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INCREASING THE INVOLVEMENT OF YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN EUROPE

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GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

ADRIL - Association for Integrated Rural Development in the Lima Valley (Portugal)
ALP - Activating Local Potential (Slovenia)
ANIMAR - Association for Local Rural Development (Portugal)
ARVAL - The United Artisan Cooperative of the Lisma River Valley (Portugal)
BSC - Business Support Center (Slovenia)
CAP - Common Agricultural Policy
CCRA - Regional Co-ordination Centre for Alentejo (Portugal)
CSFs - Community Support Frameworks
EAGGF - European Agricultural Guarantee and Guidance Fund
EC - European Community
ECTs - European Countries of Transition
ERDF - European Regional Development Fund
ESDIME - Southwest Alentejo Local Development Agency (Portugal)
ESF - European Social Fund
EU - European Union
GDP - Gross Domestic Product
HDRC - Human Resource Development Center (Slovenia)
IRA - Irish Republican Army (Northern Ireland)
IRD - Integrated Resource Development
ILE - Local Employment Initiatives (Portugal)
LAGs - Local Action Groups
NEO - National Employment Office (Slovenia)
NGO - Non-Governmental Organization
NSBC - National Small Business Center (Slovenia)
NUTS - Nomenclature of Statistical Territorial Units
POR - Operational Programme for the Region of Alentejo (Portugal)
PTE - Portuguese escudo
RDP - Regional Development
RDIG - Rural Development Initiative Group (Slovenia)
RDTs - Rural Tourism Development Strategy (Slovenia)
RIME - Incentive Programme for Micro-enterprises (Portugal)
SIR - System of Regional Incentives (Portugal)
SOP - Student Operations Programme (Slovenia)
SMEs - Small and Medium Size Enterprises
SPDs - Single Programming Documents
TERN - Trans-European Rural Network
TIC - Tourism Information Center (Slovenia)
WTO - World Trade Organisation
PREFACE

Young men and women constitute one of the most important elements for facilitating the development of rural areas. Their potential should be supported to create vibrant and healthy rural societies and economies. Unfortunately, the population of rural areas in many European countries has been in decline, due in part to the outmigration of young men and women. The rural population is thus ageing, and the innovation and energy of rural youth as a strong viable human resource is lost, underutilized, or underacknowledged.

To promote and facilitate the adoption of appropriate and sustainable policies for sound rural development, governments need, inter alia, to identify and prepare local agencies to be the engine for the development of rural areas. Governments should support the appropriate social and economic motivation, legal and financial incentives, and an adequate institutional framework that would attract rural youth to farming and/or off-farm income generating activities.

In some market-oriented countries, mechanisms have been developed to encourage rural youth to remain, engage in productive activities and establish their families in the rural setting. Such positive experiences could be useful in the creation and realization of rural development policies and programmes in those countries where rural outmigration of young men and women has risen dramatically, particularly in the European countries in transition (ECTs).

In Commitment One of the World Food Summit Plan of Action, signatory governments committed to “enact legislation and establish institutional structures that provide opportunities for youth and enhance the special contribution that women can make”, in partnership with all actors of civil society.

The FAO Working Party on Women and the Family in Rural Development of the European Commission on Agriculture recommended at its Eighth Session in 1996, in Akureyri, Iceland, that a study be conducted on mechanisms for increasing the involvement of young people in rural development in European countries. This recommendation falls within the stated goals of both the World Food Summit and the Beijing Platform for Action. As a result, this study, supported by FAO’s Regional Office for Europe (REU) in collaboration with the Women in Development Service (SDWW), was organized to outline effective programmes and approaches that integrate young rural men and women into the policy and programme framework of their communities.

This publication, Increasing the Involvement of Young Men and Women in Rural Development In Europe, coordinated by the Institute for International Relations (IMO) in Zagreb, provides an analysis of the general situation in the EU and ECT countries, and the applicability of EU initiatives and experiences to the situation in ECT countries. Three case studies follow from Portugal, Slovenia and Northern Ireland (UK), which recount local initiatives in rural areas, launched in order to stimulate growth and put an end to the social and economic marginalization of rural youth.

The intent of this document is to encourage decision-makers at all levels in European countries to push the issue of the integration of young men and women in their respective communities to the forefront, thus tapping into rural youth as a dynamic and necessary human resource for rural development.

