



EAFRD-funded projects

Ju & Me

A youth mentoring project in the LEADER regions «Wesermünde-Süd» and «Leipziger Muldenland»

Fostering new forms of youth civic participation.

The «Ju & Me» project actively involved young people in the planning of their region through a 'reverse mentoring programme', in which young people and young adults advised leaders from business, politics and administration in the participating municipalities of two LEADER regions in Germany.

Rural areas face the challenge of remaining attractive to young people. Forward-looking solutions can only be found if youth perspectives are brought to the attention of decision-makers in order to orient the region more towards the needs of young people and young adults.

This innovative project addressed fundamental questions of sustainable regional development, such as: how to bring the viewpoints of young people closer to decision-makers, so that they can integrate such views into their work? Which possibilities can young people use to make their interests known and to implement them?



Location

Wesermünde-Süd and Leipziger Muldenland (Germany)

Programming period

2014 - 2020

Priority

P6 - Social Inclusion and Economic Development

Measure

M19 - LEADER/CLLD

Funding (EUR)

Total budget 176 385

EAFRD 157 626

Private 18 758

Project duration

2018 - 2022

Project promoter

Community Schiffdorf & Cluster e.V

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Online PDF

Results

The project fostered networking between different actors in municipal and regional development: young people, leaders from politics, the social, cultural and business sectors, LEADER regional managers as well as representatives of two LAGs in two German regions.

It developed an innovative 'reverse mentoring' methodology which fostered concrete 'participation and co-decision-making', involving youth in regional development. It led among others to the involvement of young people in the development of the future Local Development strategies.

The project encouraged similar experiences in other German regions and prompted collaboration with two LAGs in Finland. In addition, youth leaders involved in the project are working together with actors from Finland and Latvia in an EU-wide Erasmus+ project to further develop the topic of youth participation.

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Context

Many rural areas face depopulation issues. Young people often leave their rural homes to find a job, happiness or simply a change of pace in cities.

To strengthen the connection of young people with the region they live in, it is important to bring youth perspectives closer to regional decision-makers, so that the latter can better understand and meet the needs of young people and young adults. Ultimately this can help retain skilled workers and improve the viability of rural regions.

Objectives

The project aimed at actively involving young people in regional and municipal development, while improving the consideration of youth interests by the adults and by adapting entrepreneurial and political activities to young people's concerns. The project supported the goals of the LEADER local development strategies of both the participating LEADER regions.

The main goals of the project were:

- Providing opportunities for regionally and globally oriented, holistic education, equal opportunities for learning and working, creativity, and promoting a constructive approach to dealing with conflict.
- Adapting the social infrastructure, local government and services to the needs of (young) people and promoting communication between public administration and citizens, particularly youth.
- Providing opportunities for local civic participation for young people through equal participation in decision-making processes and encouraging the submission of project proposals by young people.
- Developing intergenerational dialogue: young people design projects together with adults, take on responsibility for areas of work in the LAG and design concepts for the future.
- Strengthening youth's identification with the region they live in.
- Raising awareness of regionally relevant issues.
- Fostering the overall participation and involvement of young people.

Part of the pilot project was to work out the way of cooperation and to develop appropriate materials for it in supporting such planned youth participation and deliver the local development strategy objectives. The aim of the pilot project was to answer relevant questions and to develop an efficient implementation structure (guideline).

Activities

The project trained young people as mentors so that they were able to advise executives from politics, business and administration, so called 'reverse mentoring'. Thus, youth perspectives can be brought closer to decision-makers and better orient the region towards the needs of young people and young adults.

The project started with an actor and market analysis to identify potentially important people and check for similar projects.

Young people were informed about the initiative and invited to participate, ensuring they were motivated. Mentees were also recruited – these were policy-makers or entrepreneurs who were interested in having young people as mentors (for some specific project) and were informed about the overall process.

Young people from the two LEADER regions attended a two-day training module, developed in close coordination with the actors from the Leipziger Muldenland region and based on an assessment of the young participants' wishes, ideas and expectations. In a further feedback loop, the participants could provide further comments on the training. Thanks to the training, young people from the two regions got to know each other.

Each young participant was then matched with a mentee, as established by the methodology of the project, and approximately 8 counselling pairs were formed.

The kick-off event was the opportunity to present the process, how actors would work together in small groups and the matching, and to launch public relations work.

The counselling phase included: a framework programme for mentees, with activities on new media, exchange and coaching for the mentors, up to three online meetings for both groups and regions and, if necessary, also coaching sessions.

At the final event, important milestones from the counselling experiences were presented and discussed together. The final event served as a retrospective joint evaluation of the project with the aim of developing guidelines for the further cycles of the mentoring programme.

The project included the production of a film documenting the goal, implementation and successes of the project. A joint and an individual final report were prepared by both regions to evaluate the project.

Main results

Two LEADER regions worked together in this interterritorial LEADER cooperation exchanging knowledge and experience. The project was based on the networking of different actors in municipal and regional development: young people, leaders from politics, the social, cultural and business sectors, LEADER regional managers and LAG representatives.

The mentoring programme is designed exclusively for young people and helps the LAG as well as the entire region establish a strong voice for youth and integrate their future perspective into the decision-making processes.

Through reverse mentoring, the project promoted youth self-efficacy, political skills and willingness to take responsibility and participate in local development – anchoring the experience of democracy. Youth are also involved in cooperation between municipalities and organisations through concrete ‘participation and co-decision-making’.

The innovative reverse mentoring method involves a change of perspective for the mentors and the mentees, abandoning their usual thinking habits and taking on a new role.

The project created local and regional development interest in

Germany and across Europe. As part of the youth participation process, German LAG cooperation has been established with two Finnish LAGs (Keskipiste LEADER, Rieska LEADER). Finland now plans to implement phase 1 of this reverse mentoring process, while the two German LAGs will develop phase 2 (training of multipliers) and phase 3 (independent continuation).

Youth leaders from both German regions are working together with actors from Finland and Latvia in an EU-wide Erasmus+ project to further develop the topic of youth participation.

The pilot project Ju & Me resulted in the LEADER region Leipziger Muldenland in the project «Ju & Be. Youth Participation Leipziger Muldenland», the results of which were also passed on to the LEADER region Wesermünde-Süd. Furthermore, it was possible to include young people in the decision-making body of the LEADER region Leipziger Muldenland and to involve them in the project evaluation and the preparation of the LEADER development strategy 2023-27. Building on Ju & Me, a youth engagement competition is currently being carried out in the LEADER region Leipziger Muldenland.

Additional sources of information

www.leipzigermuldenland.de

www.leader-wesermuende-sued.de

[Video 1 - LEADER Cooperation strengthens youth participation](#)

[Video 2 - DVS-Workshop Jugendbeteiligung Mai 2017](#)

[Video 3 - Ju & Me Presentation](#)

This project has been categorised under ‘Socially inclusive & innovative futures’ by the nominating National Rural Network