

Training COURSE SMART VILLAGE RURAL TOURISM

DEVELOPING BUSINESSES THROUGH CIRCULAR
ECONOMY AND SOCIAL INNOVATION



O2/A1 - Handbook

"Social innovation and circular economy in rural services, production value-chain and entrepreneurship"



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1. Introduction

The SMART VILLAGE > www.smart-village-project.com project addresses 50+ citizens and communities or other stakeholders in disadvantaged rural areas in the partner countries. Rural areas are areas located outside cities and suburban belts. Disadvantaged rural areas are suffering from low economic activity, low average income, a "hardly any" jobs situation, a low level of education and a migration imbalance.

This handbook is created as the first of four handbooks designed to support the target group in their individual and social development within their rural area. Whereas handbooks 2, 3 and 4 include deeper information on digitalisation, development strategies and entrepreneurship, this handbook concentrates on social innovation and circular economy in rural services, in the production value-chain and in entrepreneurship.

We will explain key terms that are needed to understand the concept, we will give instruction about how to get involved and to help you find out why you may want to get involved. There will be space for your own thoughts and notes, and in the last part you will find success stories on how other people in rural areas got involved in social innovation and in the circular economy.

This handbook is among other references based on a project desktop research and online surveys that were mainly conducted in the most disadvantaged part of the partner countries.

2. WHAT IS... a smart village?

WHAT IS social innovation?

WHAT IS a circular economy?

Background & understanding of key concepts

2.1 What is a smart village?

Although there is no legal definition of a 'smart village' within the EU, there are a number of distinguishing features associated with the smart village concept. These include the involvement of the local community and the use of digital tools as core elements. The concept implies the participation of local people in improving their economic, social or environmental conditions, cooperation with other communities, social innovation and the development of smart village strategies. Digital technologies can be applied to many aspects of living and working in rural areas. The smart village concept also suggests smart solutions in both the public and private sectors over a wide range of policy fields such as improving access to services, developing short food supply chains and developing and sharing renewable energy sources. EU-wide, the smart village concept is gaining traction on the rural development agenda.



SCAN ME

Want to know more?

Listen to the Podcast on Smart Villages

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/rss/podcast/eprs-policy-podcast/mp3/2021/20210304-smart-villages.mp3> for more information. Smart village solutions may be found and implemented in a variety of thematic areas. What they have in common is a spirit of sustainability in activities, community building, and entrepreneurship.

Smart solution area	Public services	Public management	Private enterprises
Areas of intervention	power supply	e-administration	precision agriculture
	safety and security (e.g. visual monitoring)	waste management (e.g. container level sensors)	online trade (e.g. in local products)
	distance learning	town and country planning (e.g. digitalisation)	rural tourism based on smart solutions
	transport (e.g. telebuses) e-care e-health	environmental monitoring (e.g. air quality sensors)	sharing (e.g. specialist equipment)

Table 1 – Examples of smart measures in rural areas. Source: Extracted from L. Komorowski and M. Stanny, 'Smart Villages: Where Can They Happen?', Land, Vol. 9(151), May 2020.

The table (above) shows several areas where smart village solutions may improve public and private sector services and production. The use of digital media is common to all suggested measures and of course, these have a strong connecting component. Nevertheless, the best media/digital support tool needs actors that are willing and able to use them in a proper and competent way. So the start for more connectedness lies outside the digital tools, but inside the decision makers and citizens of a rural area. It is crucial to stimulate the motivation for more individual engagement, social cooperation and/or economic activity. (See also the chapter on "Social innovation") Digital tools may help to stimulate, but also to apply new strategies for further development.

To conclude this chapter Smart Villages share certain traits:

- They are about people, about rural citizens taking the initiative to find practical solutions that will transform their locality. Care is taken to ensure that equity and efficiency targets are carefully balanced.
- They are about using digital technologies only when appropriate – not because they are fashionable. Smart villages are tailoring digital technologies to better serve the local community.
- They are about thinking beyond the village boundaries. Many initiatives taking place involve the surrounding countryside, groups of villages, small towns and links to cities.
- They are about building new forms of cooperation and alliances – between farmers and other rural actors, between municipalities, the private sector and civil society, between bottom-up and top-down.
- They are about thinking for yourself. There is no single model or off-the-shelf solution. Successful projects take stock of local assets, draw on the best available knowledge and make change happen.

Research: "Briefing Smart villages: Concept, issues and prospects for EU rural areas"

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/689349/EPRS_BRI%282021%29689349_EN.pdf

A brochure on digital and social innovation in rural services:

https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/publications/eafrd-projects-brochure-digital-and-social-innovation-rural-services_en

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/689349/EPRS_BRI%282021%29689349_EN.pdf

When did "smart villages" appear first?

In a global context, the beginnings of the smart village concept date back to the middle of the last decade based on initiatives pursued in Africa, Central and South America and Asia. In the EU, the notion of smart villages emerged after 2016 out a 10-point-manifesto to improve quality of life in rural areas. It highlighted the need to overcome the digital divide between rural and urban areas and to develop the potential offered by connectivity and digitalisation in rural areas.

In 2017 the European Commission's publication "EU Action for Smart Villages" set out several EU policy areas and funds actively promoting the concept, including planned measures, adopting a holistic and integrative approach towards those objectives. It defined smart villages as 'those (local communities) that use digital technologies and innovations in their daily life, thus improving its quality, improving the standard of public services and ensuring better use of resources'.



2.2 Social Innovation

Social innovations are new social practices that aim to meet social needs in a better way than the existing solutions, resulting from - for example - working conditions, education, community development or health. These ideas are created with the goal of extending and strengthening civil society.

Key concepts for social innovation: Changemaker, Social design, Social entrepreneurship, Social impact / Collective impact, Social investment / Socially responsible investing / Venture, Philanthropy. For a long time now, many citizens got used to being "spoiled" by their governments or municipalities. Responsibility for their own life was too often given to forces outside themselves. Of course, social security is one duty of a democratic country. Still, individuals must not forget that they can initiate development and cooperation themselves.

Nowadays a new focus is given to bottom-up driven initiatives improving life in communities. Especially rural areas may benefit from active citizens who care about and become active to make a change towards sustainable, future-fit villages. Be it that they engage in the production of regional products, the creation of cooperative services and trading, or the development of green/sustainable tourism in their region, any of these activities have the power to transform rural societies and make them more resilient. The European parliament defines social innovations as "innovations that are social both in their ends and their means. In other words, they are innovations that are both good for society and enhance societies capacity to act."

The public sector plays an important role in promoting and facilitating social innovation by providing a common framework for social innovation activities. So there is also a significant top-down notion that facilitates social innovation and encourages bottom-up activities. At the same time, the public sector needs to realise the need for social innovation and its role in it. Public sector also needs to innovate itself as well to meet the increase in public demand and to promote and facilitate social innovation.

For social innovation, rural areas and communities can build on their existing strengths and on new opportunities – coming from the people - to develop added value, not only in an economic, but also in a social sense. Traditional and new networks will be enhanced by means of digital communications technologies, innovation and better use of knowledge. Villages of the future will need to bring different perspectives together to find strategic approaches to promoting smart villages. It is important that these stakeholders are aware of their responsibility for social innovation and that they provide an appropriate framework.

Are you engaged in your village? Are other people of your age or socio-economic group involved in community life? Having your /their own business set up in a sustainable way? Is cooperation something that is important in your village?

What can we do as a municipality or regional government to enhance social innovation?

1. Listen to the people! The crowd is a lot more creative than single decision makers.
2. Provide opportunities for exchange, e.g. village come-togethers, citizen councils, involve professional supporters like Agenda 21 organisers.
3. Provide place (rent free room without consumption obligation) for village meetings
4. Invite citizens to these meetings on a regular basis
5. Create "future think tanks" and working teams to implement new ideas and visions.
6. Very important: Hear your citizens' voice and support implementation of ideas. If people don't feel that they and their ideas matter, they will no longer contribute.
7. Support innovative ideas and find ways to implement, including your community services.
8. Trust in a rise of satisfaction and living quality by giving all these opportunities. Look forward to a better life in your village!

What can I do as an individual to enhance social innovation?

- Learn about social innovation, its benefits and principles. (See this handbook)
- Spread the word: Raise awareness for social innovation.
- Engage in community-building activities.
- Bring in your ideas, visions and strengths.
- Motivate your neighbours and friends or other people you know to participate.
- Talk to other people, exchange ideas and cooperate for new projects or businesses.
- Open your eyes and see what there is already in your community/region in terms of social innovation.

Challenges to be met by introducing social innovation

From a social point of view, healthy societies and communities include a variety of professional backgrounds, a diverse age mix including all generations in an equilibrium way. Once this equilibrium is disturbed, migration from rural to urban areas may start and leave behind overaged, quite inactive communities which lead to further migration movements towards the cities. To avoid or to stop this vicious circle, social and economic life needs to maintain resilient structures. Research shows that participatory processes and social innovation strengthen societies. Even if quite some time and other resources may have to be invested in social innovation, it will pay off. And, of course, your community council needs to listen to the citizens' voice and empower people. This might be a challenge in some cases, but in the end everybody benefits from a better community life and a stronger common sense.

At the same time, there is a growing push towards increased efficiency in the use of (constantly shrinking) public resources. Demographic shifts are increasing the need for services while at the same time resourcing for services is decreasing. As a result, infrastructure is diminishing, and degradation of rural areas continues. This is making it incredibly difficult to maintain acceptable levels of well-being and economic vitality in rural communities. Social innovation has been suggested as a potential way to address these challenges.

Of course, community and government have certain duties in a welfare state, but the more a population succeeds in being self-responsible and active, the better. Without obligation but encouraged by support and success, citizens will feel happier and be healthier once they start to engage.

Reports show that the SMART VILLAGE project target group of the 50+ generation is often even more disadvantaged in rural areas than the average inhabitant. Especially they lack digital skills and sometimes business spirit. Social innovation and entrepreneurship address all social groups, including all age groups. For the elderly, starting a new business or getting involved in rural tourism may incite new energies and more economic prosperity for individuals and a whole area.

2.3 Circular economy

After social innovation, circular economy is the second principle to be presented in this handbook. Whereas ancient and poor economies and their individuals lived and are still living a modest life while practicing principles of circular economy without knowing, consumption and treatment of products in the Global North are exhaustive and environmentally problematic. The scope of the circular economy extends far beyond waste prevention and waste management. It is about using natural resources efficiently and increasing the use of secondary raw materials. Circular economy is an economic concept linked to the sustainable development and green economy, which goes further than the latter. Indeed, rather than only aiming at the reduction of the ecological impact of industries and the amount of waste, its goal is to produce goods and services by targeting a sustainable management of raw materials and energy sources. In other words, the goal is to make the economy as circular as possible, by thinking of new processes and solutions for the optimization of resources and the use of waste. However, the definition of circular economy remains a debate in the sense that there is no official and unique definition, and therefore leaves room for multiple descriptions. Nevertheless, all the definitions agree on the importance of designing, producing, and consuming in a sustainable way. Its objective is to transform our society into a more circular economy compromising environmental, economic, and social issues.

Circular economy is based on seven fundamental principles: sustainable procurement, eco-design, industrial and territorial ecology, the economy of functionality, responsible consumption, extension of product lifespan, improvement of waste prevention, management and recycling. Your ancestors may have used and repaired their products for a long time, and after that probably have found another use for what was already there. Times of economic shortage often automatically led to a more sustainable use of products. What if times are good economically, but the environment and climate just no longer bear our way to consume and produce trash and greenhouse gases? Information, awareness raising activities and self-determined change of behaviour will be helpful for our planet and our lives in our communities.

How does a circular economy work?

In a circular economy, products and materials are highly valued. This contrasts with the traditional, linear economic model, which is based on a 'take-make-consume-throw away' pattern. In practice, a circular economy minimises waste through reusing, repairing, refurbishing, and recycling existing materials and products whereas traditional linear production generates exhaustive use of resources, mostly short times of product use and lots of waste.

Moving towards a circular economy will ensure reduced pressure on the environment and enhanced raw materials supply security. Increased competitiveness, innovation, growth and more and better jobs are expected to come along in our regions and in our communities. Challenges such as initiative financing, skills needed, consumer behaviour, business models and multi-level governance need to be faced and met by public stakeholders, research and of course interested, and capable citizens.



