

Case study 8: Living Community Pomalší

Abstract



The case study is focused on the *Living Community Pomalší project*, which responds to problems such as low community activation, lack of support and facilities for community life, and unavailable professional help for families with children, youth and adolescents. There are a number of newly arrived residents in the area, but also a number of families who commute across the border to work. This carries an increased risk of the occurrence and creation of endangered and excluded areas, of which there are several in

the region. In this context, the project made it possible to comprehensively support various communities in the area, using different methods and approaches. It also enabled the implementation of new activities to support participation in the area (e.g. senior senate, participatory budgeting) and to establish the position of case manager, which allows links to social services. The topic was also solving problems related to energy poverty, supporting families and raising awareness of environmental issues. The project activities were based on the long-term experience of the local action group (LAG) and community planning of social services.

Case Study Subject

The project is focused on **strengthening community life and preventing social exclusion of people in the community**. The LAG territory is struggling with a higher incidence of vulnerable families and children, there is a high level of indebtedness, or a problem with the availability of housing and the availability of the region in general. The aim of the project is to stabilize families, improve the situation of the socially disadvantaged, activate the community and strengthen its self-sufficiency. Through the active involvement of the population, the availability of care was also to be improved.

LAG Pomalší and cooperation in the territory

The project is implemented **by LAG Pomalší** with its partner – ICOS o.p.s.. The partner provides key activity 4 (KA4) – Support for families at risk, in which it provides comprehensive forms of support such as education and consultation, family counselling, individual or couples therapies and mediation in the family. LAG also has a number of stable partners in the area, with whom it is in frequent contact. Thanks to them, it was also possible to set the parameters and topics of the project so that it meets the needs in the area and contains uncovered areas.



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Example of good practice – using methodologies and new solutions to activate the community

The added value of the project is mostly **the support of the community and local leaders** thanks to the fulfillment of the LEADER / CLLD principles. The LAG **relies on the methodologies and experience of other organizations and regions to implement its activities**. The ABCD (Asset Based Community Development) method, as well as the HCD (Human-Centered Design) method, are used. The LAG involves the target group of seniors in identifying needs, uses in-depth structured interviews with the target groups. The HCD method is about involving the community in the entire process of solving problems and achieving change – emphasis is placed on the needs, experience and knowledge of community members in order to achieve effective and sustainable solutions. It is up to the target group to implement the activities they are interested in. The Cochem practice, i.e. interdisciplinary solutions to family situations, is used to support families.



"We used the HCD method, most of which was done by the seniors themselves, including the distribution of questionnaires. The results were presented publicly, Prachatice was also invited, and on the basis of this activity, the Senior Senate in Kaplice was established as an advisory body to the city. We also use service designers to work with children in schools, such as participatory budgeting."

- Representative of the implementation team

The project works with several target groups, including **socially excluded people and people at risk of social exclusion, families in an unfavorable social situation, seniors and the public**. Looking at the problems of the target group, the disproportion between the south and the north is evident in the area. Especially in the southern part of the region, there is a risk of foreclosures, social exclusion or lower education. For smaller municipalities in the LAG area, the availability of services such as psychotherapeutic support or educational support is problematic. The absence of preventive mechanisms is a great threat to families. The specific benefits of the project for the target groups are summarized in the diagram below.

Thanks to the project, it was possible to contribute to improving the situation across the target groups. For **people at risk of social exclusion**, the creation of a safe space where they could establish contact with professional help was a significant benefit. **Families with children in an unfavorable social situation** were offered comprehensive support. For **seniors**, a specific shift is, for example, the establishment of the Senior Senate in Kaplice. This activity is an example of empowerment for this group and the creation of a settled community.

In the activity of preventing problems associated with energy poverty, education in the community about energy savings takes place through practical demonstrations, measurements, consulting and education.



Strengthening competencies, autonomy and active role of the community through the introduction of methodologies and activities



Better orientation on energy poverty and available assistance through preventive activities to tackle energy poverty.



Creating social ties and a sense of belonging to the territory through community and environmental activities.



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- ▶ Thanks to the LAG, **actors across sectors are interconnected and cooperate**. The LAG has partners in the area with whom it has been cooperating for a long time. At the same time, it has expertise and can provide information across municipalities. In the social area, community planning is implemented, which ensures experience with the target group.
- ▶ **Synergy effects** are emerging, such as **connecting energetic advisory with social work**. Proof of the involvement of an innovative approach is **the Cochem practice**, which aims to minimize conflict between parents in the event of separation or divorce and to protect the interests of the child. Thanks to the project, an innovative solution was implemented and the white spots in the field of child protection were covered. The implementation of projects gives the LAG space for **innovative solutions and interconnections** in various areas.
- ▶ LAG employees have **a very good knowledge of the local context** – the problems of the area are solved by people who live directly in it. This allows to address the situation in detail. Thanks to the links with local partners, the LAG manages to **identify needs from below from local actors**. An example is communication with the social department of one of the local municipalities, or communication with a union of municipalities. As a result, the LAG perceives the complexity of local problems, but also emerging issues, such as the increased number of arrivals from Ukraine. In response, the position of case manager was created and cooperation with the Centre for Support of the Integration of Foreigners for the South Bohemian Region is ongoing. The LAG also has **a community dimension**. Social and community meetings, pop-up events, or cooperation with schools, for example through participatory budgeting, where children try out how to change something and local leadership is supported take place in the area.

- An important part, not only of community activities in the area, are **local leaders**, who take charge of some of the topics and then transfer it to the entire area. Local leaders help to activate the territory, but also to solve local problems.
- The LAG praises the **setting of requirements and communication with the managing authority**, and overall the cooperation is evaluated beyond the standard. The challenge is also perceived positively, as it tries to cover all relevant topics and allows you to try out new activities and ideas.
- x On the contrary, the problem was to find and **provide suitable meeting spaces**, which is a recurring problem in rural areas and smaller towns.
- x In the future, it is necessary to support greater **reaching of the young generation**, because it is this important group that often leaves the territory.
- x Some of the project's requirements were mentioned as disruptive, especially the **condition of monitoring sheets and attendance lists** within community activities.