



EAFRD-funded projects

Creative Apprentice Worlds

Creative Apprentice Workshops highlight rural career opportunities in craft trades for young people in Austria.

A LEADER project helps young people discover rural career opportunities in craft trades through a roadshow project visiting schools. The project involved pupils, businesses, schools, and LAGs working together. Pupils and businesses created work benches showing key aspects of specific craft trades. This helped the pupils understand the type of work involved in the craft trade and thus allowed them to make better informed career decisions.



Location

Kaindorf (Austria)

Programming period

2014 - 2020

Priority

P6 - Social Inclusion and Economic Development

Measure

M19 - LEADER/CLLD

Funding (EUR)

Total budget 225 000
EAFRD 144 000
National/regional 35 000
Private 45 000

Project duration

2018 - 2022

Project promoter

LAG und Regionalentwicklung-sagentur Oststeirisches Kernland

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Results

- 25 work benches were created.
- Around 9000 students took part in the roadshow.
- On average, around 30% of the pupils who were interested in an apprenticeship started an apprenticeship with a company that the young people got to know through the project.
- More than 95% of the entrepreneurs surveyed believed that the project could help more pupils to choose an apprenticeship.
- The partner network covered 100 schools and 500 entrepreneurs.

Lessons & Recommendations

The project gives young people a practical insight into a wide variety of craft trade professions within a very short time span. Such a practice-oriented approach could be made possible for more young people.

Digitisation in almost all apprenticeships is opening up new career opportunities in craft trades. Gender-stereotypical career decisions can be resolved, as previous physical strength requirements in craft trades no longer apply in many situations.

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Context

Career choices for many students is a major challenge in a sensitive transition phase. Career decision processes involve matching occupational and personal characteristics as well as personal interests and available occupational opportunities in the labour market. Teachers and parents are faced with complex challenge of providing young people with the best possible support in their career choices.

Entrepreneurs, especially craft trade enterprises, are urgently looking for apprentices. In May 2022, there were 9,763 open apprenticeship positions in Austria. This is an increase of 3,390 apprenticeship positions in the same period of the previous year. The associated shortage of skilled craft trade workers, exacerbated by demographic developments, can limit the economic prospects of rural regions.

Fewer and fewer young people are opting for training in the skilled craft trades or for an apprenticeship. This is, among other things, due to the continuing trend toward higher education and a prejudiced image of apprenticeships in craft trades. Gender-stereotyped career choices also influence young people who may think that body strength is important for craft trades. Digitisation in almost all apprenticeships is opening up new career opportunities. A reimagining of career perspectives for craft trades is therefore considered useful.

Objectives

The project's goal was to address the numbers of young people opting for training in skilled craft trades through apprenticeships. It aimed to facilitate school pupils' reimagining of career perspectives resulting in recruitment, motivation and qualifications for future skilled craft trade workers. This would be achieved through encouraging companies to participate in initiatives to find joint solutions using cooperation between schools, companies, and LAGs.

Aims for the project target groups were:

- Students - strengthening of career choice competence through comparative trial and error.
- Apprentices - joint production of work benches.
- Entrepreneurs - establishing contact with potential apprenticeship positions.
- Teachers/parents - clarification of labour market opportunities combining cerebral and manual skills.

Activities

The LAG Oststeirisches Kernland formed a multi-actor group as an innovation broker to implement the project. Project activities involved students working with businesses to design and construct work benches which illustrated the most essential tools and materials for the specific profession. The result is a menu of 25 different «work benches», representing the following craft trades and related skills: creative culinary and gastronomy; creative materials processing; creative media design; practical technology applications; and knowledge and sales promotion.

The project's range of career guidance also included providing individual apprentice support. This focused on the challenge of starting a career. For the sensitive transition phase, mentors in the companies were trained to act as contact persons for apprentices' questions. During this initial stage, an attempt was made to provide apprentices with as many positive experiences as possible to help discover hidden talents.

Project activity costs involved coordination, roadshow organisation, network building with schools, entrepreneurs and stakeholders, as well as public relations and evaluation to further develop the concept.



Main results

25 mobile work benches were jointly developed between an architect, idea providers and the implementing apprentices and businesses.

An example of a result from one of the students confirmed that he «learned a lot of new things and can now better imagine to start an apprenticeship».

The Creative Apprentices Worlds have been implemented in all 15 LEADER regions of Austria's Styria province and are aimed primarily at elementary schools, middle schools and polytechnic schools.

The project became a pioneer in career guidance for skilled craft trades. To date, around 9 000 students took part in the roadshow (including career information fairs).

On average, around 30% of the pupils who are interested in an apprenticeship have started an apprenticeship with a company that the young people got to know through the project.

More than 95% of the entrepreneurs surveyed believed that the project could help more pupils to choose an apprenticeship.

The partner network covered 100 schools and 500 entrepreneurs.

The project concept was planned to expand within Austria (Burgenland) and into the EU area (Luxembourg).

Key lessons

The project gives young people a practical insight into a wide variety of craft trade professions within a very short time span. Such a practice-oriented approach could be made possible for more young people.

Digitisation in almost all apprenticeships is opening new career opportunities in craft trades. Gender-stereotypical career decisions can also be resolved, as previous physical strength requirements no longer apply in many situations.

Additional sources of information

[Instagram](#)

[Facebook](#)

This project has been categorised under 'Resilient futures' by the nominating National Rural Network