<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/infographics/circulareconomy/public/index.html>

While the traditional linear economy uses raw materials which are either extracted domestically or imported, in a circular economy raw material can come from virgin or secondary sources. Waste itself becomes a resource and consequently minimises the amount of waste.

More info:

Material flows:

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/infographics/circulareconomy/public/index.html#production-today>,

Material stocks:

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/infographics/circulareconomy/public/index.html#material-stocks>

Product design can contribute to a longer product lifespan and a more circular economy, thanks to ecodesign and repair-friendly design.

More info:

Longer lifetime for products:

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/infographics/circulareconomy/public/index.html#longer-lifetime>

Manufacturing that uses fewer resources (i.e., energy, water, land and materials) has positive impacts on climate, marine littering, and biodiversity at regional, but also at global level. Furthermore, risks associated with the supply of raw materials, e.g. price volatility, availability and import dependency, would be decreased using secondary raw materials. Using secondary raw materials instead of virgin raw materials in metal, glass and paper production produces energy savings of 20 % to 90 %, and significant water savings. From this general perspective, it must be said that also local entrepreneurs may take advantage of working with good-value materials from local providers, secondary materials and short transport routes, with all benefits for climate and environment at different scales. Locally produced products can of course not compete with China-made goods in terms of low prices, which should on the other hand lead to more sustainable and reflected consumption patterns - and again: less waste. To prolong and optimise product use, a shift from ownership of products to their usage via rental, sharing or subscription models may be considered.

More info:

Sharing economy:

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/infographics/circulareconomy/public/index.html#sharing-economy>

Why not open a rental service for expensive or not-daily-use items in your village?

Product life cycles need to be prolonged not only by industrial change to a more sustainable production. At a smaller, individual or community scale, products will increasingly be reused, re- or upcycled. Initiatives such as second-hand markets or shops, repair cafés or creative handcrafted production of new products out of "waste". Be aware that waste is produced as such: At a certain point, a product is declared waste as it is no longer needed/used by their original owners - these products can often serve as valuable "secondary raw materials" by more creative thinking persons. You can even make a business out of it.

As packaging is mostly waste from the second moment, it needs to be substantially reduced. Therefore, reusable household packaging must be increased. Even if there are still potential conflicts between packaging industries, reuse schemes and recycling schemes, there is no other way than getting away from one-way packaging. Slogan: Less waste, more creativity. Find solutions to prolong product use or create something new out of old materials.

Also abandoned buildings may be reused for innovative new businesses and thus land use, transport energy and building materials consumption will be reduced.

The transition to a circular economy will deliver a number of opportunities, first and further steps need to be taken at all levels: bottom-up by our citizens and communities AND top-down from national governments or at EU level. This will help develop Europe's environmental footprint, the competitiveness of the European economy, and ultimately the living standard of EU citizens. Including the concept and application of social innovation, YOU and US are part of this transition process by starting our own transition in our villages and towns. Growing rural economies will support inclusive agricultural growth for more food security at regional level. Diversification in agricultural production will be promoted. At the same time, productive transformation for more jobs in rural areas will be stimulated and a stronger voice is given to rural populations.

2.4 Circular Economy and Social Innovation in rural tourism

There is a variety of possibilities on how circular economy and social innovation can be implemented in rural tourism. Besides circular production cycles, including recycling, upcycling, and reusing, jobs are created in your region.

Travellers and tourists will appreciate the authentic spirit of your local business, be it productive or service oriented. They are increasingly interested in how people are living in other parts of the country/continent/world. Hand- and self-made products, scenic work, cultural heritage and insider tips and guidance for local restauration or activities are highly appreciated.

3. Why do social innovation and circular economy matter to MY village?

Rural municipalities may benefit from the above-mentioned concepts. Let us see how these are connected to circular economy and social innovation. The following shows some aspects that will benefit from innovative village development. Public services cover transport, water, energy supply and waste disposal, as well as healthcare and social services, education, telecommunications, and postal deliveries. These services are better not governed merely by commercial, free-market rules, because this would mean the weakest and the most-needy would have less access. They must be of the highest possible standard, and therefore subject to democratic control involving all stakeholders including consumers, employees, and service providers in these crucial sectors. Through circular economy and social innovation more jobs will be created in rural areas. This also means more taxes for improved public services. More money stays in the region: 1 EURO spent in local businesses makes 3 Euros for the region instead of 1 EURO spent on multinational enterprises!

Facts and thoughts:

- Businesses pay their taxes in the region/country, whereas big businesses often don't.
- Better community through collaboration and increasing/less decreasing population.
- More local businesses lead to better local infrastructure, services and product offers and thus increase quality of life. More people may come and want to live in your village instead of others wanting to leave to the next urban area.
- More people in your village increase community income and as a consequence community services and infrastructure.

A true improvement loop may be provoked by social innovation and circular economy.

Think about it, act and be part of it!

A production value chain describes the full range of activities needed to create a product or service. For companies that produce goods, a value chain comprises the steps that involve bringing a product from conception to distribution, and everything in between - such as procuring raw materials, manufacturing functions, and marketing activities.

The more of these activities take place in your village, the better!

Locally produced products are fostering local production value-chain. There are number of advantages coming along with local production and local service offers:

- Products with local flavour are very attractive.
- High quality products by qualified local providers help to apply the ideas of long-living products and waste reduction.
- Local businesses ideally use local raw or secondary materials – from other local providers.
- Special products are interesting for tourists/travellers!
- Cultural heritage is included in products, at the same time cultural heritage conservation takes place
- New products may be invented by new approaches like circular economy. This may enhance cultural development.
- More money stays in your village/region and helps create more jobs.

Entrepreneurship is a key element for a vivid local economy. The owner or manager of a business, by risk and initiative, attempts to make profits – for his business, his possible employees, and ideally also for a better life of all persons involved and concerned. You have been an employee for your lifetime? You have always wanted to create your own business? Be your own boss?

There are many reasons, why you should do so NOW:

- More jobs are created by local businesses than by international enterprises.
- By creating your own business, you are not only creating YOUR new job but also jobs for your possible employees or business partners.
- You have the chance to make your business out of what you can do best and like most doing. You are your own boss.
- More added value from local jobs/products/services within the region
- Regional currencies (be it real regional currency or vouchers to be spent regionally) increase creation of value within the region.

Practicing social innovation, your community will gain a livelier spirit and a stronger common sense. Your village will be able to live (and offer to your visitors) a unique character and sense of life. Be aware that the crowd also may find better visions and solutions for the future than single thinkers and actors. Every single person participating in developing a new village spirit and image makes a difference and is part of the new area.

Jobs created within your rural area by you and your co-inhabitants/business partners are resulting in a much larger economic benefit than jobs created by international enterprises. Social innovation will help strengthening community feeling, empower citizens to create the place they want to live in, less dependency of big businesses, government aid and more self-determination included.

Rural communities cannot exist without the appropriate public services that meet residents' needs. Accessibility of services is critical to the well-being of rural residents and the social and economic resilience of communities. Creating markets for public services can help. Some municipal tasks, such as snow clearance for example, may be provided by a farmer more efficiently than by a municipality. Similarly, local people can often provide better care for the elderly and disabled than agency staff who must travel long distances. The emergence of multi-service hubs, places where different services and products are offered, is an effective step into the future for rural villages.

These hubs can maintain basic retail services by linking them with other services or support entrepreneurial spirits of all ages looking to develop their new business idea. Initiatives may start spontaneously when a local shop or garage decides to take on additional activities, or sometimes by municipal planners looking for ways to sustain services across areas with low population density. Formerly autonomous businesses may also decrease in size or disappear unless there were cooperative efforts to maintain certain businesses, be it private trade or service or public services. The EAFRD brochure contains good practice examples from different European countries for further reading and ideas.

3.1 The role of MY village in the region

Investigate the SMART VILLAGE toolkit to find our analysis tool for the role of your village in your region. Analysis: Are circular economy and social innovation already there? Where and to which extent? Find out potential fields of application for both concepts.

3.2 My village, my life, and the world

Be it a private business, public service or public management activity, society and individuals - YOU - are benefiting from social innovation. As participation is meant to be high in every decision, acceptance in a community is expected to increase. Motivation of individuals to contribute socially and economically to a lively and prospering community will rise as they are being heard and seen by the authorities and supported in their visions. If YOU felt like you could make a change to your community, to the environment AND you would benefit personally and economically from your activity – why would you not want to take the chance? Humanity needs meaningful, sustainable, and wholehearted activities and products to raise connectedness, knowledge, and appreciation for values, be it at regional or global level. The world will be changed in small steps, at small scales, in our villages. It is not (just) elsewhere. The world is us; we are the world.

3.3 Why should I participate?

Do you have a special interest or skill? You are retired, but you would like to stay involved in social and economic life? You are unemployed and 50+, it's hard to find a job out there? You want to connect with a broader community, make new acquaintances and friends and share your knowledge and talents? Do you want to contribute to the improvement of infrastructure in your area? Get active and make your own business! YOU are the expert in your region. Share your knowledge and values with travellers, foreigners, or tourists! If you don't know how you can get involved, use our POTENTIAL ANALYSIS tool.

3.4 What is my potential to engage in rural tourism and the circular economy?

If you have your business idea already, you may skip this next part. If not, the following questions may help you to find out how you could get involved. First of all, find out your potential. Use the SWOT analysis technique to see how you and your environment are set up now. This will help you make a good decision for your future. Brainstorm possibilities of business ideas, preferably more than one. This will broaden your mind and let you discover that even if there is not the "one and only" way, there are still many possibilities.

These questions may help you to discover your preferences:

- What do I really LIKE to do?
- What am I GOOD in?
- Out of the things mentioned above, which could serve as a business idea implementing circular economy and social innovation?
- Are resources you will need available in the region? Is the circular economy approach met? How? If not, think about how you could still meet it.
- Would I need/want to have (business) partners/other persons for my business?
- Who could be interested in my product or service? How/where could I promote my idea/business to my target group?
- How will I monitor/measure my own resources/business success/smart village social benefit?

Now take the idea you like most and go for the SWOT-Analysis. This will help you find out internal and external factors that may support or threaten your business vision. You can repeat this analysis with as many ideas as you wish.

SWOT-Analysis:



Once you have filled in this SWOT-analysis, you will be able to see clearer, where your strengths lie, and how external factors favour or disadvantage your ideas and visions. It's up to you to decide for your potential, your favourable environment. This might be the direction of your first steps on the way to your rural tourism business. We have collected a number of good examples, where similar businesses from all around Europe are presented. Have a look at our case studies in the last part of this handbook and get inspired!



SMART VILLAGE

DEVELOPING RURAL TOURISM BUSINESSES



Ionela Lungu – Clay Craftman

<http://ionelalungu.ro>



A member, since 2006, of the Association of Popular Craftsmen of Moldova, Ionela Lungu is a popular ceramic artist recognized in the country and abroad. Her creative activity - she has many active participations and exhibitions at craft and tourism fairs - has been intertwining her, for many years, with the sharing of the little ones in the art she masters. Voluble nature, working with students excites her. It gives, but also receives, energy at the same time. A creative one, meant to spring and delight the eyes and hearts of those around you. For some time, Ionela Lungu started a collaboration with the Piatra-Neamț Popular Art School, within the “Carmen Saeculare” Neamț Center for Culture and Arts. Its activity within the Department of Popular Art is designed so as to cover as many schools in the Târgu Neamț area as possible.

"Because my field is to model clay - especially I model clay figurines that embody characters from the world of Ion Creanga -, then in these workshops I will rely on modeling figurines, but not only. Every class I allocate time for discussions with the children about our folk costume, about making opinci, traditional masks or embroidered fabric. ”

You can find Ionela Lungu every day, crafting or talking in an organized setting or not, with students or adults in Târgu Neamț. At schools, at his own workshop, wherever he is, he is always ready to talk about the world of the clay craftsman.

"Working with children is closest to my soul, especially because I have the opportunity to convey to them what I know about traditions and folk art, knowing that we live in a hurry, when everything seems on the run." (I.Lungu).

