



MAS Brdy-Vltava

The case study abstract describes the good practice of cooperation among local actors in the Local Action Group (LAG) Brdy-Vltava.

1. Brief introduction of the LAG

LAG Brdy-Vltava was established in 2006. Its Strategy for Community-Led Local Development (SCLLD) was approved in 2017. In total, LAG Brdy-Vltava managed to obtain CZK 79 million from European funds for its territory. LAG Brdy-Vltava consists of 31 municipalities with more than 30 thousand inhabitants.

In the 2014-2020 programming period, the LAG activities focused on the following topics under the thematic areas of the Operational Programme Employment (OP Emp) framework:

- ◆ **Prevention of social exclusion:** the aim of the measure was to support projects leading to social inclusion, projects aimed at increasing accessibility of social and related services, informal care, preventive activities and other projects addressing local needs.
- ◆ **Support for employment, including social enterprises:** the aim was to implement planned activities promoting local employment with regard to the needs of the local labour market; strengthening community-led local development to improve the quality of life in rural areas and activating local potential through support for existing social enterprises and the establishment of new ones.
- ◆ **Support for pro-family measures:** the aim of the measure was to implement activities enabling the reconciliation of professional and family life, as well as activities supporting carers in their return to the labour market.

These topics are also reflected in the strategic objectives of SCLLD 2021-2027.

- ◆ **Social inclusion and pro-family measures:** Strategic Objective 2 *To be able to care well for ourselves and our loved ones here.*
- ◆ **Employment and pro-family measures:** Strategic Objective 3 *To be able to work and do business here.*



LAG Brdy-Vltava designed its SCLLD for the first time in the programming period 2007 - 2013. As they were not selected for support in the Rural Development Programme, they looked for meaningful alternatives for their activities in that period and focused on tourism and the social area. At that time, they started with community planning of social services, and this shaped the LAG's long-term focus on the social area and its successful operation in CLLD, supported from OP Emp.

The strength of the LAG lies in its **high flexibility** shown recently, especially in the context of the pandemic and the refugee crisis (food aid, community wardrobe), in its excellent ability **to activate the community** and in its professional team. The LAG is very strong in **strategic planning**, from continuous **gathering of needs** and extensive communication in the territory starting with **target groups** (clients of services), through **coordination and networking of actors** in the territory in thematic as well as cross-cutting platforms and working groups, **strategic documents** and project cards of individual **municipalities**, to being involved in higher working groups in transnational projects and drawing inspiration for long-term **visions** for the benefit of the community in the context of the changing situation in the economy and challenges of the contemporary world. The LAG **monitors and evaluates** the outputs and works to assess and measure the improvement of the quality of life of the inhabitants in the territory. LAG Brdy-Vltava **extends its scope into other activities** beyond the support from operational programmes, it is involved in international projects, is a member of the TESSEA network for social economy, they were involved in the research project Good Work in the Municipality, where they verified the impact of support in favour of the long-term unemployed.



2. The setting of cooperation among local actors in CLLD

LAG Brdy-Vltava brings together 16 entities from the public sector and 31 entities from the private sector, i.e. 47 entities in total.

The LAG's partners (representatives of municipalities, public entities, entrepreneurs, non-governmental non-profit organizations) and grant applicants (mainly social service providers) actively cooperate on the development of the LAG Brdy-Vltava territory within the CLLD system in the thematic areas of the OP Emp programme framework.

The local actors cooperate in the thematic areas of the OP Emp programme framework already during the design of the SCLLD. Local actors work together in working groups dedicated to the social area. These working groups created the **Community Plan for Social Services of the Brdy-Vltava Region**, the **shared work crew**, the **Social Fund of the Brdy-Vltava Region**, the **Medium-Term Plan for the Development of Social Services of the Brdy-Vltava Region until 2022**, and they established the **World of Good People community centre**.

Moreover, the local actors cooperate in the implementation of individual projects. Projects focused on employment are implemented by LAG Brdy-Vltava in cooperation with the **Labour Office, social service providers and employers**. The cooperation among these actors has the form of joint meetings. In the implementation of its projects in the thematic area of community centres and community social work, LAG Brdy-Vltava seeks to activate the **general public**, including friends of the community centre and volunteers.

LAG Brdy-Vltava is succeeding in building a long-term sustainable robust network of local actors. The main benefits of **bringing together local actors from the business, public and non-profit sectors** are the established cooperation and communication in areas where these actors would not meet, and the ideas that emerge from such cooperation and communication.

A barrier to cooperation with municipal representatives is the administrative burden they have in their work. LAG Brdy-Vltava attempts to facilitate the process of applying for a grant by unifying the administration. That is why the Social Fund was created. Another barrier to cooperation among local actors is lack of time. Local actors often commute to Prague for work, which leaves less time to participate in various working group activities and other activities for the public.

