MAIN STORY:
IMAGES OF RURAL EUROPE
ENRD PHOTO COMPETITION 2012
Dear Reader,

Welcome to the 2nd issue of the ENRD Magazine, as always, dedicated to bringing you up to date with all of the rural development news that concerns you, from across the EU.

This magazine is about showcasing the wealth and diversity of rural Europe. Therefore, we are delighted in this issue to bring you a special feature on the recent ENRD ‘Images of Rural Europe’ photo competition. We received thousands of stunning images from all across the EU and on a number of themes, and a final selection made it to the associated exhibition and awards ceremony at the Berlaymont in Brussels in July. As the Jury President Emiliano Larizza said – ‘the exhibition was not just for those interested in rural life but for anyone simply interested in life’. And so for those of you who couldn’t make it – all of the winning entries will be featured in the popular ‘Images of Rural Europe’ section in upcoming issues of the ENRD Magazine. And due to the popularity of the photographs – this section is now yours to ‘pull-out and keep’ at the centre of each issue of the ENRD Magazine!

Our Rural Focus for this edition is on the hot topic of ‘rural finance’ (see page 30), in particular some recent innovations in terms of funding mechanisms, which could make all the difference to ensuring that more rural development projects get off the ground. In fact, the ENRD is committed to bringing you an array of tools to assist with de-mystifying this seemingly complex but important topic… so keep an eye on the ENRD website for more information on this!

And of course we continue to bring you the usual features, including a round-up of policy news in the ENRD Report and we scan the European rural landscape for news from your area in our NRN Focus and LEADER in Action sections. We hear from France and Slovenia in the ‘Over to You’ articles and as always, feature a selection of innovative and interesting EAFRD project profiles, including how children and music are bringing French and Portuguese communities together on a transnational cooperation project and others including one that is helping improve farm performance in Estonia.

Finally, a big thank you to all of you who completed our online survey and for the positive feedback we received on Issue 1. We look forward to hearing your thoughts on this edition, so please do email us at info@enrd.eu.
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The rich diversity of rural Europe was highlighted at an awards ceremony for the winners of the ENRD ‘Images of Rural Europe’ photo competition, which took place on 2 July, 2012, at the Berlaymont building, in Brussels. Presented by the Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Dacian Cioloș, the awards saw people from local communities across Europe come together to celebrate the diversity of rural areas.

In total, more than 1700 photos were submitted by Local Action Groups (LAGs) from 25 countries – as part of a pan-European competition, which took place between March and May, 2012. Several LAGs ran their own local contests to pre-select their best pictures, which were subsequently submitted, via a dedicated ENRD website (www.ruralimages.eu).

Organised by the Contact Point of the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) and promoted by LEADER LAGs the competition sought to promote the beauty and diversity of rural Europe, by giving rural citizens a chance to express their feelings on issues relating to them and their local communities.

“"The photos offer such a rare glimpse into this hidden world. This exhibition is not just for those interested in rural life - it’s for anyone simply interested in life...”"  

Emiliano Larizza, President of Jury
Photos were collected in six categories: Rural People, Rural Environment, Rural Employment, Rural Diversity, Rural Youth, and Spirit of LEADER. As one organiser said: “We are confident that the photographs will provide an invaluable resource to help build strong links and bonds so as to better enhance the work of the ENRD as it seeks to grow and strengthen connections in rural Europe”.

Speaking at the ceremony Commissioner Cioloş said the photos portray modern life in rural areas, including challenges faced and the unique quality of life experienced by those who live there. “This photo exhibition proves we have a lot of diversity in rural areas and this is an important element, as it is this diversity that gives us the capacity to innovate and develop further in the future,” he said.

"This photo exhibition proves we have a lot of diversity in rural areas and this is an important element, as it is this diversity that gives us the capacity to innovate and develop further in the future."

Commissioner Dacian Cioloş

LAG Manager Rosi Wimmer travelled from Hallstadt, Germany to attend the ceremony. She said they were delighted that a photo from their region had been selected for the first prize in the Rural Diversity category. The photo by Wolfgang Stadler entitled ‘Fuhr-Fahrt’ (‘Journey’) was taken at the famous Wolfgang lake. She says the photo perfectly illustrates the quality of life in the region: “We like to work and relax in our region. It’s very beautiful, not only for tourists, but for everyday life.”

“Austrian LAG Manager Rosi Wimmer

One of the guests views some of the winning photos at the awards ceremony reception on 2 July, 2012.

© Ana Nechita

“Famous Stork” by Tomasz Wątasa from Poland (LAG Partnerstwo dla Doliny Baryczy), which won 2nd prize in the Rural Diversity category.

Photo competition winners announced on next page
THE ‘IMAGES OF RURAL EUROPE’ WINNERS

‘Fuhr-Fahrt’ by Wolfgang Stadler, from Austria
LAG Kulturerbe Salzkammergut

‘Famous Stork’ by Tomasz Wojtasik, from Poland
LAG Partnerstwo dla Doliny Baryczy

‘Industry at River Landscape’ by Heinz Naujoks, from Germany
LAG Wesermarsch in Bewegung

Special Mention
‘Wind Power’ by Brendan Burke, from Ireland
LAG West Limerick Resources

‘Cyclist, Robky on the bikes’ by Cyril Gajdík, from the Czech Republic
LAG Kyjovské Slovácko in motion

‘A Treasure in the Hand’ by Francesco Catalano, from Italy
LAG Fior d’Olivi

‘Beating on the Water’ by Karel Šimeček, from the Czech Republic
LAG Kyjovské Slovácko

‘Haymaking’ by Mario Folchi, from Italy
LAG Molise Verso Il Futuro

Special Mention
‘Theatre carved out of the rock’ by Eduardo Esteban Muñecas, from Spain
LAG Asociación Tierras Sorianas del Cid

‘Production of cheese in Tyrol’ by Stefan Astner, from Austria
LAG Mittleres Unterinntal Tirol

‘Small Man/Big Tree’ by Liina Laurikainen, from Estonia
LAG Jõgevamaa Cooperation Chamber

‘Lonetal Landscape’ by Helmut Schlaiß, from Germany
LAG Brenzregion

‘Lonely pilgrim “Osamělý poutník”’ by Martin Trcka, from the Czech Republic
LAG Valassko - Horni Vsacko

Special Mention
‘The doomsday “Soudný den”’ by Martin Trcka, from the Czech Republic
LAG Valassko - Horni Vsacko

‘White-horse’ by Daniel Penciuc, from Romania
LAG Bucovina de Munte
THE ‘IMAGES OF RURAL EUROPE’ WINNERS

‘Monastery in Valle Umbra’ by Stefano Pasquini, from Italy
LAG Valle Umbra E Sibillini

‘Drac Costume Viseu de Sus’ by Gabriel Saplontai & Lucian Hotoiu, from Romania
LAG Codrii Hertei

‘Belief and Tradition’ by Jacek Cisło, from Poland
LAG Ziemia Pszczyńska

Special Mention
‘Rural traditions’ by Ivo Pirisi, from Italy
LAG Sarcidano Barbagia di Seulo

‘The spirit of LEADER’ by Cyril Gajdík, from the Czech Republic
LAG Kyjovské Slovácko in motion

‘Shepherds’ by Stefano Pasquini, from Italy
LAG Valle Umbra E Sibillini

‘Water Creatures’ by Martin Trcka, from the Czech Republic
LAG Valassko - Horní Všacko