In addition to folk art, Ionela Lungu is a blogger at Povești de pe Ozana (<http://ionelalungu.ro>), a photographer, wife and fulfilled woman.

A fascinating man, a beautiful man from soul to body, in whose stories and words people seem to be from another world.

- ✓ Using of local materials and heritage
- ✓ Cooperation between sectors (school, learning, tourism, local heritage)
- ✓ Traditional promotion of processes and products
- ✓ Zero waste to conserve natural resources and reduce pollution from extraction, manufacturing and disposal.
- ✓ No harmful substances for humans
- ✓ Digital story telling



**Local Gastronomic
Point - Maria Bidian**



www.mariabidian.birgau-calimani.ro



www.facebook.com/maria.bidean.pgl



Tradition and excellence

The unmistakable taste of traditional food cooked with love, from “clean”, grown dishes, cultivated with care for health in our household or in those of the producers in our county, which helps us to put on the table goodies cooked according to ancestors' recipes.

Our story with goodies from the Gate of Transylvania is one that is a long time ago, told by our grandparents from our families, from whom we inherited the love for our places and the work of the field, for traditions and locals, respect for bread and salt with which is to greet our guests who step on us.

We invite you to learn the unmistakable taste of traditional food cooked with love, from "clean" dishes, grown, carefully cultivated in our household or in those of the producers in our county with whom we collaborate.

For our mother, Mica Maria, knitting the dishes according to our grandparents' old recipes is both a blessed joy and a way to honor their memory, to confess their life and the way they lived it. That's how the idea came about, with a good thought: let's not forget our roots, history and traditions, stories and „let's" keep "our nation!

And so we thought that it is very appropriate for us to share with others the history, and the stories and traditions and all the gifts with which the Lord has blessed us, putting them on the table of those who pass by us, along with the "dishes" with taste long ago, swirled with so much love, next to a glass of wine from our lands, or a real brandy, which loosens your tongue and rejoices your soul and invites you to gladly share everything with Others.

Here, we also invite you to learn the unmistakable taste of traditional food cooked with love, from "clean" dishes, grown, carefully cultivated in our household or in those of other worthy households in our county, which helps us to put you on the table goodies according to the recipes of the ancestors.

- ✓ Using of local materials and heritage
- ✓ Cooperation between sectors (tourism, local heritage)
- ✓ Traditional promotion of processes and products
- ✓ Zero waste to conserve natural resources and reduce pollution from extraction, manufacturing and disposal.
- ✓ No harmful substances for humans
- ✓ Digital story telling



DEVELOPING RURAL TOURISM BUSINESSES



POPA Museum



www.muzeulpopa.ro



www.facebook.com/Casa-POPA-Tarpesti-216239725069919



The house "POPA" has become, over the years, an exhibition and creative space, founded by the popular creator Neculai Popa, but also a tourist destination for many visitors (Romanians or foreigners) who come to travel through the Land of Neamt. Here you can admire, in addition to the works of naive sculpture created by Neculai Popa or the masks sewn by his wife Elena Popa, an exhibition of Romanian naive painting and a private collection - accessible to the public (ethnography, archeology, numismatics, religious objects).

Also here there is an art workshop (sculpture, ceramics and painting), as well as accommodation in bed & breakfast. Neculai Popa's passion for collecting has been manifested since his youth. Being in love with the world of the traditional village and being aware of the impact of the accelerated modernization process, from the second part of the century. XX, he will begin to collect various objects, from rural areas, but not only, with the intention of trying to keep the spirit of an era that was already beginning to disappear.

The courtyard has become, since the early '70s, a real outdoor exhibition, which includes creations in wood and stone by the naive artist Neculai Popa, the size of the works ranging from 1 to 2.5 m.

Access to this set of sculptures is it makes through a monumental gate, carved in oak wood, a kind of "genealogical tree" of the family, which includes about 23 human figures.

- ✓ Using of local materials and heritage
- ✓ Cooperation between sectors (tourism, local heritage)
- ✓ Traditional promotion of processes and products
- ✓ Zero waste to conserve natural resources and reduce pollution from extraction, manufacturing and disposal.
- ✓ No harmful substances for humans
- ✓ Digital story telling



Wine fountain Marezige is the first wine fountain in Slovenia, located on the hill near the seaside in a village called Marezige.



It has a wonderful view of the Slovenian coast which can be enjoyed by wine lovers and gourmands. For an unforgettable and unique experience, guests can enjoy the open self-service fountain with wines from the local wine cellars and those of Vinakoper. Istrian cuisine is another part of the business, and guests can buy locally produced delicacies (e.g., truffles, chocolates, sea salt products olives, marmalades, bottles wines etc.) in the shop.

The self-service fountain is placed outdoors near the shop. It offers four different sorts of wine – Chardonnay, Malvasia and Refošk (all from Vinakoper), and the wine which won the annual competition – this year, another Refošk from a different wine producer was awarded and is available to guests from the month of August until the end of the next year's competition. In other words, three sorts of wine always stay the same and one sort changes each year which gives other wine producers the opportunity to compete and promote themselves and their wine cellars.

Guests can choose between two packages – the first one is suitable for individuals and contains a wine glass, a carrier bad and 3 tokens for the wine fountain, and the second one, suitable for small groups of up to 20 people, contains wine glasses, carrier bags and a wine list which lists 15 different (and best) winemakers of Slovenian Istria.

The location of the wine fountain is approximately a 20-minute drive from Koper, our coastal city. Guests can access the fountain with their own vehicles, or they can take the wine bus which is another part of the business. The bus takes the guests through the vineyards of Slovenian Istria all the way to the panoramic view, where the wine fountain Marezige is placed. Guests can choose between different packages for the wine bus. Package one includes a visit to the Vinakoper wine cellar, a drive with the vintage American bus along the wine road, and a visit of the wine fountain Marezige with a tasting of both the wines and Istrian cheese.

Package two contains a bus tour of Koper with a stop in the Old Town and the Tomos museum, a drive along the olive road and a stop at Babič oil mill, and a visit of the wine fountain Marezige with a tasting of both the wines and Istrian cheese. The bus takes the guests to the starting point at the end of the tour. Customization of the bus trip is also possible where guests can choose among the options provided on Wine fountain Marezige's official website.

On the site of the wine fountain is also a restaurant called Karjola which is owned by the same owner. Guests can find home-made traditional dishes with a touch of modernity or modern classic dishes here. The exterior reflects both rustic Istrian and modern style and has a homely atmosphere. The place is suitable for a variety of occasions – either a casual breakfast/lunch/dinner, business lunches or even an unforgettable wedding.

Sustainability:

- ✓ using local resources (wine from Vinakoper and other local producers),
- ✓ expansion of the business (Wine fountain Marezige, a small shop with local products, restaurant Karjola just across the street, wine bus), and
- ✓ selling local products.

Fountain of the Green Gold



 www.beerfountain.eu/en

 www.facebook.com/pages/Pivska%20Fontana%20%20C5%BDalec/1390544170959905



Fountain of the Green Gold represents a tribute to the hop heritage of Žalec and Lower Savinja Valley, which embodies the centre of the hop growing industry in Slovenia. It is a result of a common effort of the Municipality of Žalec, local entrepreneurs and the Centre for Development of Culture, Sport and Tourism of Žalec Municipality.

Beer Fountain is situated in Lower Savinja Valley, also named as the Valley of Green Gold due to the area's hop tradition. According to the beer fountain's webpage, the Fountain of the Green Gold "tells the story of the hop-growing tradition which developed through a century and a half. In some places it lives on, in others it has become nothing but a memory. Several tools, habits and traditions still remind us of this heritage."

The fountain as a tourist product is based on the cultural and natural heritage of the local area and promotes it for present and future generations.

From April to October every year visitors from all over the world come to taste local beers.

Beer varieties are strictly made from local hops. Lots of microbreweries get promoted this way.

The fountain is surrounded by tourist information boards about hops tradition. It is in the central park, next to the local market, in the heart of the town. The fountain has brought thousands of tourists to Žalec and Lower Savinja Valley since 2017 when it was opened. It has boosted visits to other tourist attractions in the area, to local restaurants, bars, and cafes. Beer fountain is complemented by a souvenir shop placed a few steps from the fountain.

Beer Fountain activities include selling souvenirs, beer, marketing tourist products, tourist tours, selling products of local farms and Green Gold products. Key characteristics of the business model:

- The Beer Fountain is operated by the Centre for Development of Culture, Sport and Tourism of Žalec Municipality. Since the Centre is a public body that primarily provides public tourist services, beer Fountain is among its for-profit products. It is to be noted that the Centre has many areas to attend to and running the Beer Fountain is only one of its activities. This may carry certain risks.
 - It is in a rural area.
 - It is part of the Green Gold brand.
 - It complements some other local tourism products and initiatives: cycling path between hop fields, Dežela Celjska, Green Gold brand.
 - It is based on hops growing tradition and beer making – cultural heritage of the local area.
- Promotes local products.

Sustainability:

- ✓ using local resources (hops),
- ✓ cooperation with local providers (restaurants, cafes, tourist societies etc.),
- ✓ employing the locals, and selling local products.



BEE DIVERSITY

Biodiversity Improvement Through Monitoring of Bees



 www.ita-slo.eu/en/bee-diversity



BEE DIVERSITY is a project developed within the Interreg cross-border programme with 5 partners from Slovenia and Italy. The main goal of the project is to improve the biodiversity through an innovative management of the ecosystem and monitoring of the pollinators. The project started in February 2020 and will last for two years (until the end of January 2022).

The innovative system will be integrated in around 8000 hectares, in areas between Slovenia and Italy. The case study areas belong to Natura 2000, meaning that they are protected by law and strive to preserve the biodiversity for future generations. With the help of the ICT system and pollinators (bees), monitoring the ecosystems will be easier, and the partners will be able to observe the health status of the case study areas. There will also be an application which will collect and manage all the data provided by the bees. The application will help both professionals and the public by giving them guidelines for future measures and raising their awareness.

For the collection of data, beehives will have to be connected by an ICT system. The collection and monitoring will then be done through “smart” beehives (called Smart Hive), which will closely observe the behaviour and health status of bees. In vegetation, pollinators have a fundamental role because they help with its conservation. Farmers are also dependant on good health of the flora; therefore, they will use such smart beehives and contribute to the project. Alongside farmers, beekeepers and other stakeholders in that area will also contribute with the data collection. In spring of 2021, they started to collect the data about the flora around smart beehives in pilot areas in Gorenjska, Slovenia.

For the data collection, they used a German application called Flora Incognita that helps with the recognition and determination of plant species. The restoration of vegetational biodiversity is crucial if we want to preserve a healthy environment. The partners expect that the model used and developed in this project area will be transferred to other European countries after the project's ending. Findings could help with the preservation and promotion of natural resources on a global scale.

Sustainability:

- ✓ preservation of the environment through technological innovations,
- ✓ preservation of nature by analysing it and helping it to recover by itself,
- ✓ making sure that pollinators stay healthy since they are crucial for our existence, and
- ✓ possibility of expansion on a global scale.

The Sun Farm Camp is located in the village of Tankovo in the beautiful Eastern Rhodopes in Bulgaria. The farm is based for active recreation and sports of the association "New Perspectives for Development", which exists with the belief that young people are the future of Bulgaria. Non-formal learning, outdoor sports and volunteering are among the initiatives the farm team is trying to turn young people into ambassadors of the future.

Summer sessions are organized for children, in which the main topics are Bulgarian traditions, organic farming, nature protection and outdoor sports. The children actively participate in the life of the farm and the village. The Sun Farm Camp organizes summer camps for children using the concept of "Return to the Village". The goal is to create a strong connection with the land and the Bulgarian village in infancy. By the method "learning through empathy" the children realize their belonging to the Bulgarian genus and get acquainted closely with the Bulgarian traditions and culture. "Return to the Village" is an immersion in the idyll of rural lifestyle and real participation in daily farming activities. The "return" is also to nature and to the understanding from children that man is part of nature and every little human activity – from throwing garbage out of the bin to breaking twigs from trees – leaves its mark on it.