Manfred Lindau
Regional Representative for Europe
SUMMARY
by Mladen Staničić, Gordon Ramsay

In many rural communities in ECTs, young men and women feel they have no hope of finding employment. Opportunities for starting their own small business are scarce, and that option is seldom considered. As a result, they move to large overcrowded cities in a search of a better life. This outmigration deepens the economic crisis in rural communities, which in turn leads to a further exodus of young men and women. The principle goal of rural development policies in ECTs should be to break this vicious circle of decline caused by high unemployment and steady outmigration. These policies must not neglect the needs of young women because in many rural regions in ECTs unemployment and outmigration rates are rising faster for young women than for young men.

In some EU countries, rural communities are also struggling to survive, not only economically but culturally, as the outmigration of young men and women continues. In the EU countries, rural development strategies designed to reverse this trend have concentrated on establishing independent community-based agencies capable of organizing their own development initiatives and taking responsibility for their implementation.

This study examines the possibilities of implementing similar rural development strategies in ECTs. The first section of this document highlights gender related problems and policy issues affecting rural youth, identifies mechanisms for increasing the participation of young men and women in rural development activities, and assesses the applicability of EC initiatives to rural areas of ECTs. This is followed by case studies from Northern Ireland (UK), Portugal and Slovenia. The case studies offer a detailed description of the background and the activities of several rural community-based development agencies and examine their relationships with national and international agencies.

Although each of the local development agencies examined in the case studies seeks to address different specific needs within their community, all of them share the general objective of raising the awareness of both the community and young men and women about their importance to the community and encouraging them to participate actively in local development initiatives. In Northern Ireland, YouthAction, a volunteer organization, concentrates on the social integration of young men and women in an area torn by an armed civil conflict. In Portugal, the United Artisan Cooperative of the Lima River Valley (ARVAL) has revived traditional methods of linen production in order to improve the socio-economic status of young women. Another Portuguese agency, the Southwest Alentejo Local Development Agency (ESDIME) and two organizations in Slovenia, Activating Local Potential (ALP) and the Students Operational Programme (SOP), offer management and vocational training programmes for young men and women and promote the growth of SMEs by providing information on local development potential and technical and financial support to entrepreneurs. Each of these agencies advocates on behalf of small local businesses and other community groups in their relationships with international, national and regional development agencies. This mediation at the local level has enhanced the effectiveness of external financial aid by ensuring that it is directed to sound development initiatives.

There is ample opportunity for similar local development agencies to contribute to rural develop-
ment in the ECTs. This is especially true for farming communities that have suffered heavy job losses due to the collapse or severe downsizing of large state-run farms and cooperatives. For the foreseeable future, rural areas will continue to rely heavily on agriculture for income and employment. If these communities are to survive, small private farms will need to succeed economically. Local development agencies can play an important role in farming communities, especially those far from large cities, by creating a support network for private farmers and providing reliable information on commodity prices, marketing opportunities and the latest agricultural techniques. They can also contribute to making agriculture an attractive option to young men and women by providing them with farm management training. Furthermore, development agencies located within farming communities are sensitive to local environmental issues and growing conditions and as such, are well placed to promote sustainable agricultural practices.

However, to ensure economic stability, rural communities in EU countries and ECTs need to diversify their economies and become less dependent on agriculture. The local development agencies in Portugal and Slovenia realize this and recognize that tourism, because it makes use of locally available expertise and resources, offers excellent opportunities for creating alternative income generating activities in farming communities. ARVAL's commercial successes with hand-made linen products was partly a result of the local women's ability to tap into the growing tourist market for traditional handicrafts. In Slovenia, ALP and SOP help young men and women create jobs for themselves in tourism by providing them with vocational and management training, business information and technical support for their initiatives. Campaigns promoting local tourism not only create business and employment opportunities, by highlighting the natural beauty of the countryside and the value of local traditions, they also help instil a sense of community pride in local young men and women.

All of the development agencies examined in the case studies receive assistance from international development programmes. YouthAction in Northern Ireland and ARVAL and ESDIME in Portugal obtain financial and technical support from a variety of EU programmes. Although community groups in ECTs do not have access to the full range of European Commission (EC) development programmes, support is available through the EC's Phare and STRUDER programmes and from the World Bank. These former two programmes provided valuable assistance to the development initiatives carried out in Slovenia by ALP.