‘Harvesting’ by Steve Morgan, from the UK
LAG South Pennine LEADER

Special Mention
‘The young musician’ by Dittlbacher, from Austria
LAG Mondseeland

‘Fresh straw in barn’ by Meike Lücke, from Germany
LAG Wesermarsch in Bewegung

‘Applepress, Nethercott’ by Kevin Nicholson, from the UK
LAG LEADER 4 Torridge and North Devon

‘Framed by the Landscape’ by Steve Morgan, from the UK
LAG South Pennine LEADER

‘Let us Lead You’ by Matej Povše, from Slovenia
LAG Srce Slovenije

Special Mention
‘LAG meeting under canvas - Yurt’ by Charlotte Hursey, from the United Kingdom
LAG North Pennine Dales LEADER

‘Image smugglers’ by Regis Blanchard, from France
LAG Pays de Vannes

For further information: Contact jacqui.meskell@enrd.eu or visit http://enrd.ec.europa.eu.
All of the original entries are available for viewing on the dedicated website www.ruralimages.eu.
Among the other winners was Helmut Schlaiß, from Germany, who won second place in the Rural Environment category for his photo ‘Lonetal Landscape’. Speaking after the ceremony he said he was honoured to have been selected. "I heard about the competition in my community and decided to submit my photo of the Lonetal – which brings back memories from when I was a child. Rural Europe has many faces and this photo portrays the mystery of this beautiful part of Austria – so I hope this photo will inspire people to visit my area.”

Jury President and award-winning photographer Emiliano Larizza commended all those who entered the competition, praising not only the technical composition and aesthetic value of the photos but also the important messages conveyed. “These photos force you to confront your own views about people, about nature... about life generally. It was a great privilege to have been part of this competition,” he said.

A selection of photos was on display at the Presidents’ Gallery of the Berlaymont building for some time after the ceremony. A touring exhibition is foreseen later this year and in 2013, which will allow for a greater number of people to enjoy the photos at different locations in Europe.
Key success factors for the provision of environmental services have been identified as a result of the first working phase of the ENRD Focus Group on the ‘delivery of environmental services’. These benefits are supported by the second pillar of the Common Agricultural Policy and include clean water, an attractive landscape, biodiversity and healthy soil.

The first working phase of the Focus Group, comprising representatives from National Authorities, National Rural Networks (NRNs), European organisations, farmers and other practitioners ran from January to June 2012. This work focused on collecting evidence on how current Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) are contributing to the provision of environmental services. The Group examined what measures and approaches have been used. On this basis the members of the Focus Group shared ‘relevant examples’ of successful (or less successful) experiences in the EU Member States (MS). According to the Progress Report published in June 2012, so far, some 50 such examples in 15 MS have been selected- providing a sound empirical base for the identification of key success factors, which include:

- The involvement of farmers in the design of policy measures;
- The availability of tailored training and advice;
- Communication amongst partners;
- The commitment of farmers to the objectives;
- The level of collaboration experienced;
- Flexibility in how measures are implemented locally;
- Simplified administrative procedures and adequate rewards for land managers.

The Focus Group was established in December 2011, as part of ENRD preparatory activities for the next programming period. Its main aim is to explore how the provision of environmental benefits, through the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), can be improved and maximised in the future, with the view of improving the design and the implementation of the next generation of RDPs. In the second half of the year, building upon these initial findings, the Focus Group will produce specific recommendations for the development of better RDPs for 2014-2020.

For further information see the Environmental Services Theme Page on the ENRD website (or click the following link if reading the online version: [http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/themes/environment/environmental-services/en/environmental-services_en.cfm](http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/themes/environment/environmental-services/en/environmental-services_en.cfm)).
The main findings of the LEADER Focus Group on ‘Better Local Development Strategies’ were discussed at the 8th meeting of the LEADER Sub-Committee on 31 May, 2012. The findings show that linking Local Development Strategy (LDS) design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation in a more effective way is a priority. In particular, there is a need to develop guidance on the monitoring and evaluation of LDSs, as according to the results of the Focus Group questionnaire, one-third of LAGs do not currently monitor or assess the achievements of their LDS objectives. In terms of the design and implementation of LDSs, the importance of good planning, starting early and involving the local population was highlighted. Proper financial planning was also identified as critical.

An analysis of the 240 approved transnational cooperation (TNC) projects notified to the EC and the results of the recent LEADER Event on TNC were also presented, as follows:

- Almost half of the projects are bilateral;
- 50% of projects have a budget range between €10,000 and €100,000;
- 7% of projects have a budget above €500,000;
- 56% of the projects will last for one year and more.

Initial proposals for the 2012/2013 work programme focused on ENRD tools - in particular the LEADER Gateway on the ENRD website, as well as forthcoming LEADER events. The possibility of LAG workshops as a means of making better use of the results of Focus Groups and the organisation of joint events with the European Fisheries Areas Network (FARNET) were also discussed.

For further information, see the ‘meetings’ section of the ENRD website or click the following link if reading the online version: http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/themes/environment/environmental-services/en/environmental-services_en.cfm.
Workshop on Community-Led Local Development

Workshop on Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) - which aims to ensure better integration of Common Strategic Framework (CSF) Funds by Member States and LAGs in the next programming period (2014-2020), was held on 1 June, 2012, in Brussels.

The EC Directorates-General for Agriculture and Rural Development; Regional Policy; Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion; and Maritime Affairs and Fisheries presented the main principles of CLLD implementation across EU funds, which will require Member States to opt for either mono- or multi-funding for defined types of territories and decide on the role of the fund for that territory. Furthermore, the funding approach chosen by LAGs should be in line with the outcome of an analysis carried out while developing their area’s Local Development Strategy (LDS).

Three parallel sessions focused on how to better prepare for programming CLLD, from both Managing Authority (MA) and Local Action Group (LAG) perspectives, and how best to measure the performance and added value of CLLD.

For further information, see the Seminars and Conferences section of the ENRD website or click here if reading the online version: http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/themes/environment/environmental-services/en/environmental-services_en.cfm.

Focus Group on Knowledge Transfer & Innovation

A new Focus Group on Knowledge Transfer & Innovation (KT&I) was launched by the ENRD’s Coordination Committee in Brussels, in June 2012. The Group will examine how KT&I is currently addressed by EU rural development policy (http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/eip/index_en.htm), including identifying what is working well and where issues may arise. Additional focus will be given to investigating existing links between the scientific community, farmers and other rural actors. The Focus Group will also examine the role of Farm Advisory Services and identify areas where support for improving cooperation between actors may be required.

The results of this work will provide support for Member States in their design of future Rural Development Programmes (RDPs), particularly since KT&I is proposed as a cross-cutting priority for the next programming period. In addition, it will inform on how the ‘European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability’ (EIP on AP&S) – might effectively promote knowledge transfer and innovation through the RDPs and help identify a clear role for National Rural Networks and advisory services.

The EIP on AP&S is part of the EU 2020 flagship initiative called ‘Innovative Union’ and aims to foster competitive and sustainable agriculture and forestry sectors, that achieve ‘more from less’ and work in harmony with the environment. For further information on the EIP on AP&S, please see http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/eip/index_en.htm.
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Serbia Pre-accession Visit

A group of civil servants and PhD students from different regions of Serbia visited the ENRD Contact Point on 22 May, 2012. The visit was part of Serbia’s preparatory efforts for EU accession, and delegates sought a better understanding of the objectives and roles of the ENRD. They were also particularly interested in the role of renewable energy in EU rural development policy.