In the same time the farm works as rabbit farm, which preserves the authentic look of the farm from the early 20th century. Stone, wood and straw are the materials used in the restoration of the property – in order to maintain the connection with nature. The drive to achieve maximum efficiency and sustainability gave new life to old things and turned discarded tools, clothes and books into a source of new knowledge. The roof is with Turkish tiles, collected from old houses and abandoned yards in the village. Mud and straw are one of the main materials that children work with during creative activities, when we talk in simple words about the invaluable properties of ecological construction and the quality of life it provides. In the farm are preserved authentic tools and tools from the life of the Bulgarians from the beginning of 20th century and back.

Here children learn what a loom is and how it weaves on it, what the burrito serves, what sickle and palamark is, and how to mow grass with a real old scythe. At the end of the spring and summer sessions, everyone knows where milk comes from, how honey is pulled out, where tomatoes grow, how the bunny lives and what this ecosystem is. The return of the village also includes reading fairy tales projected on to the big screen, changing clothes and recreating "from the old days" paintings, outdoor games, animal games and cart rides.

In the Sun Farm Camp, in addition to animals, places for recreation and a meadow for children's games, there is also a small library with books, a folk-style and adventure corner and a separate camping area.

- ✓ A combination of rural and eco tourism;
- ✓ An ecological building - Stone, wood and straw are the materials used in the restoration of the property – in order to maintain the connection with nature;
- ✓ Extension of the lifespan of some old things and turned discarded tools;
- ✓ The farm offers various activities and training related to the daily life of the people of the village.

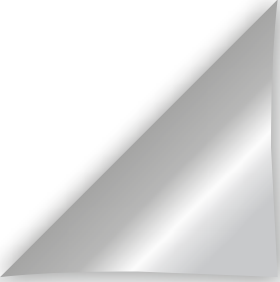


SUN FARM CAMP

 www.sunfarmcamp.eu

 www.facebook.com/sunfarmcamp





Baba Residence is an Ideas Factory initiative which connects urban youth with elderly from diverse Bulgarian villages. Participants, or residents, live in village elderly households for 1 month. As a result from the interaction between them, specific products, services and initiatives based on local knowledge and which answer to specific needs of villagers come out.

The pilot issue of the initiative took place in summer 2015 in 4 villages in the Rhodopi Mountains: Dryanovo, Dzhurkovo, Manastir and Yugovo. Baba Residence has proved to be a needed bridge between town and village, between urban youths and elderly villagers according to feedback received from inhabitants of the villages participating in the project and from its supporters.

The relationship that builds up between residents and elderly lays the foundation of long-term mutual support and collaboration. Each small settlement keeps its micro-specifics, charm and traditions in the form of needleworks, crafts, personal and community stories. The Baba Residence initiative creates conditions for the preservation of local folklore and knowledge and its transformation into a useful product / service / event for the village by young enterprising people.

What is the process of the initiative – The first step is selection of the participants who will live in a village for a month. After the selection, the residents go through training in design thinking, working with communities, ethnological research and local economy, generating solutions and teamwork.

The next step is a meeting of young urban people with the elderly hosts in the villages, where they will live together for 1 month. During this month, the residents use their experience and learning from the training to learn about the needs of the community and document local folklore, starting work on their own socio-entrepreneurial idea to help the host village.

Once young and old have agreed on what they want to happen in the village, they make it possible! Participants become part of a Social Innovation Incubator to find mentoring support to implement their long-term ideas.

- ✓ A new innovative socio-entrepreneurial model;
- ✓ Strengthening and supporting the rural community;
- ✓ Involving young people in the initiative provides an opportunity to create a stable network of solidarity, understanding and mutual assistance and rethink cultural heritage;
- ✓ A new quality of human relationships - between generations, between urban and rural communities, exchange of experience and learning of new skills and competences;
- ✓ Developing new ideas based on traditions and taking into account modernity.



 **BABA RESIDENCE**

 <https://ideasfactorybg.org/baba-residence/?lang=en>

 www.facebook.com/BabaResidence



Office In The Woods Chepelare is a temporarily shared office space in the mountains (coworking space), which is suitable for remote work of people who love nature, summer and winter sports. It is a place with comfortable offices, fast internet, free elderberry juice, where people rest and inspire while working or the so-called co-workation (coworking + coliving + inspiration & vacation).

Changing the environment increases productivity and predisposes to creativity. People are together most of the time (they are accommodated in one place, come together to work, work together, eat together and have fun together in the evening) which is a prerequisite for new acquaintances and effective cooperation.

Office In The Woods offers:

- Separate offices up to 100 mbit internet for 65 people, shared work space, conference room, place to relax, kitchen, cafe, place for lunch, panoramic yard.
- Camping space and sleeping rooms in the office building, as well as suitable accommodation, guest houses and hotels and apartments nearby.
- Organized major music and sports events, sports and tourism activities, pre-specified workshops and excursions for inspiration and productivity.
- Close to the nature, clean mountain environment, sterile alpine air, good and balanced food.
- Collaborative activities (practical seminars, sports practices, lectures) aimed at sustainable development (entrepreneurship, agriculture, construction, food, music) and the acquisition of new skills, presented in an interesting way, unite people and enrich them.

The informal methods of the Office In The Woods Chepelare (gentle working atmosphere close to nature, activities bringing fun and new knowledge) ensure:

- Increasing individual productivity
- Increasing innovation
- Increasing group productivity and strategic decision making
- Solving organizational problems related to change, crisis or team laziness
- Motivation (individual and group) to achieve better results
- Effective goal setting and strategic planning

- ✓ A new concept and business model in tourism, based around sustainability - a destination for co-workation in rural areas. This is a combination of CoWORKING (shared workspace and interaction between people) + CoLIVING (spending some time together, spending the night in one place) + Collaboration (cooperation and interaction between new / old acquaintances on common projects and knowledge sharing) + Inspiration (inspiration, through beautiful nature, clean food, movement, active lifestyle, art and culinary workshops, seminars and presentations) + Vacation (active rest during work, by visiting tourist and sports attractions and recharging activities)
- ✓ Cooperation between different local entities (regarding the offering of the accommodation)
- ✓ Boosting tourism and local economy



 **Office in the Woods**



www.coworkation.4epelare.com



www.facebook.com/officeinthewoods



WeWilder

 www.wewilder.com

 www.facebook.com/wewilderbisonhillock



Go
wild
Think
fresh

CO-WORK, CO-LIVE, CO-CREATE, CO-LEARN IN THE
WILDER SIDE OF EUROPE. WANDER WITH THE NATURALISTS
AND THE LOCAL PEOPLE



la-ți bilet
cătrec sălbătici!



WEWILDER is a WWF Panda Labs prototype, that evolved from the pioneering wilderness experiences developed by WWF Romania with the local Bison Hillock Association, in cooperation with REWILDING EUROPE and the European Safari Company. WEWILDER is operating as a social enterprise partnership between WWF Romania and local community members. WeWilder is a co-working, co-living and co-creating space, situated in the heart of the village Armeniș, Caraș-Severin, from Romania, where the bison roam freely and nature is abundant. This initiative helps tourists discover nature in a wild way, learning, working and living sustainably in a quirky campus and local houses. WeWilder's mission statement is to find nature based solutions for a better tomorrow for the local and urban communities, sustainably, to support biodiversity in one of Europe's largest wilderness areas. WWF, together with the local community from the small village of Armenis and innovators in sustainable architecture, started work in 2020 on WeWilder - the first rural hub in Romania, which comprises co-working and living spaces. The rural campus in Armenis, in the Southwestern Carpathian Mountains, aims to be a meeting place for freelancers, company teams, artists, entrepreneurs, and locals.

The area chosen for this project also gives visitors the chance to discover Romania's wildlife: Armenis is the place where bison have been reintroduced in the Tarcu Mountains, through the WWF Romania initiative in collaboration with Rewilding Europe. More than 60 bison are currently roaming free in the Southern Carpathians.

“Our vision for WeWilder is to create an entrepreneurial innovation center for nature. As a freelancer, you can work from here, get your energy levels back up, eat well, and in turn, contribute to the birth of ideas and projects with a long-term vision. We're proposing companies to offer their teams experiences in a wild area where WWF conducts conservation projects. These places can be the best source of inspiration for sustainability and business innovation,” said Orieta Hulea, director WWF Romania. The WeWilder campus will consist of three wooden houses called Chilii and a central space called Zâna (the Fairy), which houses a co-working area, a community kitchen, and a library. The wooden houses have been designed to include a small cooking space and a workspace so that one or two people can work without coming into contact with other people.

The space follows the philosophy of invisible architecture, which means that the buildings will be integrated into the natural landscape both in appearance and through the construction materials. Plus, the glass facade will give visitors amazing views of the panorama of the Tarcu Mountains. WeWilder is located in a garden surrounded by trees, which will be transformed by landscape architect Tiberiu Chereches. In addition to planting maple, ash, or birch miniature forests next to each house, there will be a mixed forest near the main building, Zâna. There will also be a vegetable garden and a permaculture area, as well as a place dedicated to learning traditional mowing, which is essential for grassland biodiversity, WWF said. The WeWilder campus under construction is completed by a network of traditional stone houses, located in the village or in the middle of nature and renovated with the villagers, which are already welcoming guests. There is also the MuMA Hut - a “tiny house” built in a local orchard, which was nominated this year for Beta - the architecture biennial in Timisoara. In addition, several locals are already offering local dishes to those staying here or as culinary experiences in nature. WeWilder is a prototype of WWF Panda Labs, developed in response to the need for the rural community to grow substantially and sustainably. WeWilder aims to be an example in terms of green architecture and a model for implementing a green, participatory micro-economy, echoed throughout the region.

✓ *The social innovation aspects found in this case study are the following: firstly, the fact that WeWilder is operating as a social enterprise partnership between WWF Romania and local community members, to help strengthen the community and valorize its marketing assets sustainably. Another socially innovative aspect is the introduction of new concepts and business models in tourism, based around sustainability, such as the model of a rural hub - a destination for co-working, co-living, and co-creating sustainably, in rural surroundings.*

✓ *Circular economy principles are at the heart of this initiative: the campus is built using eco-design principles, combining traditional architecture with modern trends and comfort, as well as sourcing local materials and workforce. Another circular economy aspect is the fact that WeWilder offers carefully crafted experiences/activity packages, in close connection with nature and wilderness, based on activities such as biking, gastronomy, and nature discovery, done with respect for nature, in a sustainable manner.*

Orange Valley

 www.orangevalley.ro

 www.facebook.com/orangeValleyBio



Orange Valley is a company located in the rural area of Neamt County, Romania. It is a company that started with a simple plantation of wild berries, sea buckthorn, a variety of orange wild berries found locally, in the spontaneous flora.

They are traditionally used in the food industry, in forestry, in pharmacy as well as an ornamental plant. Sea buckthorn fruit contains twice as much vitamin C as rosehip and 10 times more than citrus fruits.

Orange Valley created a colorful local flavor and a strong brand for Neamt county, starting from this wild berry – o local resource, producing natural juices and syrups, cold-pressed and prepared the day before delivery. They started by selling this brand via restaurants and hotels, and it soon became well-known and requested by more and more restaurants and tourist locations, turning into a refreshing, healthy, and certified organic signature drink, representing the county.


What makes this example relevant for our study is the fact that this company is located in a rural area, it is a local producer who innovatively harnesses local resources - by enriching with this wonder fruit the destination brand of Neamt county and even the national destination brand. They even created a made-up name for their most popular product, called 'catinada', derived from two words: 'catina', the name of this berry, and 'limonada' which means 'lemonade' in Romanian.

Orange Valley brings the flavor, the color, and the story of the wonder fruit in a remote rural area of our region, enriching the local economy and strengthening the destination brand.

