Delivery of ICT based services in rural areas,

Examples from Estonia.

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Facts

Population in Estonia is 1.3 million inhabitants
Sparse population: 30% lives in Tallinn, only 20% lives in 4433 villages.
1km² = 31 inhabitants
Since 2000 there have been remarkable developments in the Estonian ICT sector,
69% of the population uses the Internet and 86% Internet banking (spring 2008)
e-Elections
More than 800 public Internet access points
1,200 free Wi-Fi Internet zones around the country
The popularity of several e-Services (e.g. e-School, e-Health and other electronic Public Services)
Electronic ID-card and ID related services.
Over 16,500 employees are currently working in the ICT sector - 4% of total employment in Estonia

Rural life situation- weaknesses

- Weak marketing and small spendings on innovation.
- Low reputation of rural life.
- Low population concentration in rural area
- Small number of consumers of goods and services, limited logistics opportunities and the outflow of services from rural area.
- Shortage of non-agricultural jobs in rural area

*Estonian Rural Development Plan 2007-2013*
Strategic related to strengths and weaknesses

- Activities are more and more directed by the Leader-decisionmaking process.
- Preference is given to non-agricultural production which are directly related to the improvement of the quality of life in rural area.
- New solutions should be found, considering the sparse population (mobile solutions to offer goods and services and the implementation of modern information technology, at the same time considering people with special needs)
- The objective is the reduction of migration caused by the unavailability of services.

Estonian Rural Development Plan 2007-2013
LEADER program in Estonia and in Võru County

26 LAGs in Estonia
99,99% of Estonian territory
Võrumaa Partnership Assembly – South-East of Estonia
10 municipalities
21500 inhabitants
Main topics in LAG strategy: entrepreneurship, village and culture, youth
ICT is connected with all of these topics
Local research in 2006 for local region strategy – needs of local people

- More activities needed for solving unemployment problems
- More effective information network
- More local services
- More working places for women and young people
- More technological innovation to improve cost-effective services
Activities for LAG strategy according to research

Investments improving Internet access

Services increasing people internet connections

New knowledge and skills

Improving information network

INNOVATION!
LAG Strategy 2007-2013

New knowledge and skills to improve rural region quality in production and service field.

Improve life environment (networking, social services, infrastructure, identity, welfare)
Supporting ICT project in rural region

- ICT supporting is not special action, this is manner of thought.
- Decision is based on Estonian Rural Development Plan and LAG strategies
- On Leader program decision making is on local level and helps to better understanding of local needs.
- We support innovative ideas and ICT is usually connected with innovation.
- We support local traditions, food, handicraft marketing
- ICT is a tool for better marketing and local life promotion, increasing services for local region.
- ICT has been one part of initiative and add extra value to it
Project examples (1)

- **South-Estonia Food Network**
- Farm products selling and marketing e-solution. Selling + logistics.
- Applicant: Farm Union
Web for food marketing and logistics

Results:
Savings in time resource, more independence
Enlargement of communications
Cost-effective logistics
More cost-effective services, decreasing unemployment
Project example (2)

UMA MEKK *(own taste)*

Applicant:

Võrumaa Partnership Assembly.

Local food promotion, marketing
Results:

Local food better promotion, traditions are better available and more used

Rural region image improvement

Increasing number of local food producers
Results:

Decreasing unemployment of young people

Effective information network between entrepreneurs and young people

Young people connections with local region
Local information is collected into common website about Võru county tourism attractions, food, accommodation, packages etc. Website is produced by Tourism Association. www.visitvoru.ee
Strategy - Initiatives

- More activities needed for solving unemployment problems
- More effective information network
- More technological innovation to improve cost-effective services
- Living in countryside is attractive
- Youth work market
- www.visitvoru.ee
- South-Estonia Food network
- UMA MEKK
Follow up...

- All these project just finished.
- Influence of these project is not measured yet.
- Influence of these activities will be in the next projects.
- ICT initiatives were all positive and confirmed their usefulness in rural life.
- ICT initiatives for different age and interest group are very welcome!
Thank you!