Polish Regional Network Support Unit

A group of visitors from the regional Network Support Unit from Warmia – Mazury Voivodeship, in Poland visited on 3 July, 2012. Presentations and discussions focused on the ENRD’s mission, the future of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the added value of networking. Guests also provided a short overview of the activities of their regional network.

Ukrainian Delegation

Representatives from Regional and State administrations in the Ukraine gathered in Brussels on 24 May, 2012. The visit was organised as a means of fostering cooperation with EU Member States and Institutions and a number of topics were discussed, including ageing population groups, unemployment, the rural-urban divide and other challenges for Ukrainian rural areas.
National Rural Networks (NRNs) are set up by Member State governments to bring together those involved in rural development and to help implement EU rural development policy. This section features all the latest NRN news from recent meetings and other events organised throughout the EU.

German NRN: Assisting the Green Energy Revolution

How can public authorities facilitate greater production of green energy? This was the theme of a two-day event, hosted by the German NRN in Göttingen in June 2012. Over 100 delegates participated, comprising policy-makers and elected representatives from city, district, town and regional authorities, across Germany. The event addressed issues around regional and local planning controls, greater acceptance of the network’s role in energy transfers from rural to urban areas, and ensuring that value and benefits are secured by the rural communities themselves. The outcomes of the meeting stressed the importance of cooperation, ongoing communication and the participation of local communities in the sector.

Commenting on the event, Isabell Friess, Conference Coordinator from the German NRN said: "It’s important that rural areas benefit from the energy transition and that’s why we wanted them to exchange experiences. The meeting presented best practice examples, but most importantly we had a lot of time to discuss challenges such as how we guarantee the security of energy supplies and how we can deal with changes to the landscape".

For further information, see: http://www.netzwerk-laendlicher-raum.de/service/veranstaltungen/des-archiv/2012/energiewende/.

Finnish NRN: ‘Rural at the Edge’ Conference

The second Nordic Conference for Rural Research saw over 130 rural research specialists from 11 countries come together for three days in May 2012. Hosted by the Finnish Society for Rural Research and Development, in collaboration with the Finnish NRN, the theme of the conference was ‘Rural at the Edge’. The participants discussed current rural development research with a focus on the increasing interdependency between countries and regions. 120 papers were presented in 15 workshops covering four main topics: cultures and people, places and identities; natural resource governance and landscape management; rural economy and entrepreneurship; and policies and politics of rural areas. The event also allowed participants to meet with rural development practitioners and policy-makers at the International Summer School of Rural Development.

Speaking at the conference, Päivi Kujala, Manager of the Finnish NRN and member of the Conference’s Scientific Committee said: "From the fruitful discussions we had in the working groups we can conclude that the challenges for rural development are consistent across the Nordic countries; essentially we need more people in the countryside and new innovations in rural business. Rural research is very important in helping us understand challenges, and we are keen that there should be increased cooperation between researchers, developers and authorities regarding rural development issues".

For further information, see www.mua.fi/ruralattheedge/.

Fresh produce provided sustenance at the Rural at the Edge Conference.
The Lithuanian NRN brought 30 Lithuanian LAGs together with representatives from 13 other Member States in the Panemuniai Region, in May 2012, to provide a showcase for the very best in rural development, illustrated through culinary heritage and traditional crafts. LAG and NRN representatives from countries such as Finland, Poland, Latvia, Wales (UK), Cyprus, Estonia, Portugal and Bulgaria gathered at the meeting, where a number of potential transnational cooperation (TNC) projects were discussed. The event was run alongside the annual ‘Panemuniai Blossom’ festival which draws thousands of visitors from across Lithuania. The participants also enjoyed the performances of folk dance groups, storytellers and youth groups at the festival and they expressed their appreciation for the strong cultural identity that has been maintained in Lithuania. For further information, see www.kaimotinklas.lt.

The Scottish Rural Network, in partnership with the Community Transport Association (CTA) Scotland, hosted a networking event on 31 May, 2012 for community organisations involved in community transport initiatives.

The event coincided with the launch of the CTA’s ‘State of the Sector Report for Scotland 2012’, which is the first national survey of the community transport sector. The report reveals that the sector’s annual income is €12.5m and that over 100 000 people now benefit from community transport schemes. Between them they take over 3.5 million passenger journeys per year. The event also included workshops on different types of community transport schemes, (such as ‘dial-a-bus’ or ‘community cars’ initiatives), working with volunteers and understanding and applying equal opportunities legislation. Feedback from the 42 event participants indicates that with cutbacks to rural transport services and increasing fuel costs the community transport sector is set to keep growing. For further information, see: www.ruralgateway.org.uk or www.ctauk.org/in-your-area/scotland.aspx.
Maltese NRN: New NRN Committee and Streamlined Structure

The Maltese NRN launched its new streamlined structure at the first meeting of its restructured NRN Committee in Dingli, on the 20 April, 2012.

The committee, which has a broad membership taken from the agricultural, environmental and craft sectors, as well as LAG and government representatives, discussed the NRN-led consultation regarding the post 2013 period. In addition to stakeholder consultations and budgetary analysis, the NRN has also established six working groups, each of which will focus on developing one of the themes proposed for the RDP 2014-2020. The meeting, which was attended by external evaluators for the 2007-2013 Rural Development Programme (RDP) also heard updates from three LAGs (Xlokk, Majjistral and Gozo) and discussed NRN communications initiatives. The new NRN Committee will meet every four months, and this will coincide with the publication of an e-newsletter, the latest of which is about renewable energy and agriculture. For further information, see https://secure2.gov.mt/MRRA-MA/home/?l=1.

Latvian NRN: Tackling Rural Finance in Challenging Economic Times

A seminar on ‘Finance and Support for Rural Entrepreneurship’ was hosted by the Latvian NRN in partnership with the ENRD Rural Finance Group, Riga, on 28 June, 2012. The event saw some 70 delegates from across the EU come together to consider a range of issues on financing difficulties and how they affect rural businesses.

Participants heard from a range of speakers about alternative financial instruments, which might support both start-up businesses and small enterprises in the early stages of their development, in light of reduced bank lending. There was also discussion about the role of NRNs and LEADER LAGs in supporting rural entrepreneurs, for example through the provision mentoring support, training and information.

Edgars Linde, Secretariat Manager for the Latvian NRN said: “Funding for new businesses is an important issue across Europe, and we believe that this seminar is an important step in encouraging Managing Authorities and NRNs to consider how new financial instruments that might encourage growth of the rural economy, can be incorporated into their planning for RDP 2014-2020.” For further information, see www.llkc.lv and http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/themes/entrepreneurship/rural-finance/en/rural-finance_en.cfm.
Belgium – Flemish RN: Roadshow on the Role of Agriculture

A roadshow, which raises awareness of the benefits of agriculture and horticulture, is touring all five Flemish provinces from 08 July to 08 September, 2012. Organised by the Flemish Rural Network (RN) and part of the 50th anniversary of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) celebrations, the roadshow is designed to inform the general public about the wide range of benefits provided by agriculture - from food and enterprise, to the environment and landscape. The roadshow allows members of the public to speak to staff from the RN and the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, as well as to view information panels and collect information about the CAP, whilst games and activities are also provided for children. Nele Vanslembrouck, Coordinator of the Flemish RN said: “We have been very pleased with the response we have had to the roadshow. We were very fortunate to select beautiful locations and the opening of the road-show by our Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development demonstrates the importance of what we are trying to do in reaching out to the public.”