Key characteristics and concepts of the business model:

- *small, family company*
- *located in a rural area*
- *have identified a unique, specific local feature (in this case, a product)*
- *harnessing local, certified organic products (in this case, a wild berry)*
- *growing their crop sustainably*
- *based on a short food supply chain (SFSC)*
- *based on a health food concept, turning a local superfood into a recognized brand*
- *forged links with the tourism industry, by becoming a supplier of local flavor*
- *good collaboration with urban areas*
- *closely supervised and controlled product value chain (procuring raw materials, manufacturing functions, and marketing activities)*
- *creative and constant use of digital technology and marketing solutions (Orange Valley has a very strong identity and presence online, via a website and social media pages)*
- *caters to the local public, using wordplay for the names of the products in the local language; also caters to an international market, creating a brand in English – Orange Valley, which is the name of the company.*

Nemteanca Craftsmen Association

 www.nemteanca.com

 www.facebook.com/nemteanca



The locals of Moldavia region have created over time, practicing different crafts (weaving, stitching, wood carving, making traditional fur coats, etc.), products of great artistic and documentary value, and vessels for passing on ancient skills. Since April 2001, the Craftsmen's Association "NEMȚEANCA" functions as a non-profit organization, with some commercial activity, empowering and promoting local craftsmen and their heritage. The purpose of the Association is to capitalize on human resources, material and natural resources existing locally, by:

- revitalization of the craft activity;
- supporting tourism by crafting souvenirs inspired by local tradition;
- preserving Romanian cultural identity and the capitalization of the existing patrimony; organizing artistic creation camps.

In 2002, they took part in the project Harmonization of the objectives, skills and resources of the craftsmen's association to the market requirements and possibilities, a project financed by CIPE/USAID. The purpose was to consolidate and develop the activity of the organization. The result of the project: collection of handicraft products-souvenirs, training of the labor force in the marketing activity (sales techniques) of handicraft products and promotion of the activity of the organization. Within the Young Craftsman project, developed by the Omenia Philanthropic Foundation, funded by World Learning, 25 young people were trained in practicing a craft; the training was provided by craftsmen within Nemteanca association. Nemteanca partnered in the project Center for learning traditional crafts, developed by the Omenia Philanthropic Foundation, funded by the European Union through the PHARE-ACCESS program, in which the target group were socially disadvantaged people, who with the help of craftsmen develop skills in practicing a craft as possible source of personal income. The Nemțeanca Craftsmen Association initiated in partnership with the Local Public Administration Tg. Neamț the Creangă Land (Ion Creanga being the most famous Romanian storyteller), which represents a substantial contribution to the preservation of the Romanian cultural identity and the capitalization of the tourist patrimony of the Neamț area. The main result of the project is the establishment of a new tourist attraction, by arranging the "Creangă Land" park, in the city of Tg. Neamț, the hometown of the great storyteller. The Nemțeanca Craftsmen's Association is part of the Integrated Action Group (GIA) and the Working Group (GL) for increasing economic development by promoting tourism, established in Neamț County, supported by the Local Public Administration Reform Program through Sustainable Partnerships (GRASP). Within this program, GRASP funding was launched to support the implementation of the Work Plans of the Integrated Action Groups. The Regional Fund for the Development of Partnerships (DFID), in the North-East Region, financed the project "Folk crafts, the business card of Moldavia", initiated by the Nemțeanca Craftsmen's Association. Considering the priority identified within the Regional Thematic Group "Tourism Development", namely "promotion of traditional values", as well as the proposed intervention axes, the results of the initiated project are:

- a representative collection of handicraft products of the NE Region of Romania;
- 30 points for promotion and marketing of products;
- promotion leaflet with craft itineraries from the North-East Region of Romania.

The association is a permanent participant in national and international fairs.

Kythira Island – Travel Guide – Greece

Kythira Information and more

Beaches Attractions Villages Excursions Map Food and Drink Local Products Art Antikythera Contact

SMART VILLAGE STRATEGY ISLAND OF KYTHERA

 www.smartrural21.eu/villages/kythera_el



“The island of Kythera in Greece, also known as Tsirigo by the locals, lies at the crossroads of 3 seas and is known as the birthplace of the Goddess Aphrodite. Our island is one of the largest islands in Greece and is characterised by a large number of small settlements, with a total population of around 4000. Our greatest expectation is to keep our youth in the area, by creating the appropriate conditions for young and active people to live and work on the island.

Our local economy is based predominantly on tourism and agriculture but also other areas such as trades and services, including education and health. We would like to promote agricultural and environmental sustainability on the island by introducing new technologies. The goal is to enhance the production of local products, mainly olive-oil production, honey, as well as aromatic and medicinal plants, while promoting and preserving Kythera's landscapes, ecosystems and biodiversity.

We also want to increase quality tourism, by supporting alternative forms of tourism, through the promotion of cultural heritage, the natural beauty of the island as well as the local products. Our local community is very strong with a well-preserved local identity consisting of various local associations and organisations. Through our participation in the Smart Rural 21 project we are hoping to gain new ideas and inspiration for developing a strategic plan for implementing smart village approaches.

” The Local Action Group of Attica Islands, the mayor of the island and the Agricultural University of Athens (AUA) are the main actors actively involved in the first stage of the process of the Smart Village Strategy development for the pre-selected village, the island of Kythera, in Greece in the context of the Preparatory Action on Smart Rural Areas of the 21st Century project.

The process was initiated by the LAG of Attica Islands, that supported the village Kythera during the submission phase to apply to become a pre-selected smart village. The LAG of Attica is a network for the cooperation of municipalities of the regional unit of Attica islands. It consists of eight (8) insular Municipalities of Attica Region and twelve (12) other local associations (representing fishing, agricultural, cultural, tourism sector). It has a strong interest in smart villages, being partner in the LEADER TNC project on 'smart villages' and active member of the Smart Village Network.

Mr. Eustratios Charchalakis, the mayor of Kythera and chair of the Programme Management Committee LEADER/CLLD of Attica Islands, enthusiastically supported the process and he is actively engaged in setting off the smart village strategy development. Furthermore, support for local smart village strategy development and implementation is led and coordinated by members of the National Expert Team in Greece, the AUA that is also part of the Coordination Team. National experts nominated by Smart Rural project partner have direct family linkages in Kythera, and strong commitment to support smart village development.

The AUA being the National Expert in Greece, contributes to the development of the smart village strategy by, firstly, supporting its preparation, Smart Village Strategy of Kythera 3 guiding Kythera through the stages of strategy development, identifying and mobilising specialist expertise as and when needed and identifying innovative tools and methods for strategy development as and when needed.



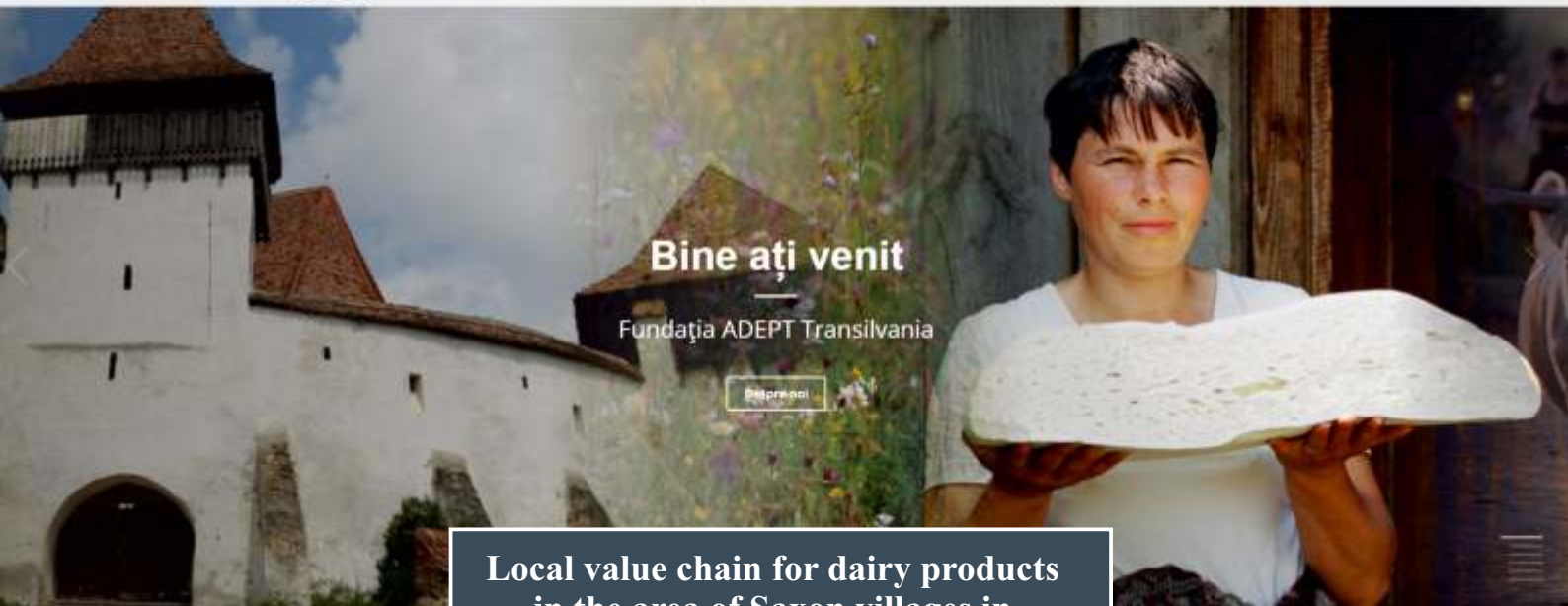
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BORGOFUTURO
www.borgofuturo.net/en/



The social innovation is the participatory process organized in the frame of the festival, analysing its results and investigating it as a model of involvement in rural areas. Building trust and shared visions are among the main objectives of such a process, aiming at contributing to set the bases for a shared implementation of actions that will contribute to regenerate the area. BORGOFUTURO, an experience of rural regeneration through art and festival based in Ripe San Ginesio, Marche Region, is one of the selected additional replicators. The project rises from a collaboration between the Municipality of Ripe San Ginesio, a small village of Marche Region, and the association Borgo Futuro, formed by a group of young people committed to the local territory and involved in cultural productions and environmental studies. Born in 2010 as a “Festival of Sustainability on a hamlet scale”, over time BORGOFUTURO has become a project for the regeneration of Ripe San Ginesio, which reactivated its historical center – defined as Borgo – through the assignment of municipal spaces to artisans and local boutiques. As in the rest of the globe, COVID19 severely hit the cultural initiatives of rural areas, often based on traditional organization structures, not able to adapt to the safety regulations required by the sanitary emergency (De Luca et al, 2020). At the same time, the need of open spaces, social distances and safety measures, brought the festival that traditionally takes place just in Ripe S. Ginesio, to reinvent itself, and to travel among 5 different municipalities. In this way, ten years after its birth, BORGOFUTURO widens its scope to other four neighboring municipalities, which decide to embrace its project and host a month of shared cultural activities in the summer 2020 under the name of “Borgofuturo+, il buon contagio” (in eng. “the good contagion”).

