communities in which municipal and social infrastructure is enriched with digital, telecommunication technologies and innovative solutions for cheaper energy supply.

Main results

The participating LAGs developed five models of smart solutions for ageing rural communities.

They established six places for socialising, bought a car for the transportation of elderly people, and carried out more than 50 workshops.

The online workshops were attended by 197 young and elderly people.

Key lessons

In order to attain the planned objectives and results, it was crucial that different LAGs would work together contributing their unique insights derived from their specific circumstances. The LAGs exchanged best practices and knowledge, which was key to the preparation of the innovative models.

Networking and connections among local stakeholders were crucial. Young, qualified volunteers transferred their knowledge and experience on using digital tools to the elderly. The project is an excellent example of cooperation between all rural stakeholders.

Special attention was paid to environmental protection through awareness raising activities. Training in the use of renewable energy sources and energy efficiency helped raise awareness among rural residents, particularly the elderly. The focus was on the significance of water and soil protection, lower energy consumption and energy efficiency by using photovoltaic systems, waste separation, and new technological solutions in agricultural production that protects the environment.