For further information, see [www.ruralnetwerk.be](http://www.ruralnetwerk.be).

Romanian NRN: Delivering Training in LEADER Methodology

Some 80 participants met in Gura Humorului in North-East Romania on 10-11 May, 2012 for the second meeting of the LEADER Working Group. Organised by the Romanian NRN, the meeting welcomed participants from Romanian Local Action Groups (LAGs), the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Paying Agency for Rural Development and Fisheries, the Mountain Farmers’ Federation of Dorna and experts from Austria, Spain and France, to discuss how to actively prepare Romanian LAGs to successfully implement their local strategies for rural development and promote the LEADER spirit in the communities.

Over the two days a combination of presentations, workshops and informal networking between the delegates took place. The topics covered addressed a range of issues facing the new Romanian LAGs including governance and operational models for LEADER, LAG financial operations and animation.

For further information, see [www.rndr.ro](http://www.rndr.ro).
From milk to cheese and from sheep to stockings… members of the Dragotin Kette Farming Group already know how to plant and sow, milk and curdle. Tadej has just got a new rabbit hutch and a female rabbit; now Rok – who got a chicken from his mentor Tamara two years ago (that has now grown into a hen) wants a henhouse. Farming group members will take care of that too.

What will the henhouse be like? “Hm, I still need to think about that. I know it’ll house three hens and has to be portable, so that Rok can take the hens out to graze on a pasture and it has to protect them from the wind in the winter,” Tamara, the group’s mentor, explains. They have to hurry with the henhouse, though. By the end of February it will already be time to sow the first seeds in pots and crates, and then soon after that, hurrah, it’s back to the garden again!

Farming groups that have grown into functioning farms

A farming group has been active at the Dragotin Kette Primary School in Ilirska Bistrica since 2009. Two other farming groups have since also been formed at Košana and Podgora Kuteževo schools. In fact, they can hardly be called farming groups any more. They are now three full-blown farms – and that means no holidays! Not even school holidays.

The person taking care of the farming group members and of the attendees of the workshops (offered at Hruševeje schools and the Miroslav Vilhar primary school in Postojna) is the tireless...
Tamara Urbančič from Ilirska Bistrica, an agricultural engineering graduate, who took the initiative to organise the farming groups and got the project on its feet with LEADER funds obtained at a tender published by the Local Action Group Society for Rural Development of the Land between Snežnik and Nanos, which is headquartered at Ilirska Bistrica.

The pupils of these three schools each tend a herb garden and a vegetable garden. In Košana, the vegetable garden will have to be enlarged due to an overwhelming interest in the project. Right before New Year, the farming group members put up bird-feeders with corn cobs and seeds, sewed organic shopping bags and then applied themselves to making a rabbit hutch for Tadej.

Some time ago Tadej kept rabbits in an improvised space that did not belong to his family. As the rabbits did not get a proper home and care, Tadej ended up losing them, and all the joy the little critters gave him. Tamara decided that this could not go on, and the group members were immediately ready to make a new rabbit hutch.

Action started right after New Year. They designed a rabbit hutch that would provide the doe Tamara gave to Tadej, and her offspring, with complete comfort. “Actually, they’re not rabbits. They’re hares!” Tamara corrects herself.

Even so, Tadej would still have been without a rabbit hutch had not the friendly carpenter Marjan given them wood, and the kind beekeeper Lado cut and polished some planks. The kids constructed and painted the rabbit hutch and used the money they made selling produce at the market to buy seed and water dishes.

Beans for a gene bank

Over the past few years the farming group members learned to process herbs into oils, syrups, tinctures, balms, tea, wine and vinegar. They know how to make homemade pasta and bake cookies, pickle and dry vegetables and fruits, prepare marmalade, juices and compotes.

They know what kohlrabi is, and they even know how to prepare it. They have already sewn, reaped and threshed the cereals, cleaned them in a wooden trough; ground them; and baked bread. They have collected 120 local varieties of beans, made an exhibition and a play about them and sent them to our gene bank. The first 30 varieties have already been propagated and are being examined before the farming group starts to grow them in larger quantities, says Tamara.
Mentor Tamara Urbančič explains to children how to work with rabbits.

“Fresh Straw in Barn”

A photo by Meike Lücke, from Germany (LAG Wesermarsch in Bewegung), which received a ‘special mention’ award in the Rural Youth category of the ENRD ‘Images of Rural Europe’ photo competition.
Images of Rural Europe

“Harvesting”

A photo by Steve Morgan from the UK, who won third prize in the Rural Youth category of the ENRD ‘Images of Rural Europe’ photo competition. The photo depicts home-grown harvesting at the Heptonstall community allotments, in the South Pennines, UK.
“Lonetal landscape”

A photo by Helmut Schlaiß, from Germany (LAG Brenzregion), which won 2nd place in the Rural Environment category of the ENRD ‘Images of Europe’ photo competition. Lonetal translates as ‘lone valley’ and is situated in the Brenz valley, in Germany.
During the summer, several farming group members went to the Konjska Planina Dairy Farm, on the Pokljuka plateau. There they became dairy farmers and had to get up at 6 a.m. to fetch the cows and bring them back to the barn, milk them and make cheese, sour milk and butter.

They slept on hay, cooked their own lunch and baked bread for breakfast. They learned how not to waste any food. They learned to ration water and experienced dinners under a flickering light bulb and life without electronic gadgets.

At their schools, the kids played host to a calf, some pigs, chickens, rabbits and other animals and are often themselves guests with the animals at Tamara’s home, a farm in Ilirska Bistrica. They have made many field trips to agricultural schools and farms and met with autochthonous breeds - the Istrian Pramenka sheep and the Cika cow. During the winter break they are going horseback riding at Prestranek castle.

From sheep to stockings

Last autumn and winter the project ‘Od vouce do kocj’té’ (From sheep to stocking) came to life. They sheared the sheep themselves, washed the fleece at Tamara’s, dried and “picked” it.

This skill was taught to them by Marija Dolgan from Gornja Košana. There they borrowed two spinning wheels. They found out from the Ilirska Bistrica-born non-material heritage researcher Romeo Volk that, back in the day, fleece was not combed, but picked and shredded, in order for the dirt to fall out and to soften the wool and prepare it for spinning.

Even the boys sat behind the spinning wheels, while three girls learned to spin the yarn on a spindle. Tamara says that the young experts, who honed their skills at home with their grandmothers, deserve a certificate recognising their mastery of this disappearing skill. The farming group members have also learned to knit and weave. They presented the full story to the public in March. “But my main goal is not merely to present it to the public. My goal is for the largest possible number of children to learn these old skills, in order to preserve them and pass them on. The kids are learning through play and with good grace. They learn with ease if the materials are presented in an interesting and dynamic way,” Tamara believes.

Tamara is not that interested in awards and recognition, but they did come, however. The kids were encouraged and rewarded for their efforts and Tamara’s creativity and energy won recognition. The farming group of the Podgora School in Kuteževo won first prize in the best eco-garden contest in the framework of the Eco-School project Solska Vrtilnica, while Bauhaus listed the Ilirska Bistrica Farming Group’s garden rearrangement concept design as one of the top 10 out of a total of 80 participating schools.

As a reward, the young gardeners will be allowed to rearrange a part of the school park according to permaculture principles. They will make a fish pond, a vegetable garden, a garden tool shed, a dry wall providing shelter for insects and heat for the plants, plant berries and a piece of natural lawn, build a spiral herb garden, a beehive, create a compost pile, and in the middle of the garden will build a pavilion that will be used as an open-air classroom seating 25. “The opening party is in June”, Tamara announces.