Starting from the challenges and the possibilities raised from the COVID-19 crisis, the participatory processes are necessary in rural areas to discuss, get opinions, create innovation and take decisions on topics such as culture services and infrastructure, ecological network, local resources management and tourism. Potentialities, criticalities and concrete proposals will be discussed in the results section, framing priorities and developing recommendations for future planning and reflecting on the opportunity for small towns in inner areas to cluster, network and coordinate planning efforts in order to reach shared objectives. The administrations of Ripe San Ginesio, Colmurano, Urbisaglia, Loro Piceno and Sant'Angelo in Pontano, all located within the Fiastra valley, decided to start an inter-municipal project, which may act as a driving force for the development of the territory. The area is also at the centre of other territorial strategies, under both the regional and national management. Through the European Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund, following the LEADER approach, Marche Region finances “Integrated Local Projects” (PIL), which brought several municipalities together in a project aiming at strengthening the touristic attractiveness of the territory, under the name of “Fiastra valley, a place of experiences”. Bordering the PIL, a further strategy is carried out by the Italian National Strategy for Inner Areas (SNAI), which is promoting the place-based improvement of basic local services and infrastructure in the pilot area “Alto Maceratese”. In this territorial context, representatives of the five municipalities adhering to Borgofuturo + have met, for laying the foundations of shared planning lines, working on the macrotopics of sustainability and quality of life. The collaborative methods that the five municipalities tested in forms of four round table discussion have set the base for shared actions that will contribute to regenerate the area according to the RURITAGE methodology. Four different events have been organized consisting of one round table session followed by a public event. These four events, scheduled within the festival program, hosted together local stakeholders and external experts on the topic. During the round table, the discussion was facilitated by moderators, constituted by members of the association Borgo Futuro and municipal employees. At least two moderators were assigned to each round table, made of a maximum 18 participants. In the event that the participants exceeded this number, two parallel tables were organised. The overall structure of the discussion has been agreed within the moderation group prior to the workshop. The four round table discussion took place between July and August 2020 and focused on the following key topics: 1st round table: Small towns, infrastructures and services for the regeneration of rural territories. The aim here was to define an intermunicipal strategy for the regeneration of the territory through the mapping and reactivation of underutilised spaces and by sharing infrastructures and services. 2nd round table: Innovative projects for environmental education and for improving the knowledge of the territory. The goal was to conceive innovative projects for the schools of the Fiastra valley for promoting education on environmental sustainability and for enhancing territorial knowledge among children. 3rd round table: Shared programming of cultural events. The aim was the definition of a protocol for the production and programming of cultural initiatives through common guidelines and tools. 4th round table: Eno-gastronomy and quality local products. The aim was to set up a network on an inter-municipal scale for supporting local production and distribution. At each event, the discussion around the predefined topic followed the same structure through i) a first moment of presentation and re-definition of the topic by each participant, ii) the analysis of the strengths of the territory and good practices, iii) the identification of criticalities and iv) the suggestion of possible proposals. In accordance with the nature of BORGOFUTURO and RURITAGE, constantly oriented toward engagement and local commitment, a participatory process, involving local actors through workshops and public meetings, has been set. Stakeholders' identification followed the guidelines provided by the RURITAGE project, identifying relevant stakeholders per type (policy, research, industry and services and public users) and per area of interest according to the identified topics (services&infrastructure, education, art&festival and cultural and natural heritage, food and gastronomy). The selection of stakeholders has been made through the support of the five local administrations, ensuring that stakeholders from all the five territories were participating. Municipalities have been specifically asked to involve at least five people per workshop per municipality. In addition to the direct engagement of the administrations, the workshops have been disseminated through the social networks of the municipalities and the communication channels of the Borgofuturo+ festival, happening in parallel. In addition, the events of the festival were organized in order to offer a further occasion to address the topics approached at the roundtables



Bine ați venit

Fundația ADEPT Transilvania

Despre noi

Local value chain for dairy products in the area of Saxon villages in Transylvania (Viscri)



www.fundatia-adept.org/ro/proiecte/



[unitate-de-procesare-lapte-in-satul-viscri/](https://www.facebook.com/unitate-de-procesare-lapte-in-satul-viscri/)



Creating a local value chain for dairy products in the area of Saxon villages in Transylvania (Viscri), which will add value to the milk produced by grass-fed cows, owned by farmers in the region.

Funded by: Carrefour Foundation

Project duration: March 2019 - March 2020 (1 year)

Budget: 250,000 Euros

The aim of the project is to create and create a local value chain for dairy products in the area of Saxon villages in Transylvania (Târnava Mare), which will add value to the milk produced by grass-fed cows, owned by farmers in the region. The landscape of Târnava Mare is one of the richest landscapes in Europe in terms of biodiversity in the region. Cows that graze on these pastures in a "natural organic" agricultural system produce a high quality milk, which can be scientifically proven by analysis, being particularly rich in healthy and tasty compounds and elements. From this raw material, a cheese can be made, which has all the uniqueness and natural quality. This project aims to allow the agricultural communities (approximately 5,000 families) in the area, the administrators of this land, to give it the value it deserves by developing an entrepreneurial vision, differentiating their products from industrial quality products, escaping the "trap" niche, which can reduce sales volume, benefit from innovation in production and, ultimately, allow the long - term sustainable survival of these landscapes and their communities.

What will they do next

- Find potential recipes;
- Repair of the cheese production building, purchase and installation of equipment, including laboratory equipment to allow good quality control. Consistent quality is vital to guarantee a market. The most common problem for micro-enterprises in Romania is inconsistent quality;
- Production of the first batches of products in the milk processing unit;
- Defining the quality criteria of Viscri cheese (from the farm to the finished product).
- Defining production guidelines, including the type of feed;
- Designing the marketing strategy, packaging, brands.

This project will help reduce poverty and encourage young people to stay on family farms.

Viscri, like many villages in Romania (and not only Romania) suffers from the lack of mutual trust that undermines the ability of locals to withstand social and economic pressures. The project will be a catalyst for cooperation and trust. Consumers will have access to quality food and will also be more aware of the values of the High Natural Value agricultural landscapes in Romania and will support them more through their purchasing choices.

beneficiary

Farmers: 50 members of the association from Viscri.

Community: social cohesion will increase in the Viscri community, 300 people. On a larger scale, 5,000 farming families in Tarnava Mare as a shopping area. The economic and social benefits are widespread.

Consumers who will have better access to quality food and will also be more aware of the values of HNV landscapes in Romania and will support them more through their purchasing choices.


Innovation and promotion of attractive livelihoods in rural areas ADEPT's philosophy is to combine innovation with tradition, not to preserve HNV landscapes like in a museum. ADEPT uses innovation at different levels to make the area more attractive to visitors and more economically

interesting for locals. For example, we have introduced innovative mowers in the area, which are much better suited to the needs of farmers and the environment. At the visitor and marketing level, ADEPT uses smartphone and social media applications to promote tourism and food in the area. ADEPT hopes to develop new products, such as high-value beef and unique local cheeses, suitable for the landscape and for the continuous management of the meadows. At the processing level, ADEPT has developed a vegetable-fruit processing unit. ADEPT had a strong local impact. Now, in partnership with TFT Forest Trust Rurality, we want to move this project to another level where we can have more than a niche impact and help save a larger proportion of farmers who live and maintain these unique landscapes. in Transylvania and other parts of Romania. This project will be carried out in close collaboration with the locals, in order to give farmers an adequate value for their products, so that they will not be sold as goods that compete with industrial products, but will receive an adequate price, which will capitalize on nature conservation and food quality. We share the desire to innovate and co-develop a prosperous future for their communities and ecosystems in Transylvania with those economic actors in the value chain who share the same interests and values. The overall aim of the project is to provide this community with greater financial stability and a model that can be used by other communities as well.

Objectives:

- ✓ Adding local value to milk produced in Târnava Mare; creating and marketing products that carry all the uniqueness of the area
- ✓ Collaboration with a small but strong community. Viscri village is the most suitable. It has about 350 cows, of which 180 provide milk. We will start working with the Viscri Farmers Association, and later we will extend the project to neighboring villages that have the same characteristics of agriculture and landscape.
- ✓ Co-design to succeed. ADEPT will collaborate with farmers to manage the investment and to set up the production unit, while benefiting from the technical expertise offered by TFT.
- ✓ Elaboration of an original cheese recipe, which should take into account the type of cheese that the market would accept, being defining for the quality and uniqueness of the Târnava Mare landscape. Consumers are increasingly willing to connect with nature through their food and be sure that the food they eat is healthy for them. Viscri cheese will allow them to benefit from both.

Re-use, reduce and recycle strong and long-lasting sail materials for fashionable bags.

 www.saltybag.com

 www.facebook.com/Saltybag

Salty bag was conceived as an idea during a Corfu Sailing Club seminar in January 2013. Salty Bag was created to design and manufacture handmade bags of high-strength, through the re-use and exploitation of materials, taking into account the low environmental impact and principles of the circular economy. Established in Corfu, an Ionian island, Salty Bag restores decommissioned sail sails, sailboards, parachutes, which have completed their life cycle at sea, offering new life and new value. Each Salty Bag is designed to have a long life and to be able to be used even after the end of its life cycle.

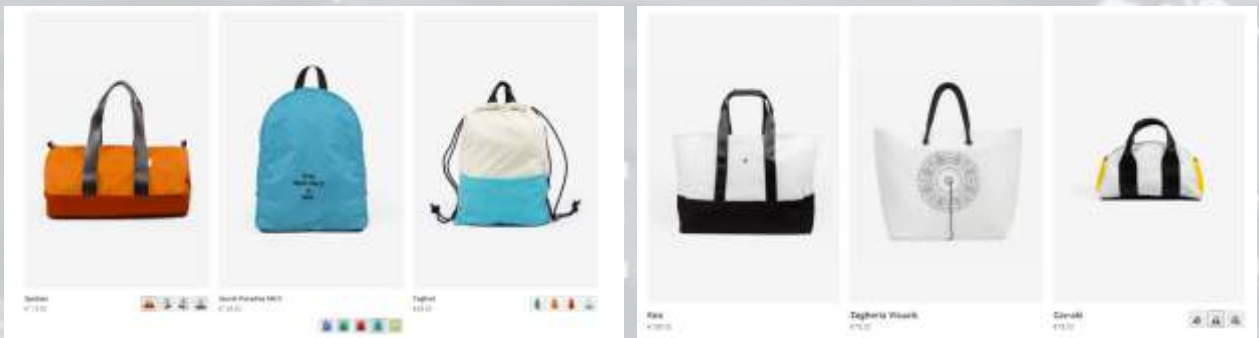
When reusing materials, instead of creating new products from virgin materials, there is less burden on the economy. Reuse is an economical way for people of all socio-economic circles to acquire the items they need. More specifically Salty Bag uses sail cloth, a very strong hard wearing material which after reaching its life-end at sea, it still retains its long-lasting weather resistant nature making it perfect to transform into strong elegant travel bags. During the manufacturing of new products, initially limited natural resources are drained and unwanted materials are disposed of and pollute the environment, communities face difficulties getting the affordable goods they need. One way to prevent waste, to improve communities, and increase the material well-being of citizens is to take useful products discarded by those who no longer want or need them and provide them to those who do.

Salty bag prevents waste production by designing and craft-making these sail cloth bags to be reusable. They also initiate their customers to return their old salty bag back to them in order to repurpose it into a new one. Additionally whenever a customer returns a Salty bag to the enterprise they offer a 30% discount from their new purchase. Salty Bag is also characterized as a Vegan friendly brand as it does not use any animal-leather and only uses source plant-based leathers and all their materials are from sunbrella, recycled polyester lining, recyclable virgin polyester lining, reclaimed seat belts and natural rope.

- ✓ Upcycling of materials considered to be exhaust
- ✓ Cooperation between sectors (retail, manufacturing, yachting)
- ✓ New craft making and recycling methods
- ✓ Innovative processes and products
- ✓ Zero waste to conserve natural resources and reduce pollution from extraction, manufacturing and disposal
- ✓ No harmful substances for humans

Reusability by design

We design & make our bags to be reusable. You can return a Salty Bag to us for it to be reused and we will make sure it is repurposed into new Salty Bags. Whenever you return a Salty Bag to us for us to reuse you enjoy 30% off your next purchase from our website.



Salty Map



Salty Stories

Armoni Upatras – Environmental protection services

 www.armoniupatras.com/en/home

The company Armoni Upatras I.K.E was created by decision of the University of Patras and the technical company Armoni MT, for the purpose of research, development and implementation of environmental and energy-friendly projects with zero carbonization. The company has been established in Serres, a city of Central Macedonia, Armoni UPatras operates with environmental protection services and not only.

The company develops projects in the fields of conventional (solar, wind etc.) and other (hydrogen) renewable energy sources, as well as waste treatment. Some of their main services are:

- Production of hydrogen and electricity: H2 Power is a technology that has no waste (the only waste it produces is water vapor) and does not cause any kind of pollution. It is designed to remove existing and future industrial production of energy from harmful emissions from fossil fuels.
- Gasification of Biomass: In Greece, agricultural and forestry residues, potential biomass, are equivalent to 3-4 million tons of oil in the year. The prospects for using biomass in Greece are extremely auspicious. Their conversion technologies of bio-energy are many and quite different: Thermal, Chemical and Biological Processes.
- Gasification of Solid Waste: The project concerns the construction and commissioning of an electric power plant, by burning the gas produced by the gasification process of solid municipal waste. Its innovation is that for gasification, a controlled atmosphere of air is applied resulting in partial combustion through which suitable catalysts are used so as not to leave gaseous, liquid but also solid pollutants in the environment. Gasification is an endothermic thermal process in which solid biomass is converted into combustible gas. The final product is electricity and thermal energy.

