Provision of networking activities for advisors & innovation support services:

“Innovative studios for Local Action Groups”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic information</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>NRN:</strong></td>
<td>Austria</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Keywords:</strong></td>
<td>Studio, workshop, fillip</td>
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<td><strong>Coordinator:</strong></td>
<td>Luis Fidschuster</td>
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<td><strong>Partners:</strong></td>
<td>e.g. Regional Management Austria</td>
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<td><strong>Resources:</strong></td>
<td>Approx. € 20.000 p.a.</td>
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<td><strong>Period:</strong></td>
<td>2008-2013</td>
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**Background to the networking/innovation support activities**

Local Action Groups, particularly the LAG officers, are mostly concerned with the everyday business of running a LAG such as project development or dealing with financial issues. There’s not much time available for them to search for innovative approaches to certain topics or explore new solutions to regional problems. So it is vital that someone fills this role on their behalf and interrupts their management routines with inspiring, astonishing or even unsettling inputs, formats and ideas.

**Purpose and description of the networking/innovation support activities**

The Network Support Unit develops and organises 3-5 innovation workshops a year. These workshops follow a three-fold logic: 1/3 expert input, 1/3 exchange, 1/3 reflection and implementation. The topics are defined in the NSU’s annual programme which is developed together with the national Leader support group (a group of LAG managers). Annual planning of topics in combination with the “target audience” – the LAGs – makes it easier to react to urgent topics. Every workshop includes a moderator, with Local Action Groups filling the expert’s role where they already have experience with the issue being discussed. The methods are chosen quite flexibly – depending on the topic and on the type of information the participants want to gain. In practice these workshops last 8 hours and are split over two working days. The workshops normally start at 1pm on the first day so everyone can travel to the venue from throughout Austria and ends at 1pm the next day. The additional advantage is that participants have a common evening together which strengthens the relationships and builds networks.
### Who benefited from the activities and how

The beneficiaries are mainly LAG managers, regional management organisations (an Austrian specific regional development structure) and also several active people working in Local Action Groups.

### Main results of the networking/innovation support activities & added value of the chosen delivery approach

Participants were able to learn about new topics, new rural development approaches and had the chance to reflect on them together to apply this new information to their own local or regional context. This format works well if one wants to provide a focused overview on a new topic which then has to be deepened either in a follow up (as the NSU did with the “diversity” workshop which then led to an innovation award and a best practice brochure) or in further individual LAG engagement.

### Success factors

What we (the NSU) learnt from participant’s feedback is that they want inputs of both a “conceptual/theoretical” and a “practical” nature. Therefore the NSU has to pay attention to the selection of experts so that there is not a huge imbalance. Also the exchange and networking between participants is highly important as it is both an opportunity to reflect on the information learnt and also a forum for “off topic” discussions on recent problems or issues.

### Description of NSU and other partners contribution

The NSU planned and organised the workshops and also functions as a ‘hub’ for further development of workshop “spin-offs”.

### Additional information and useful resources

The entire workshop documentation is available on the website of the Austrian rural network [www.netzwerk-land.at](http://www.netzwerk-land.at) (only available in German).

### Pictures

[http://netzwerk-land.jalbum.net/Leader%20und%20Innovation/](http://netzwerk-land.jalbum.net/Leader%20und%20Innovation/) (workshop Leader and Innovation)

### Last Update

November 2013