By then, the farming group members will have grown several hundred tomatoes, peppers and other vegetable saplings and sold them in farmers’ markets. They may have to grow thousands more before Tamara’s example, admired by many public institution representatives, finds its way into the school system.
Clichés die hard. We often hear that young people have nothing to do in the country, that they get bored and that this leads to problems. It gets to the point that many councillors and local actors either perceive young people as a problem or complain bitterly that they are unable to do anything to get them to stay in the territories where they were born.

The huge exodus from the countryside, which has been so prominent over the last century, is still fixed in our minds as an inescapable reality. Rural young people seem to have nowhere else to go except to the city; therefore those who remain behind must surely be putting up with second best.

However, popular educational movements, such as the Young Catholic Farmers or JAC (La Jeunesse agricole catholique - set up in 1929, which later became the Young Rural Christian’s Movement) or MRJC Mouvement Rural de Jeunesse Chrétienne – set up during the 1960s) have been working on the issue. In their manifesto they clearly state: “We reject the image of rural territorial enclosures from which it is difficult to escape. We want to fight this perception, fight this prejudice. We actually want to live in the countryside. While living here we can welcome newcomers and help others to leave.” While expressing their views on issues such as how to reduce energy consumption, develop local economies, promote the principle of equality in rural planning.
Ambitious, inquisitive, confident

“Education for mobility” cannot be reduced to eco-mobility or to commuting. It has to tackle all the challenges that have been raised. This training could be done in various ways inside formal and informal education systems, including outdoor classes on the topic, opportunities for pupils to be encouraged to put aside their usual habits and to use new ways of getting around. Everybody remembers their first visit to Paris, their first plane journey, the first time they took a train. Overcoming their fears in order to discover the world, all the while stepping back to consider the consequences of their action - that’s quite some programme! (…) The whole challenge consists of cutting down on the use of transport methods that are harmful to people and the planet, while developing those that can be fun to use and also lead to meeting new people, discovering new places, and overcoming prejudice.

In 2010, the French Rural Mayors Association (Association des Maires Ruraux de France) decided to run a conference on the theme of youth, and stressed the vital importance of access to qualifications. But in a rural environment it was traditional to learn on the job either on a farm or in a craftsman’s workshop. Getting academic qualifications didn’t seem to matter, but nowadays these are key to getting a job. Companies that are looking to expand into rural areas have problems recruiting qualified staff. The creation of training schemes in the territories is one approach, but you have to watch out for young people being directed ‘by default’ towards whatever training scheme is on offer locally. Mobility must be supported and more work done on what is stopping young people (and their parents too) from being ambitious, inquisitive and confident.

Why youth is a resource

Overcoming prejudice and perceiving young people in a new light – that is what the current different schemes of the French Rural Network are encouraging people to do. Thus in Lorraine at the end of 2007, the Ministry for Agriculture, Agri-business and Forestry Services (DRAAF) suggested to the Carrefour des Pays Lorrains (the Regional Network Support Unit for the area) and to those involved in local youth and sports that they become involved in a phase of incorporating the theme of youth into the agenda of the Regional Rural Network. Rather than conduct new research, it was decided to set up a practical experiment by creating a network, to exchange views on local policies affecting young people with representatives of official bodies and associations of the territories, in order to suggest schemes that could be applied in a complementary and consistent manner. In addition, new research was also aimed at putting forward new ideas to help local actors implement a ‘youth policy’ that would be conducive to a global policy for the whole territory. All this work gave rise to the publication of a guidance tool entitled “Implementing a Local Policy for Young People”. This guide states that there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ description of youth, but in fact there are many types of young people, depending on whether you categorise them by gender, age, financial resources and so on. They also represent an ‘across-the-board’ sector of the public with regard to a number of themes and policies, whether on education, health, training, mobility or even citizenship. But all too often public policies focus on only two delineations - ‘young people as victims’ and/or ‘young people as a threat’. Members of the regional working group were very clearly in favour of arguing the case for regarding young people as ‘a resource’.

No more farm start-ups without aid

As in many other regions, few farming businesses come to set up in the Centre region. For every new business that arrives there are three that leave, and half of those that are starting up do not meet the criteria of the legal framework for publicly-funded grants. However their projects play a part in maintaining some economic activity in territories that are often in decline and they need some case-by-case assistance in order to guarantee their success. That is why the regional agricultural office of Centre and the departmental offices of ADASEA and ADDEAR have dreamed up the ‘NINA’ tool – ‘non installé non aidé’ or ‘no start-ups without aid’. This network identifies sponsors for projects, diagnoses the resources needed, and offers follow-up and guidance. Funded since 2005 by the Cher General Council, then since 2009 by the region, this mechanism is gradually becoming more powerful. A factsheet on it has been published as part of a project on ‘Forms of support for the setting up of short-circuit (local small-scale) farmers in the regions’, a project supported in the framework of the French Rural Network. The factsheet shows that out of 54 diagnoses carried out, 26 start-ups have actually been achieved, 2 are in progress and 6 projects were abandoned.

http://www.reseaurural.fr/gtn/alimentation-agriculture/plans-actions-projets

The views of young people should be taken into account at planning stages, according to research.

Making room for them as actors

“Young people should be implicated in current policies,” explains Jean-Claude Richez, Head of Studies at the National Institute for Youth and Popular Education (Injep), during one of the Lorraine Group’s meetings. “You have to leave some room for them as actors and not just as recipients of information. It often strikes us that Youth Councils are not working because nobody makes room for them or lets them in on the action. It’s therefore important to make a place for them, even if in the end their seat at the table stays empty.” With a view to helping local actors in their discussions, the Lorraine Guide poses questions under five headings: ‘Political Will’, ‘The Role Played by Associations’, ‘The Place of Young People in Society’, ‘Human/Financial Resources’ and...
Why not live in the country?

They had career jobs such as a professional dancer, pharmacist, marketing executive or were university students. They came from Bordeaux, Vilnius, Brussels, Stockholm, Grenada and Perugia… All of them young people, most of them university graduates … and despite all that they have elected to set up home in the countryside! Marion, Laurent, Francesco, Bodil and Enira are now entrepreneurs and project sponsors, and while some of them have settled down in places where their ancestors lived, others have been eager to change countries, languages and culture. All of them add value to the natural wealth and culture of their territories by creating activities that enhance society and the environment. Their first-hand accounts have been compiled in a 52-minute documentary produced by the association Savoir-Faire et Découverte, in the framework of the programme of a French political group for welcoming and maintaining populations of rural areas. “This is not a study based on statistics,” says association director Arnaud Trollé. “It’s a tool of sociology and getting things going. Our aim is to highlight the interest of young people to support original projects for setting up house in a rural setting. We want to bring this to the attention of the councillors and actors in the area.” Some 200 copies of the film have already been distributed with more to follow. The goal is now to organise discussion meetings wherever it is shown to continue to draw attention to the attachment young people develop to the place where they have set up home, the benefits of welcoming them and how it is possible in an area to create a dialogue with young people. The film can also be downloaded at www.lesjeunessefontleurfilm.fr.