The company is taking its first steps, and is backed by long term experts in all manners of environmental fields, with the official endorsement of the esteemed University of Patras in Greece. The innovative part of the Company stems from their design and development of renewable energy acquirement from Hydrogen, an ever-expanding and increasing field on the carbon footnote elimination proverbial map.

The aim is to implement their services and have an impact through the application of environmental programmes. The present effort is to acquire an environmentally beneficial, long-term and financially viable business presence. In the long term the role of a “green” enterprise is to ensure that the use of natural resources (such as water, energy and raw materials) and their savings are optimized, and to invest in the protection and restoration of the natural environment, which is threatened.

- ✓ Environment friendly and active
- ✓ Time and energy investment in circular economy concept
- ✓ No solid waste production
- ✓ Constant research for a sustainable change
- ✓ Use of green and innovative technologies



The 8 rotations per minute (rpm) of the installation are multiplied to 300 rpm with a combination of gears / chains, in order to rotate the magnetic generator. The continuous operation is automated, saving the need for personnel.

The system has a monitoring / control panel, for isolating any potential faults and issues, and assuring a smooth operation.



Kefalas S.A

 www.organicvillage.gr/company_el.html

The company of Kefalas is located in Laconia, near ancient Sparta and the river Evrotas. The olives grow using techniques that are chemical free. Shifting to organic farming started in 1995 and for better production and movement of products it was created exclusively by the producers of bio-growers who created the company Kefalas A.E.

The primary purpose and concern of the company is the faithful application of organic farming techniques and methods to all stages of the production process:

- cultivation of olive trees without the use of chemical drugs and fertilizers,
- picking up the olives in a traditional way,
- low-temperature pressing,
- packaging, storage and placing on the market under continuous monitoring and control.

All the above lead to the result of the production of excellent quality organic products, making the company a pioneer in its field and one of the main “green” enterprises in Greece.

But why is organic farming important and beneficial? Because it aims to:

- The overall protection of the environment through sustainable management (protection of soil and aquifer, ensuring biodiversity),
- Sustainable use of energy and natural resources (such as water, soil, organic matter),
- Maintain and increase fertility and biological activity of the soil,
- Ensure the health and well-being of animals,
- To protect the health of farmers and consumers from exposure to harmful chemicals.

✓ Online and in person community network

✓ Environmental sustainability

✓ Circular economy

✓ Promoting organic farming

✓ No harmful substances for humans





Biomaterials for fashion, furniture, packaging, automotive & transportation

VEGEA company was founded in 2016 in Milan, to promote the integration between the chemistry sector and agriculture sector through the development of innovative eco-sustainable products. Vegea develops plant-based products out of synthetic oil-derived materials for fashion, furniture, packaging, automotive & transportation.

By boosting the use of renewable resources as an alternative to non-renewable fossil ones, the production processes are developed on the exploitation of biomasse and vegetable raw materials. Cooperations between public and private sectors allow Vegea to establish synergies and partnerships with local, regional or national industry and research players.

Constant investments are allocated to research activities for the continuous development of innovative environmental light impact technologies and procedures. Sustainability is one of the pillars of Vegea social responsibility policies and is based on production operations that use vegetable raw materials, recycled materials and bio-based polymers.

Vegea valorises agro-industry biomass and residues as high-value feedstocks, and make them become new materials for fashion, furniture, packaging, automotive & transportation. In particular, in collaboration with Italian wineries, Vegea company has developed a procedure for the valorisation of wine waste: grape marc, such as grape skins, stalks and seeds discarded during wine production. No toxic solvents, heavy metals and dangerous substances for humans and the environment are involved in the production process.

We are constantly searching for sustainable solutions in order to offer our customers new applications of biomaterials, following all the processes from the first laboratory analysis up to the production on an industrial scale.



www.saltybag.com



www.facebook.com/Saltybag



- ✓ Upcycling of materials considered to be exhaust
- ✓ Cooperation between sectors (chemical, agro)
- ✓ New agriculture methods
- ✓ Innovative processes and products
- ✓ Zero waste to conserve natural resources and reduce pollution from extraction, manufacturing and disposal.
- ✓ No harmful substances for humans



Vaillant. 140 years of experience and particular attention to the environment.

The Vaillant company, a leader in the supply of intelligent systems for the home, performs environmental sustainability through: the SEEDS project, The Green Evolution programmatic manifesto and the promotional campaign for scrapping old / inefficient boilers.

Main goals:

- 25% reduction of CO2 emissions of the group
- Zero accidents which means applying a zero accidents safety program
- Improving efficiency of product development.

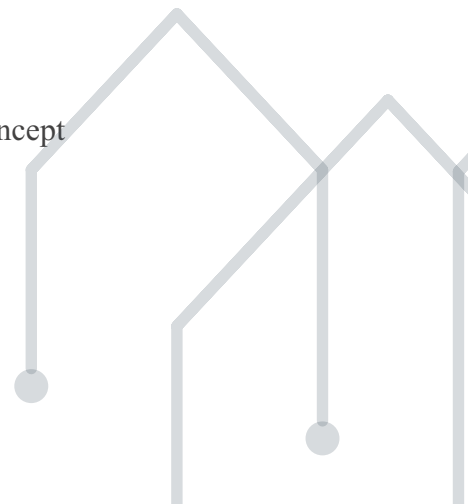
Each customer by replacing his boiler will have a seven-year warranty and will contribute to the growth of trees within the protected areas in the Ticino Park (Lombardy) and in the Aniene Valley (Lazio). Thanks to this project, changing the boiler means reducing energy consumption, greenhouse gases and CO2 in the atmosphere. Air pollution is among the major causes of respiratory and cardiovascular diseases in the world, as well as aggravating the ongoing climate change. A small gesture to plant trees, but essential for us and the environment.



 www.vaillant.it



- ✓ Environment friendly and active
- ✓ Time and energy investment in circular economy concept
- ✓ Nothing is waste, everything can be transformed
- ✓ Constant research for a sustainable change
- ✓ Self regeneration of products





Off Grid Italia

Off Grid Italy is a cultural association created to promote minimal environmental impact living processes. The word OFF the Grid has several meanings: disconnected from the grid, living outside the box.

In Italy it takes very little to have an off the grid attitude!

Off the grid people want to:

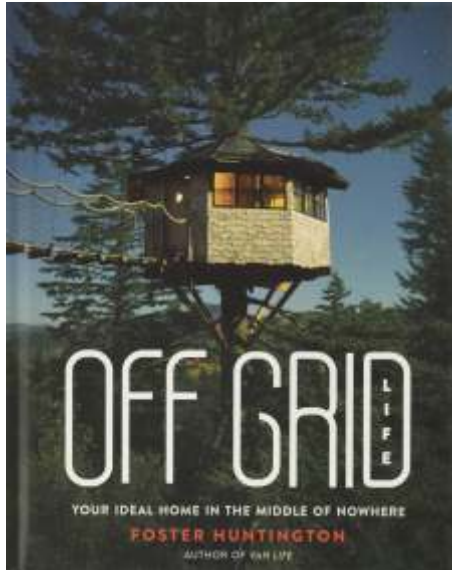
- avoid wasting food - energy - water - objects - clothing
- dedicate themselves to the self-construction of everyday objects, perhaps with waste materialsself-produce food
- perform the reduction of environmental pollution
- approach alternative economies such as bartering or time banking
- use renewable energies
- aspire to practice a totally disconnected life from networks in total autonomy.

The motto is: 100% made in Italy resilience!

Off Grid wants to spread this philosophy in Italy and build OFF GRID thinking with concrete projects. Off Grid is also engaged in the designing of the first amusement park in the world dedicated to the reuse theme (Reland).



www.offgriditalia.org



- ✓ Online and in person community network
- ✓ Environmental sustainability
- ✓ Circular economy
- ✓ Use of renewable energies

SONNENTOR



 www.sonnentor.com

 www.facebook.com/Sonnentor



SONNENTOR is very successful in growing and trading organic herbs and spices in a remote Austrian region close to the Czeck border. The Waldviertel-based company is known internationally. Sonnentor has a great ecological commitment. Packaging without plastic, palm oil free products, CO2 neutral economies and direct trade with organic farmers, make SONNENTOR a role model for other companies. Economically, the company follows the path of common good balance instead of maximum profit (see www.ecogood.org), which is a deliberate balancing system that puts the contribution of a company to common good into the centre of production and selling.

Circular economy is practiced during the whole production chain – good and healthy soils, plants have time to grow until harvest, rests are given back to the soil.

Diversity: Employees come from 10 different nations, 55% teamleading women, long-term unemployed and handicapped persons may find a job at SONNENTOR as well as retired persons looking for a meaningful occupation. These are guiding visitors through the farm and production areas.

The company is collaborating with partners producing in Romania, Kosovo, Germany, Greece, Portugal and Albania.

SONNENTOR sells products in their own shops (so far Austria and Germany) and in a franchise system (e.g. in pharmacies). There is also an online shop. They also publish a magazine for clients and friends. Various awards have been given to the company for social, economic, and of course special organic products. Special SONNENTOR ECOLOGICAL CARAVANS "LAND-LOFTS" are prepared for those who want to visit and stay overnight in the herb gardens.

✓ *Packaging without plastic, palm oil free products, CO2 neutral economies and direct trade with organic farmers, make SONNENTOR a role model for other companies. Economically, the company follows the path of common good balance instead of maximum profit (see www.ecogood.org), which is a deliberate balancing system that puts the contribution of a company to common good into the centre of production and selling. Circular economy is practiced during the whole production chain – good and healthy soils, plants have time to grow until harvest, rests are given back to the soil.*

Belgium, on its way towards a circular economy

 www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/belgium-its-way-towards-circular-economy

25 FEB 2020 | STORY | RESOURCE EFFICIENCY

Belgium, on its way towards a circular economy



STORY

New global methane pledge aims to tackle climate change



PRESS RELEASE

The gap between air pollution pacesetters and laggards in Europe and Central Asia has widened, new report finds

From the United Nations Environment Program UNEP, which will exist 50 years in 2022, comes this link and article on the Belgium circular economy and the way policy is developed to achieve it in its best way. Belgium is already on its way to build a more sustainable society through a circular economy. The federal government and the three autonomous regions—Brussels-Capital, Wallonia and Flanders—are all aligned in this effort.

“A transition to a low-carbon, climate-neutral and resource-efficient economy requires a holistic approach: it is not achieved by addressing challenges in silos. Science, technology and innovation must be put to work for this transition. Belgium is ready to play its role and to lead by example,” said Marie-Christine Marghem, Minister of Environment, Energy and Sustainable Development in Belgium. The circular economy will create economic activity. This is one of the reasons why we, the Brussels government, want to be among the pioneers: we want to show that it is possible!” said Alain Maron, Minister for Climate Transition, and Barbara Trachte, Secretary of State in charge of Economic Transition in a joint statement. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Brussels Environment (the environment agency of Brussels-Capital), together with Ecocity Builders and the World Council on City Data have developed a conceptual framework to track the city's transition to a circular economy, including draft indicators (see the report for details).

With Brussels as one of its pilot cities, UNEP is also working on a methodology to measure the number of jobs created in a circular economy transition.

UNEP and Belgium, working together on a global level

Belgium is a strong political and financial supporter of the work of UNEP. It has unfailingly contributed to UNEP's core fund, the Environment Fund since 1973 and consistently features in the top-10 list of contributors. Belgium is also one of the few Member States that make multi-year commitments to UNEP's core funding. “We have set ambitious goals through the 2030 Agenda. We need to solve complex interlinked issues covering the whole world; and Belgium is committed to achieve these. UNEP plays a crucial role—in bringing scientific evidence; in convening people; in leading the way for us... this is about our future generations, and UNEP is a core partner in this,” said Alexander De Croo, the Belgian Minister for Development Cooperation. On the global level, Belgium supports UNEP's work to accelerate the transition to resource-efficient and sustainable economies.

Towards zero waste

One of the aims of the circular economy model is zero waste, where all materials are kept in circulation. In 2016, Belgium ranked as number two in the European Union in recycling waste; almost 77 per cent of total waste in Belgium was recycled. What happens to waste in Belgium? Nevertheless, Belgium has set itself higher targets. By 2050, the Flanders region wants to have a circular economy where nothing is wasted. In Wallonia, the organic waste will be separated from raw household waste throughout the region by the end of 2025. Other measures include the strengthening of the network of repair cafés and encouraging leasing of material goods rather than buying them. Several “green deals”—voluntary agreements between private, public and government partners—have also been launched in Belgium to support sustainable development projects.