The case studies show, however, that community-based development organizations do not necessarily need international funding to be effective. It is cooperation with national government bodies that is fundamental to their operations. In Northern Ireland, YouthAction works closely with the Education and Agriculture Ministries. Before Portugal became a member of the EU, ESDIME received financial support from the Ministry of Professional Training and Development. Similarly, in Slovenia, ALP's success is due not just to international financial support, but to its collaboration with two national agencies, the National Employment Office (NEO) and the National Small Business Centre (NSBC). Furthermore, both Portuguese development agencies have partly reduced their dependence on external funding by generating their own revenue.

\[1\] In ECTs, farming is more important to the overall economy that in EU countries. In ECTs, agriculture accounts for 8 percent of the GDP, whereas in EU countries only 2.5 percent of the GDP is generated by agricultural production. Over 25 percent of the active labour force in ECTs work in the agricultural sector, compared to only 6 percent in the EU (Agenda 2000, European Commission, Brussels 1997).
In former communist countries, the highly centralized state-controlled economic system has left in its wake national governments that have little experience in working and consulting with other groups concerning development initiatives, and local administrations and community groups that have little experience in initiating and coordinating rural development activities. Therefore, a necessary first step in implementing a bottom up approach to rural development in ECTs is for national governments to abandon their top down management practices. They will need to implement programmes capable of nurturing grass-roots organizations from above so that these local groups later can become effective partners at managing development initiatives from below. This process will require that administrators at all levels, local, regional and national, receive professional training.

In ECTs, the priority of the central governments has not been local development initiatives in rural communities. This is not surprising given the size and complexity of the problems governments face in transforming a state-run economy into a free-market one. These reforms affect the country's entire economic performance as well as its general entrepreneurial climate and as a result, they also greatly influence the rural development initiatives undertaken by development agencies at the local level. The growth of private farms and other small agro-businesses will depend on the pace at which agricultural lands are privatized and on measures taken to resolve conflicts between landowners and landless farmers. Farmers who want to modernize their operations and rural entrepreneurs who want to start alternative business ventures must have easy access to credit. This will require deep changes in the way rural banking systems operate and the creation of national programmes offering financial incentives to SMEs. These broad structural reforms need to be completed before local development agencies can successfully provide young men and women in rural communities with an attractive alternative to a life in the city.
YOUTH AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN EUROPE  
- POLICY ISSUES AND RESPONSES  
IN THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY -

by Maria de Nazaré Oliveira Roca

INTRODUCTION

In Europe, rural society continues to play an important role. Europeans feel a strong connection to their rural heritage. In the last few decades, parallel to the process of European economic and political integration, traditional rural values, habits, arts and crafts have been revitalized out of a need to preserve and enhance both national cultural identity and regional specificity.

The natural receivers and transmitters of this heritage, the rural youth, have become an increasingly rare added value. In most rural regions, the number of young people has decreased as a consequence of negative trends in natural demographic growth, and of out-migration and/or emigration of both young men and women. The situation has been aggravated by a variety of causes related to social, economic, cultural, demographic and geographic/environmental conditions, both internal and external. This has contributed to increased disparities in the standards of living and economies of rural and urban areas.

Over the last decades, traditional European agricultural landscapes have been changing substantially or even disappearing due to processes such as counter-urbanization, establishment of secondary residences, diffusion of industry and services, commuting, telework and telecommuting, growth in capital intensive and labour extensive agriculture related to an increasing importance of agribusiness, increasing pluriactivity and income diversification among rural households, and the growing economic and social value of rural areas that can produce organic foods and/or provide peace and refuge.

Environmental degradation has also become a common feature of rural Europe because of the under-utilization or abandonment of cultivable land as well as excessive use of agricultural inputs such as fertilizers, pesticides and irrigation. Threats to biodiversity have become ever more evident.

Viable solutions to social, economic and environmental problems and sustainable development of rural Europe are increasingly jeopardized due to the decreasing presence of young women and men as the most productive, innovative and flexible members of society. The establishment and implementation of mechanisms to promote gender-equitable involvement of youth in rural development has become a priority of the Member States of the European Union (EU). Lessons learned from their experience at policy and practical levels could be useful for the European Countries in Transition (ECTs), where rural development has been particularly affected by a lack of productive involvement by young men and women.

