

Case Study 7: Supporting Community and Social Activities in the LAG Pošumaví

Abstract



The project *Support for Community and Social Activities in the LAG Pošumaví* responds to a wide range of problems in the region, including the remoteness of some municipalities, population ageing, the burden of informal caregivers, outflow of young people and limited availability of social services. The project facilitated the development and activation of local communities through the support and activities of community workers. Additionally, it brought innovative elements to the area, such as the development of homesharing. The establishment of new self-help groups made it possible to better cover the needs of informal caregivers.

Case Study Subject

The main objective of the project is **to support community life in the area** in various ways, regarding specific target groups. The aim is **to prevent social isolation of the population** and **to build natural ties** in the area. The project also expects to increase the competences of communities for independent functioning in the future, or to relieve caring families. The project activities are based on long-term activities in the area as well as on new needs identified through mapping and questionnaire surveys in the LAG area.

LAG Pošumaví and its partners

The project is implemented by **local action group (LAG) Pošumaví**, which operates in the Pilsen Region and consists of 100 municipalities. The **Centre for Community Work West Bohemia (CPKP)** cooperates on the Support of Community and Social Activities in the Territory of the LAG Pošumaví project as a partner with financial participation. Other stakeholders are also involved (the professional public, the region, schools, municipalities and their mayors).



Synergies within the project

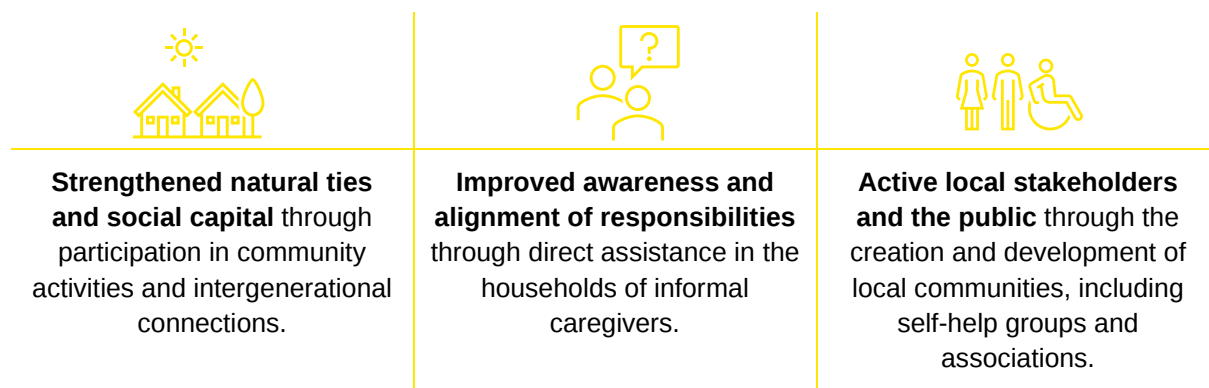
Such a comprehensive project enabled the implementation of a set of synergistic activities, which not only developed community life in smaller municipalities, but also addressed gaps in the availability of social services and raised awareness not only of citizens but also of local stakeholders. Through cooperation with RoSTEAM, the LAG has succeeded in supporting the autonomy of communities in the future. Self-help groups were also newly established where greater activation had been lacking so far (e.g. caregivers). The development of homesharing followed the need to supplement services in the social area. At the same time, partners with experience in project implementation were involved and, for example, community planning was further developed.



Co-funded by
the European Union



The project focuses on three main target groups, which are **informal carers, socially excluded people and people at risk of social exclusion, and the public**. Various benefits for the target groups include an improvement in awareness and direct support in informal carers' households, the creation and development of local communities and intergenerational connection. The benefits are summarized in the diagram below.



- ▶ **Community support:** The project includes an effort to support local communities' development and to stimulate public activity. The LAG used the methodology of community work of the RoSTEAM organization of the University of Ostrava, which supported entry into the territory and work with the community in various environments and municipalities. Community life is further supported through volunteering, intergenerational activities and activities promoting the feeling of belonging of the inhabitants to the region.
- ▶ **Social activities:** The project supports, among other things, community planning of social services or fill missing services, for example through self-help groups, informal caregivers and the development of homesharing. The value added of the project is its effectiveness, because its agenda is areas for which municipalities normally lack capacity. Finally, it is also important to educate mayors, which contributes to the development of local activities and services.
- ▶ **Capacity building and learning process:** the LAG has brought new knowledge and methods to the territory thanks to the project. An example is the cooperation with the organizations RoSTEAM and Children of the Full Moon (Děti úplňku). Thanks to these partnerships, new innovative approaches have been spread in the territory.
- ▶ **Knowledge of the territory, actors and implemented activities:** Thanks to the project, the LAG enables the involvement of small organizations that would otherwise be unable to implement the projects on their own. Similarly, the LAG possesses experience in project administration and can thus support the partners involved. Finally, this experience makes it possible to better communicate with the public and citizens, and to implement activities tailored to the needs of the target groups.

"We feel that parents are not leaving us, they are asking for individual support, we are starting to come up with other activities, guidance for caregivers and ways of linking them to the services. We are thinking in this direction."

– Representative of the implementation team

- ▶ **Connecting local actors:** Local actors, including non-profit organizations, municipalities and associations, were involved in the various project activities. The key to successful cooperation is to find a suitable topic that will engage local residents' interest. This will encourage their participation in activities, demonstrated by the restoration of the Prácheň castle ruins. The value added of the project compared to conventional projects in the area is **its complexity and the breadth of actors involved**. Finally, **trust between local actors is important**, which is further deepened thanks to the project.



- **A large and well-cooperating implementation team** was put together, which makes it possible to cover both, various services and activities, as well as the entire LAG territory. An important factor contributing to the success of the project is the cooperation between local actors and LAG bodies.
- The topic that people were approached with **proved to be important for the involvement of the local community**. An example of good practice is the restoration of the Prácheň castle ruins, where several volunteers, organizations and members of the public participated.
- x At the beginning of the project, the implementers had to deal with **low interest** in involvement. This process is demanding and lengthy, requiring experienced workers who can convince and activate the community with their skills.
- x Securing (experienced) community workers **was also problematic**.