Circular construction

The building and construction sector provides good examples on how the green deals can promote sustainable development. Currently, the sector globally accounts for 36 per cent of primary energy use and 39 per cent of energy-related greenhouse gas emissions. It also uses large amounts of natural resources—and generates waste. The move from waste management to raw material management in the sector is an opportunity to turn environmental objectives into economic opportunities that will optimize the use of resources, create new jobs and add value for the inhabitants.

Sustainable eating

What and how we eat is just as important to planetary health as to our own health. Cities have become increasingly important in reducing the emissions associated with food production and food waste, while making sure their population has secure access to sustainable, healthy and affordable food. The Belgian city of Ghent in Flanders was one of the first European cities to launch its own urban food policy in 2013, called Ghent en Garde. Thanks to suburban farmers' markets and a new logistics platform for professional buyers, local food is now booming. Surplus food has been distributed to people in need, which simultaneously alleviates poverty and reduces CO2 emissions. In 2019, the initiative was one of the winners of the United Nations Global Climate Action Award.

The strengthening of the network of repair cafés and encouraging leasing of material goods rather than buying them. Several “green deals”—voluntary agreements between private, public and government partners—have also been launched in Belgium to support sustainable development projects. The online 'Brussels Sustainable Building Guide provides tips for dismantling, reusing and recycling/upcycling construction materials. An example of actions taken in Wallonia, concrete and bricks from demolished buildings are being turned into eco-friendly road surfaces in the province of Namur. The urban food policy in 2013, called Ghent en Garde. Thanks to suburban farmers' markets and a new logistics platform for professional buyers, local food is now booming. A revised food triangle now exists in Flanders, with dietary guidelines for a healthy and sustainable lifestyle. It takes both your health and the health of the planet into account, as it encourages people to eat more plant-based foods, and to not waste food.

ECO INNOVATION IN BELGIUM



www.greenwin.be/fr/page/pepit

www.digitalwallonia.be/en

www.digitalwallonia.be/fr/publications/geochallenge 15 <http://www.valbiom.be/>



Discover Digital Wallonia's projects



[Discover all the projects](#)



The Eco-Innovation Observatory functions as a platform for the structured collection and analysis of an extensive range of eco-innovation information, gathered from across the European Union and key economic regions around the globe, providing a much-needed integrated information source on eco-innovation for companies and innovation service providers, as well as providing a solid decision-making basis for policy development. The Observatory approaches eco-innovation as a pervasive phenomenon present in all economic sectors and therefore relevant for all types of innovation, defining eco-innovation see : ec.europa.eu/environment/ecoap summary

In the 2019 EU Eco-innovation Index rating Belgium ranks 17th in the ranking list of the EU 28 Member States. Its overall composite index is below EU average. While in the eco-innovation, input, activities, output and resource efficiency outcomes show close to EU average performance, the country's socio-economic indicators show one of the lowest scores among all Member states.

In Belgium, initiatives and projects related to eco-innovation and circular economy are mostly carried out by policies and programs at the regional level. While this division can be an obstacle to a cohesive and strong eco-innovation environment, it also presents diversification of initiatives. The Wallonia region has undertaken many projects focusing on varied areas of sustainability (construction, energy, natural resources, biochemistry, digitalisation). Several initiatives have been also developed in the Brussels Region to support eco-innovation in a variety of areas, including construction, digitalisation, waste treatment; support is also provided SMEs and Self-Employed to develop eco-innovation activities. The Flemish government has initiated the Green Deal instrument, a voluntary agreement between partners and the Flemish Government to pursue specific environment related goals. The Flemish region also has developed eco-innovation activities in transportation, clean energies, construction, and waste treatment. Among the main drivers of eco-innovation, the most important ones include the integration of eco-innovation and sustainability goals into industrial and economic policies, the growing demand for green technology, products and local markets for recycling, the highly performing education system and the existence of supporting institu Nevertheless, eco-innovation is hindered by difficulties imposed by the inter-regional coordination, a lack of eco-innovation and circular economy related skills in SMEs, and a limited control over product design for most products entering the market.

At the national level, eco-innovation is supported by the federal strategic policy framework, such as the Smart Specialisation Strategy or the Belgium's Federal Institute for Sustainable Development that is actively working on integrating the circular ececonomy principles into public procurement. As in the case of the projects, several policies at the regional level support eco-innovation in different areas, including circular economy, the development of industrial symbiosis and climate change.

COMPOST IN CITY - RECYCLO / New plastics training centre Now Open! /Another initiative to enhance the climate transition through digitalisation is the Geochallenge./ Another initiative to enhance the climate transition through digitalisation is the Geochallenge.

GeoChallenge14The SPW, in partnership with various public and private playersand with the support of theAgence du Numérique, islaunching the first edition of aprogramme for the digital exploitation of Walloon geographical information: the GeoChallenge. Objective: to develop concrete solutions that meet the expectations of citizens and Wallonia. Wallonia wishes to encourage the development of innovative services and solutions based on the use and enhancement of Walloon geographical information, in particular to: promote and facilitate the use of environmentally friendly modes of transport,

- to facilitate and encourage the discovery of the natural heritage of Wallonia,
- support the implementation and facilitate the accommodation of entrepreneurs,
- improve the quality of life.

Biomass: A public-private partnership has created a cluster for biomass valorisation: Valbiom15.

The cluster network brings together industrial and agricultural companies as well as laboratory and research centres working in the field of biomass valorisation. ValBiom

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Fáilte Ireland aims to facilitate the long-term sustainable development of Ireland's tourism through socio-economic, cultural and environmental contribution.

The organization is in close collaboration with the Irish Government, State agencies, Local Authorities and tourism representatives towards promoting tourism across the country by:

- Creating destination development plans and networks
- Investing in infrastructure, activities, visitor attractions, events and festivals
- Providing consumer and buyer insights
- Offering mentoring and training programmes for business support
- Developing buyer platforms to support tourism businesses in innovating and growing

Additionally, the organization establishes Business Tourism being responsible for the management of bidding and hosting large conferences, meetings, events, etc., while being also in charge of domestic holiday marketing across the country.

Other key factors of its business model:

Fáilte Ireland has built in departments devoted to:

- Commercial development supporting the creation of novel programmes and providing access to products, sales toolkits and trainings that enhance business development in accordance with the market's needs.
- Research providing statistics and consumer insights from the tourism industry
- Funding providing support through the Irish investment strategy (https://www.failteireland.ie/FailteIreland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/2_Develop_Your_Business/6_Funding/FI-Tourism-Investment-Strategy-Final-07-06-16_1.pdf) underpinning the organization's total investment in tourism capital projects
- Marketing utilizing a wide list of marketing channels to promote local tourism businesses, such as www.DiscoverIreland.ie.
- Product development being in close collaboration with tourism operators and activity providers so as to ensure their products are promoted internationally.
- Quality assurance based on the National Quality Assurance Framework (NQAF) aiming to provide consumers with trusty standards of service.

Sustainability:

The organization has developed its own trade portal for (<https://tradeportal.failteireland.ie/>):

- ✓ mapping local tourism opportunities and activities
- ✓ seeking funding for tourism initiatives
- ✓ developing business profiles
- ✓ organizing trading and promotional events
- ✓ supporting tourism enterprises



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Short description (max 1 pg.) of key aspects, business model used, replicable by other parties interested in developing a similar business:

ICOS is a co-operative cluster of organizations focused on the establishment and development of co-operative businesses across a variety of sections supporting the Irish circular economy.

ICOS is committed to the promotion of strong and sustainable co-operative business models in the country, representing 130 organizations only in Ireland while having 150.000 members, 12.000 employees in Ireland and 24.000 abroad and reaching an annual turnover of €10 billion.

The ICOS Rural Business Committee is a dedicated board for the promotion and communication an innovative and sustainable co-operative model to rural businesses and community actors towards supporting groups interested in establishing co-operatives in the integration of their entity.

Additionally, the Committee works on raising awareness among local and national development Agencies about the opportunities offered by the co-operative model in their work.

This also implies work in lobbying Government Departments on the development and establishment of policies that facilitate the process of successfully setting up co-operatives in rural business sectors.

ABOUT

"Local Development promotes area-based, integrated community-led interventions based on participative democracy to address long-term unemployment, economic marginalisation and social exclusion." (Government of Ireland, *Sustainable, Inclusive & Empowered Communities*, 2019, p.16)

Our Network

The Irish Local Development Network CLG (ILDN) is the representative body for Ireland's Local Development Companies (LDCs). These 49 not-for-profit groups are building inclusive, vibrant communities and better life chances for people in every part of Ireland.

They assist communities and disadvantaged persons/groups with personal development and well-being, social inclusion, employment training and placement, enterprise and social enterprise, community development, environment and climate action.



Irish Development Network

 www.ildn.ie



With 2,100 employees on the ground, supporting 15,000 community groups and 170,000 individuals through €300+ million of programmes, each year, the ILDN membership is the largest Community Development/Anti-Poverty Network in the state.

Programmes include LEADER, Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme, Local Employment Service, Jobs Clubs, Back to Work Enterprise Allowance, Iús, Rural Social Scheme, social enterprise, Rural Recreation, Walks Scheme, health, mental health and social prescribing, environmental management and climate action.

Irish Local Development Network supports Local Development Companies through policy development and research; HR supports; training; representation to funders and policymakers; internal and external communications; widespread networking fora; membership of government and civil society committees, consultative bodies or working groups; group procurement, Garda Vetting etc.

ILDN is governed by a 14-person voluntary Board comprising Chairpersons and CEOs of Local Development Companies from six regions across the country. The Company also meets in Council comprising all 49 Chairpersons and CEOs several times annually. The ILDN main office is based in Limerick from where it serves all 49 members. The Board members, representing Regional Councils, are

Dublin Region – Michael Bowe, Bruce Phillips, Cormac Shaw; East – Dermot Leavy, Pat Leogue; Border: Mary Mullen, Ciaran Reid; South – Aaron O’ Driscoll, John Stack; MidWest – Isabel Cambie, Jim Finn; West – Martina Earley, Terry Keenan. Urban (non-Dublin) – Brenda Cahill.

The ILDN Strategic Plan (2020-2024) sets out key objectives for the network for the period to 2025. The full strategic plan can be read here: [Strategic Plan 2020-2024 – Web](#)

Chairperson: **Jim Finn**

Manager: **Joe Saunders** Email: manager@ildn.ie Phone: 087 937 9572

Director of Communications & Public Affairs: **Jonathan Hoare** Email: jonathan.hoare@ildn.ie Phone: 086 174 9270

Administrator: **Tanya Higgins-Carey**

Find *your* Local Development Company

[CLICK HERE TO FIND OUT MORE](#) 

Local Development organizations as members of the Irish network were initially created to support social inclusion through a place-based and innovative approach.

Entering a wide network of rural development companies can contribute to the promotion and implementation of SMART Villages strategies towards rural tourism development.

Business model:

With respect to ILDN, there are now 35 Local Development Companies in rural Ireland providing a wide variety of services to support rural communities in building up local development.

The companies focus on:

- Community development
- Enterprise & employment
- Social enterprise
- Rural recreation

The network has been supported by the LEADER Programme that provided rural communities with resources that activated local development.

Sustainability:

- ✓ Local Development companies operate the Rural Social Scheme and Tús through which more than 7,000 staff provided crucial rural services including environmental management and cultural and tourism projects.
- ✓ In addition, the companies of the network have employed Rural Recreation Officers and implemented the National Walks Scheme involving almost 2,000 landowners.

PROJECT TEAM



Bison Land
Coordinator (Romania)
www.tinutulzimbrului.ro



CCS Digital Education
Partner (Ireland)
www.ccseducation.com



Ruse Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Partner (Bulgaria)
www.rcci.bg



European Association of Geographers
Partner (Belgium)
www.eurogeography.eu



IDEC
Partner (Greece)
www.idec.gr



UPI Zalec
Partner (Slovenia)
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European Digital Learning Network
Partner (Italy)
www.dlearn.eu



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