For, by and with young people

In Lower Normandy the rural network firstly wanted to incorporate the theme of youth in an ‘across-the-board’ fashion in its work. Last September it organised a large seminar on the theme of Young people, ways of getting around, local initiatives and territories – how to incorporate the needs of young people in rural development policies. The idea behind this event was to provide an occasion for rural development actors and young people to meet each other ‘face to face’ to exchange points of view. This led, amongst other things, to recommendations for reworking certain approaches to action within the network: developing support for young people to motivate them to complete their projects and giving them easier access to the means to achieve them; encouraging them to get to know each other; and encouraging the exchange of practices by creating one or more meeting places through existing networks of youth workers, all the while taking care not to forget those who work with young people but who do not belong to these networks. They also recommended opening up such meeting places to whatever is happening outside France, to help create a policy for, by and with young people, and finally to develop alternative transport resources for young people.

Getting rid of stereotypes

Following closely on the seminar in Lower Normandy, the regional networks of the Pays-de-la-Loire and of Upper Normandy took their turn to organise meetings on the themes of ‘Youth and Old Age’ and ‘Young people’. “It’s a matter of getting rid of stereotypes and regarding these sectors of society as people who are a valuable resource,” explains Sandra Dranne, organiser of the Pays-de-la-Loire Regional Network. “We give priority to three areas: housing, mobility and social bonds, and we talk about synergies between young people and pensioners.” In Burgundy, there is a group made up of representatives of rural family centres, apprentice training centres, local missions, popular education movements and areas with qualified youth facilities. It meets every two months to discuss how to encourage young rural people to speak directly to local councillors and actors and to say what they want, what they would like to see and what they actually need, in order to have their views taken into account. The idea is to try out some tools and pick out those which could lead to dialogue. The first approach explored involved some young photography trainees at the Mercurey Centre for Training Apprentices in Saône-et-Loire. They were invited to meet some young rural people and to take photos to illustrate their own perception of rural life. “They will choose the subjects they want. We don’t want to limit them in any way. On both sides there are discoveries to be made,” underlines Brigitte Chossegros, organiser of Burgundy’s Rural Network. “Afterwards the local councillors will have to join in, so that we can set up the dialogue.” Other tools have also been used to continue the experiment, such as an internet radio station, and a few other forms of theatrical and journalistic expression.

To read this issue of ‘La Revue’ please go to the following link:
http://www.resecnrural.fr/files/rf_03.pdf
Local Action Groups (LAGs) are local public-private partnerships who work to promote the LEADER ‘bottom-up’ approach to rural development in the EU. This section features some of the many LAG-based activities and events to have taken place recently.

The 2012 ‘LEADER Inspired Network Community’ (LINC) conference was held in Estonia, in June. The focus of this year’s conference was ‘Involvement and Volunteering,’ and some 200 participants from 15 countries attended. The event was coordinated by the LINC initiative’s six Estonian partners: the Estonian NRN, Tartu Rural Development Association, Põlva County Partnership Board, Valga County Partnership Board, Võrumaa Partnership Assembly, Borderland’s LEADER. The ENRD Contact Point was in attendance to facilitate transnational cooperation (TNC) through the ever-popular ‘Cooperation Corner’ and to promote LEADER and TNC tools. Workshops were held on how ‘involvement and volunteering’ might relate to local cuisine, youth and seniors, rural tourism, community services, local resources and energy. Participants could also choose from one of four field visits, each of which involved some practical voluntary work experience, including one that saw participants travel along the Onion Route and experience three local cultures: Russian Old Believers, Baltic German Manor Culture and Estonian Peasant Culture.

LINC is a transnational LEADER and NRN partnership between groups in Austria, Germany, Estonia and Finland, which aims to promote networking and the exchange of experience between European LEADER areas in an innovative way. This takes the form of an annual conference hosted by one of the partner countries with a focus on knowledge exchange and sporting activities, which this year included orienteering, disc golf and boating.

For further information, see www.info-linc.eu/eng or www.tas.ee.

Estonia: LINC Transnational Partnership’s 3rd Annual Conference in South Estonia
Finland: LEADER Transnational Project Links Youth Training and Preservation of Maritime Heritage

A total of 20 young people from Finland and Estonia participated in a two-week training exercise on the Galeas Ihana - a traditional Baltic wooden sailing ship built by volunteers - in May and June 2012. The exercise, which was part of a transnational cooperation (TNC) project, saw them sail between the regions of project partners LAG Karhuseutu in Finland and LAG Hiiumaa in Estonia to LAG Bornholm, in Denmark, via Eckerö Åland and Västervik, in Sweden.

The overall objective of the TNC project is to keep maritime heritage alive and visible by stimulating awareness of a common maritime environment and heritage. This is achieved through networking between partners and their affiliated boat builders, ship owners and crew, and by actively involving the next generation of youth in the Baltic region.

The three transnational partners held a project meeting in Bornholm, before the boat and crew returned back to Luvia. Suvi Taitonen from the Ihana in Finland explained: “Our project objective is to train young sailors and crew who are interested in seamanship, boat construction and sailing. Through this we will revive and retain seamanship traditions. On this trip all of the participants shared a willingness to try something new, experience the magic of sailing, meet new people and be part of the crew.”

For further information, see www.ihana.fi and www.karhuseutu.fi.

Netherlands: Flevoland LEADER uses YouTube to ‘Spread the Message’

A Dutch Local Action Group (LAG) has produced a series of videos, which track projects from their initial application for funding through to their completion, and uploaded them onto YouTube. Since the videos were promoted more widely in May 2012, the LAG has had lots of positive feedback from across Europe. Groups from the UK, Sweden, Lithuania and Austria got in contact. The Vorarlberg LAG in Austria, who has produced similar videos, has now extended an invitation to the Dutch group to meet and discuss collaboration.

Margje Memelink from Flevoland LEADER who coordinated the initiative said: “The aim of the videos is to help future applicants to our LEADER programme, once more funding becomes available. In the meantime, we have shown the videos to a wide range of people including representatives from our Ministry. They told us it was very useful to see the reality of what was achieved with the funding rather than just reading about it on paper.”

To view the documentaries - which are in Dutch with English subtitles - go to www.youtube.com/user/provincieflevoland?feature=mhee.

Alternatively, DVD copies can be obtained from margje.memelink@flevoland.nl.

To view the ENRD’s collection of ‘Video Postcards’ from projects across the EU, visit the ENRD media gallery, or click the following link: http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/themes/environment/environmental-services/en/environmental-services_en.cfm.
Luxembourg: A Celebration of 20 Years of LEADER

Representatives from the Ministry for Agriculture, Viticulture and Rural Development, as well as members of five LAGs and representatives from LEADER groups, local politicians, government members and rural actors, came together to celebrate 20 years of LEADER in Luxembourg, on 20 April, 2012, in Wiltz, where the first LAG region Redange-Wiltz was founded in 1991.

The event brought together youth groups from Redange, Wiltz, Grevenmacher and Mondorf who staged a play on the topic. Other highlights included a choir composed of local actors, specially formed for this event, and a viewing of a documentary celebrating LEADER actors, which was produced by young film makers from the Regional Information Point.

The 20th anniversary has also been marked by the launch of a publication ‘People of the Region’ which looks back over the richness and variety of initiatives that have been achieved.

For further information, please visit www.leader.lu.

France: First ‘European Market of Local Products’ a Great Success

The Pays du Velay LAG hosted over 300 LAG delegates from 13 countries at the first ‘European Market of Local Products’ from the 10-12 of May, 2012. Workshops were held on the promotion and direct selling of local products and on how to promote quality and local processing and ‘adding value’. The delegates also visited projects relating to the workshop themes.

In addition, the participating LAGs were able to sell a selection of their products at the Saturday market in the historic city of Le-Puy-en-Velay, attended by around 10 000 visitors.