LAG Brdy-Vltava evaluates the cooperation with the OP Emp managing authority as very positive, it appreciates the MA's support, innovative and open approach, competence and great commitment.

3. Added value of the support in the CLLD system

Thanks to detailed mapping of the territory, strategic planning, continuous communication and networking of relevant actors, **the LAG knows its territory in detail**, can **name the needs and link them to resources**. The LAG does not make "blind calls". All supported project proposals were consulted with the LAG in advance.

The LAG sees the bigger picture and seeks to utilise the potential of communities. That is, not to reach for the most expensive solution in the form of a costly social service and help to the client, where the client is in a passive role. On the contrary, it looks for and coordinates support within the available networks. It sees a big role for local action groups in this.

The LAG is very **flexible** and can respond quickly to acute needs in the territory. Cooperation in the preparation and implementation of projects is carried out through thematic working groups, for example in the field of education or employment. The assistance in the territory is thus **coordinated and communicated**, and the actors involved bring their **knowledge and ideas** to the table. The LAG also looks for ways to engage active individuals who approach it with offers of help, and it encourages **volunteering**. The advantage of **a closer contact with the public** is that the public is willing to help and only needs some coordination to get involved in volunteer activities. Residents who have participated in volunteer activities feel good that they have helped someone.

The advantage of a closer link to the municipal leaders in the context of addressing specific problems in the OP Emp is that the municipalities are able to **inform well** their citizens and also **are trusted** by them.

LAG Brdy-Vltava encourages synergies and has supported many synergy projects (see examples below). It has also managed to use **multi-fund support and synergy from OP Emp and IROP** for a social enterprise.

A great contribution of the LAG managers lies in **advising** organisations that have no experience in applying for grants. The LAG managers go through the application with such applicants and advise on what needs to be added or corrected, and explain how projects are financed under OP Emp.

4. The contribution of CLLD support to the development of the territory in the themes of the OP Emp programme framework

Thanks to the CLLD support for the development of the territory in the OP Emp programme framework themes, **positive changes have been achieved in the area of accessibility and quality of social services, and employment and social inclusion of people with physical and mental disabilities.** Thanks to the implementation of projects in the LAG Brdy-Vltava territory, the capacity of deficient social services has been increased. The support had a positive impact on the target groups (carers, people with physical and mental disabilities, children from disadvantaged backgrounds, etc.)

Within the framework of employment support, where the LAG focuses on helping the long-term unemployed, the LAG emphasizes the importance of providing the **target group with an option to be employed in the area of their residence**, i.e. creating jobs that correspond to the possibilities of target groups mostly without qualifications or with very low qualifications and a cumulation of handicaps. Commuting to Prague or Příbram, typical for the territory, is a high barrier for these target groups.

In social services, it is important for the clients to be able to **stay in their natural environment**, i.e. support should be provided towards outpatient and in-home forms of services, not residential ones. The LAG managed to **increase the capacity of the needed social services** by announcing targeted calls based on their knowledge of the needs. They have also re-opened the debt counselling service.

CLLD support for territorial development in the themes of the OP Emp programme framework **has also had a positive impact on the life of the whole community.** The community centre for the general public offers space for various activities and public events that residents of the LAG area can attend in their free time. **The LAG searches for community resources** in caring for the community as a whole. On one side there are people who need something, on the other side there are people who are able to offer something and the LAG helps them to find each other and creates opportunities.

The community centre is an example of support synergy: clients from Stéblo, a social service provider that is using a grant for respite services through the LAG, come to the community centre for art workshops, senior citizens from the day care service attend various programmes there and, moreover, the LAG cooperates very closely with the Authority for Social and Legal Protection of Children, offering tutoring and other programmes for children. The LAG also arranges joint meetings with social service providers there, addressing the requirements and cases of shared clients.

The community centre became a centre of assistance during the pandemic and the migration crisis.

The LAG supported the social enterprise 'Goodies with a Story'. The social enterprise (employing target groups, especially those with mental disabilities, in the production and sale of pickled cheese and vegetables and the operation of a bistro and café) has an interesting vision for the development of services. They facilitate a move from sheltered housing to supported housing, which is in the natural environment of the client. The social enterprise is also an example of the **concurrence of support and synergy of two operational programmes** - OP Emp and IROP.

As part of pro-family measures, the LAG supports day camps that help to reconcile working and family life for parents who typically spend 2 hours a day commuting to work in large cities and, at the same time, **the day camps are for children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and for children with disabilities and autism.**

LAG Brdy-Vltava uses the expected advantages of support through CLLD for specific solutions to problems falling within the themes of the OP Emp programme framework. Local knowledge of the needs of the population helps to effectively support local actors (primarily social service providers) who meet these needs through their services.

The advantage of the coordination and networking of actors in the LAG Brdy-Vltava territory is to refine the focus and scope of the supported projects so that the territory is **evenly covered with the needed social services for all target groups.** Such coordination and networking of actors prevents both a shortage of services and competition among them.