LAG products on display ranged from cakes, sausages, cheeses and beers from Lithuania to a wide selection of vegetables and olive oils from Italy. Translators were on hand throughout market day to facilitate information sharing about the products on show.

This cooperation project was launched in 2010 by the Dutch LAG Zuid Twente, and incorporates many farmer exchange projects on topics from e-commerce to EU legislation. The only question remaining is which country will claim the prize of hosting next year’s ‘European Market of Local Products’?

For further information, see http://www.haute-loire.chambagri.fr/Marche-europeen-des-produits,421.html.
Slovakia: LEADER-FEST 2012

The third ever LEADER-FEST was held in the historic city of Levoča, Slovakia on 29-30 May, 2012. Following on from two successful LEADER-FESTs held in the Czech Republic, this year’s event was hosted by the Local Action Group LEV, in partnership with the Slovak NRN.

In total, some 250 delegates from 11 countries attended the event, which focused on applying an integrated approach for the application of the LEADER method post-2013. Workshops were held on topics such as the green economy, local products and services, youth participation and rural tourism. In addition, LAGs exhibited traditional crafts and produce at a market, and the event also provided an extensive folklore and cultural programme, which involved over 430 folklorists and 50 crafts workers.

Andrea Hradiská President of the LAG said: “We are delighted that we were able to involve many important organisations working on the development of rural areas here in Levoča. We are grateful to participants who helped to create and approve a new declaration which will be presented to our collective governments, as well as to DG AGRI and DG Regional Policy in the European Commission, and the European Parliament”.

For further information, see www.maslev.sk and www.nsrv.sk.
Netherlands: A Forest Learning and Adventure Experience for Children and Young Adults

The official opening of a LEADER-funded forestry initiative entitled ‘Belevenissenbos’ took place on 9 June, 2012. The initiative, which provides an extensive forest educational resource and adventure playground for children aged 6-16 years old, is led by the Ascanen Scouting Group from Lelystad and the National State forest organisation ‘Staatsbosbeheer’.

The facility allows children to get back in touch with nature and exercise in a safe but challenging environment. The 25-hectare park has four themes: sport and movement; water management; archaeology and prehistory; and nature education.

The project has been developed in collaboration with a wide range of partners from schools and childcare organisations to the state water company and the local municipality.

Whilst under construction the site had been visited by several LEADER groups, including two Swedish LAGs - Folkungaland and Berg, whose programmes focus on working with young people.

For further information, see www.scouting.nl, www.belevenissenbos.nl and www.folkungaland.se.

UK—England: LEADER Exchange Group to Shape Future RDP

The English NRN has established a new planning group to assist the Department of Environment, Fisheries and Rural Affairs in developing its future policy and implementation strategy for LEADER, within the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020. The group, which acts as a two-way discussion group between the LAGs and the Ministry, comprises 28 people from LAGs and local government around England, along with policy-makers from the Ministry. With three meetings planned each year, they have already met twice, with the most recent being on 3 July, 2012.

Latest issues discussed by the group included arrangements for transition between the 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 RDPs and up-coming ex post and ante evaluations of the 2007-2013 RDP. They also participated in an analysis to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the current LEADER programme, so as to assist with the planning of future initiatives.

Colin Whelan from the English Rural Network said: “We have been delighted with the input that we have had from all the members of the LEADER Exchange Group. It is very important that we capture LAGs and other accountable bodies’ valuable experience when planning future activity.”

For further information, see http://rdpenetwork.defra.gov.uk/activities/all-activities/England-Leader-Exchange-Group.
Innovations in rural development policy are proposed for the 2014-2020 period so as to increase the ability of Member States to help rural businesses access the finance they need to realise their own development projects. As a result, an increase in business-led rural development activity is anticipated throughout rural Europe. These new development opportunities build on pre-existing options within the current rural development policy framework, which enable rural enterprises to combine different types of financial instruments to fund their projects.

Financial engineering instruments (often referred to as ‘financial instruments’) exist in different forms. They include ‘Loan Funds’, ‘Guarantee Funds’, ‘Venture Capital Funds’, ‘Equity Funds’ and ‘Interest Rate Subsidy Schemes’. The common denominators between these financial instruments are that they all provide alternative funding methods and can also recycle the initial allocation of monies that were used to set up the funds.

Such financial instruments can be used by Member States in their Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) to help channel co-finance from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) towards business support projects covering a wide range of rural enterprises. Use of EAFRD financial instruments in RDPs has however been limited to date, but demand for their services is increasing and this is expected to continue as more flexibility is introduced in terms of how funding is used.

New opportunities

Flexible approaches to the rules governing how RDPs can use financial instruments are being proposed for the next period of EAFRD support. This would help RDP financial instruments be used to complement grant funding support, in ways that make investment projects and rural economic growth more realistic and attainable.
For example, a rural business receiving an RDP grant to cover a proportion of an investment project’s costs may also, in the future, be able to secure assistance from an RDP-funded ‘Loan Fund’ to help finance the remainder. In addition, the same business might be able to make use of other financial instruments such as an RDP-funded ‘Guarantee Fund’ to obtain a bank guarantee for the loan. ‘Interest-Rate Subsidy Schemes’, ‘Venture Capital Funds’ and ‘Equity Options’ co-financed by RDP resources could also provide useful services, all of which contribute to making investment projects more feasible for rural businesses. Such RDP support would be subject to compliance with state aid and other pertinent EU regulations.

In addition to the proposed increase in flexibility, the other significant change in terms of RDP financial instruments after 2013 will be the requirement that they be based on an accurate understanding of the development needs of rural businesses.

Each new financial instrument would need to be planned to address development needs that have been confirmed by an accurate and ‘needs driven’ gap assessment. A gap assessment is a measure of the shortfall between what finance can be raised privately and the total amount required to fund the project. Added value would also need to be demonstrated to ensure that the right type of financial instrument is proposed to address established market failures and existing funding gaps. This ‘good practice’ approach to planning rural development assistance should reduce any risk of overlaps with already existing financial products.

**Rural financing in practice**

National Rural Networks are becoming increasingly aware of the potential benefits that these financial instruments offer rural areas. According to Viviana Vasile of the Romanian Rural Network, demand from rural businesses for RDP support in the country has been extremely high and led a huge number of approved applications. “In order to further support implementation of our RDP’s assistance, we decided to use financial engineering instruments under the RDP. This has been very successful and we have already committed the entire budget that was approved from the RDP for the financial instruments. In this way we supported more than 750 applicants, covering more than €275 million worth of rural development projects,” she said.

A full investigation of the opportunities offered by rural financial instruments is being prepared in the 13th edition of the EU Rural Review. This is due for release in September and draws on existing practical experience to help explain why, when, where and how different types of RDP financial instruments can be used to contribute to policy goals for rural development and wider EU economic development. To read the EU Rural Review, visit the ‘publications’ page on the ENRD website or click the following link: [http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/publications-and-media/en/publications-and-media_en.cfm](http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/publications-and-media/en/publications-and-media_en.cfm)
Improvement of Farm Performance in Estonia with EAFRD Support

Animal welfare payments have enabled a farmer in Estonia to herd-proof his fences and keep animals on pasture for longer. The herd is healthier, easier to manage and more profitable.

Farmer Vello Brett, from Tartu County in the Lõuna-Eesti region sought to improve the farm’s boundary and internal fences by securing the grazing fields and paddocks for his dairy herd from spring to autumn. Planning, purchase of fencing material and construction were supported with €8 100 of EAFRD funding. Mr. Brett prefers to have his animals outside in pasture. “Exercise, fresh air and a natural environment will strengthen the immune system and overall health and wellbeing of the animals.” While the daily labour input for silage and cleaning has considerably decreased, pasture and herd management continue to be important. The animals are now healthier than before the introduction of the management change. Consequently, milk production has increased and fertility has risen. Additional spin-offs include reduced use of petroleum-based fuels, and an overall more viable farm enterprise.

LAGs from Five Member States Capitalise on Cultural Heritage

An innovative LEADER project is re-defining tourism through its unique combination of social and cultural exchanges between tourists and the local people who live in Europe’s rural areas.

The CULTrips partnership connects visitors with the lifestyle, history, art, architecture, religion and other elements shaping the rural population’s way of life. It was set up by the Redange-Wiltz Local Action Group (LAG) in Luxembourg, in September 2012, and currently involves another six LAGs from Austria, Estonia, Finland and Italy. Each partner LAG hosts a ‘pilot trip’ to demonstrate its interpretation of the CULTrips approach. Visitors from other LAGs provide their feedback, thus contributing to the joint-development of the CULTrips concept. So far, three pilot trips have been organised to Luxembourg and Italy on subjects ranging from energy to nature to a history of ‘goods smuggling’ for goods that were once difficult to procure, such as tobacco or bacon. In addition, two workshops have been held on the production of chairs from wood or willow. Italian and Finnish partner areas also recently hosted their first tourist groups from Austria.

In particular, the social-cultural and community based approach of CULTrips represents a new area in rural tourism, which makes local heritage accessible through increased interaction between guests and local residents. CULTrips receives €517 564 in EAFRD funding.
EAFRD Facilitates Dairy Sector Cooperation in Malta

An EAFRD rural development project in Malta is helping improve competitiveness in the farming sector.

The Marsa project, which is implemented by the Milk Producers Cooperative in conjunction with the privately-owned company ‘Malta Dairy Products’ aims to develop higher quality feed for cows, leading to better milk yields, improved feeding efficiency and ultimately a healthier product for end consumers. Some €81,913 in EAFRD funding enabled the project holders to devise processes and technologies to determine the chemical composition and nutritional value of foodstuffs. Specialised equipment for research and laboratory analysis was acquired, and experts on feed milling and nutrition were engaged to assess current processes and provide recommendations on how to improve product quality. In developing more efficient processes, the Marsa project has led to higher quality dairy products and improved competitiveness of the local dairy sector, generally.

Invigorating Rural Heritage and Tourism in Romania

EU co-financing helped a family in Romania to develop a successful and sustainable rural tourism business that respects the value of a UNESCO cultural heritage and NATURA 2000 site.

Mihai and Raluca Grigore left upper-management jobs in Bucharest to invest in the project in Viscri - a well-preserved Saxon village in Brașov County. They were attracted by the quality of life and the idea of running a small business in one of the most beautiful farmed landscapes of Romania.

With €200,000 of EAFRD support they bought and converted two guesthouses, providing accommodation, small conference facilities, high quality food products and tourism services. Their objective was to convert the Saxon farmhouses, while remaining faithful to their traditional architecture and layout. Their vision is to develop profitable activities, so that rural heritage as a tourism product of excellence becomes a means to support the rural community and traditional way of life.

TNC Project Unites Children in France and Portugal

An innovative transnational cooperation (TNC) project has brought children from Portugal and France together, through the power of music and song.

The ‘Zethoven’ project, which is led by the Trancoso LAG, in Northern Portugal, has seen local children from Portugal and those from the Pays Sud-Charente region near Bordeaux in France receive professional instruction in choral singing, working with an orchestra and recording a CD. In addition, children from both countries have travelled to their counterpart’s region to perform a concert in public and of course learn about their local cultural heritage. “This project has been really rewarding” says Alexandre Ferraz, who works on EAFRD projects with the Trancoso LAG. “Especially when you see the smile on their faces and hear the music at the concerts – then it’s all worth it,” he says.

For more information on all of these projects and hundreds more, log on to the RDP database on the ENRD website: http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/rdp_view/en/view_projects_en.cfm
And to see a video of these projects, please visit the media gallery on the ENRD website: http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/publications-and-media/media-gallery/en/media-gallery_en.cfm
“Of course it’s always good because it sets up jobs in the area and it keeps an area viable and it keeps people on the land, which is very important nowadays.”

Young farmer Willie Sheehan, Cork, Ireland on the importance of EAFRD rural development projects to local communities.

“In your Own Words

In this section, we pass the microphone to you and hear what you have to say. For this issue, we spoke to you during the filming of EAFRD Project Postcard Videos in Ireland, Portugal and France...

“It’s very rewarding work for me because you can see the actual changes. You can make a difference – from children to old people. It’s really about the community. Life itself!”

Alexandre Ferraz, Trancoso LAG, Northern Portugal - speaking about the importance of the work he does with the LAG for the area.

“I think we have to go back to understand it has to be local. We have to get the local people involved. We have to take the small idea. We have to go back to the era of 1, 2, 10, 12 jobs at a time.”

Jim Byrne, project manager for the EAFRD supported ‘Happy Days Artisan Ice Cream’ in Cork, Ireland, on the importance of short supply chains to the local community.

“From a personal point of view, in my work, it is really very interesting to exchange experiences from colleagues in other countries, to see if they have the same daily problems as us in the management of the projects, the programme, etc.”

LAG Manager Mickael Pasquier, Pays Sud-Charente, France, on the benefits of transnational cooperation, as experienced working on the Zethoven TNC project with the Trancoso LAG from Portugal.

Out & About

Smile, you’re on camera!
Some of our favourite photos of all the networking activities you’ve been involved in, over the last few months.

Partnership...

A visitor to the International LAG Fair in Lithuania enjoys some cultural exchange activity, in May 2012.

Say cheese!

Winning photographer Mario Folchi, who won 3rd prize in the Rural Employment category for his photo ‘Haymaking’ turns the camera on us at the awards ceremony for the ENRD Images of Rural Europe photo competition, at the Berlaymont, in Brussels, on 2 July, 2012.

Good work...

Ave Bremse (Estonian National Rural Network) and György Mudri (DG Agriculture and Rural Development, European Commission) celebrate on the occasion of the opening ceremony of the successful LINC conference, in Estonia.
A patriotic display... Members of the Hungarian delegation at the opening ceremony of the third LINC Conference in Estonia, in June, 2012.

Balancing Act... Adrian Neal from the ENRD Contact Point balances the finer points of networking at the AHHAA Science Centre during the LINC conference, in Estonia.

Enjoying culinary treats in France Delegates from Poland and French Guyana at the first European Market of Local Products at Pays du Velay, France, in May 2012.
Q: What is an EU rural development axis?

A: An axis is the name given to a group of Measures in a Rural Development Programme. There are four axes. Each axis has specific goals linked directly to the aims and themes of EU rural development policy. There are three thematic axes, namely: Axis 1 - improving the competitiveness of agricultural and forestry; Axis 2 - supporting land management and improving the environment; Axis 3 - improving quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy. There is also a fourth ‘methodological’ axis that is focused purely on supporting LEADER rural development approaches (LEADER Axis).

Contact information for the RDP Managing Authorities and NRNs is available on the ‘Networks and Networking’ section of the ENRD website.

For any questions related to your log-in details, please contact: MyENRD@enrd.eu
To view the new website please visit: http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/