This study has three main objectives:

- to highlight socio-economic and gender-related problems and policy issues regarding the status and role of rural youth in the EU;
- to identify existing mechanisms for increasing the involvement of youth in rural development; and
- to assess the potential transfer of positive experiences from market economy countries with important rural sectors to the ECTs.
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

Definitions

For the purpose of clarification, the following defines some key terms used throughout this study.

Rural Youth

Rural youth are considered all young people who live in a rural area. This includes not only young farmers (full-time and part-time) but all other young women and men who either make their livings from other rural activities, commute to work in urban areas, are unemployed or are students attending school in or outside rural areas.

Depending upon the statistics, the upper age limit for young people can extend from ages 24 to 35.² For this study, young people includes those from ages 15 to 24 who are eligible to receive financial support from the EU Structural Funds that promote mechanisms to prevent youth outmigration or attract young men and women to rural areas.³

Rural areas

There is no common definition of rural area among the EU Member States, which makes cross-country analyses difficult. Rural-urban boundaries are not always clear in contemporary Europe because of increasing pluriactivity in many rural areas, and because agriculture often is no longer the exclusive or even the main source of income for the population.

The pluriactivity of the rural population has been brought about by the growth of manufacturing industries and producer services away from urban areas, made possible by the introduction of new technologies that decrease the need for physical proximity in processes of product design, production, management, commercialization, etc. A diffusion of small enterprises in traditionally agricultural areas represents the highest degree of agricultural-industrial and rural-urban integration. Rural labour costs are lower and decrease when part-time activities are inter-linked in the labour market (Mingione and Pugliese, 1987:92).

Rurality

The rural-urban dichotomy is linked to the controversial concept of rurality. Even though village morphology has been preserved in various degrees, rural civilization has not because of the penetration of urban activities and lifestyles. The rural milieu is no longer a place where life is different, but a place where people choose to live a particular type of modern lifestyle. This is the so-called ‘neorurality’ (Eizner, 1996: 374).

The intensity and effects of economic and social transformations have been quite different in various parts of rural Europe. According to the EU study ‘Europe 2000+’, the five categories of rural areas include those: (1) located near strongly urbanized zones; (2) with highly intensive tourism areas; (3) with developed pluriactivity; (4) predominantly agricultural including (4a) highly productive, modern agriculture and (4b) low productive, traditional agriculture; and (5) with reduced

² The limit of age 24 is often used in demographic, education and labour-related statistics, but it extends to age 29 in sociological and economic studies. The ages of 30 or even 35 also can be included, because of increasing economic dependency of the young on their parents due to long-term youth unemployment and a growing need to extend education and professional training as the demand for unskilled or low-skilled labour decreases and the need for highly skilled labour grows.

³ Structural Funds, the European Social Fund (ESF), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Agricultural Guarantee and Guidance Fund (EAGGF) promote economic and social cohesion among countries/regions of the EU. For the ESF, the age of eligibility is 15 to 24 years and includes both rural and urban youth. For the EAGGF, the age of eligibility is 15 to 35 or 40 years, depending on the country, and includes only farmers.
accessibility and high level of population ageing. (Comissão Europeia, 1995:119-121).

The notion of rurality is hardly applicable in its traditional sense, even in categories (4) and (5) because of modernization of agriculture, improvements in communications, penetration of mass media and lowering or disappearance of rural activities and culture because of population ageing.

**Rural development**
Rural development is a process of structural changes in the increasingly complex economic, social, cultural, technological and environmental spheres of the rural milieu, which aims at improving standards of living and quality of life in an equitable, sustainable and efficient way. In order to achieve such an objective, it is crucial that all social groups in rural areas, including the young and old, women and men, be involved and participate actively. Rational use and management of endogenous natural resources, economic capacities and human capital needs to be ensured. Rural development policies should valorize and make efficient use of specific endogenous and potentially competitive advantages, diversify employment options and enhance entrepreneurial and other innovative activities in all spheres of life. The conceptualization, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development instruments/mechanisms should include policy decision-making at macro, intermediate and local levels.

**Gender asymmetries**
Gender asymmetries means inequities and/or imbalances between women and men in age composition, social status, educational levels, employment and other economic opportunities, and participation in decision-making. Such asymmetries have traditionally been mostly at the expense of women. Even when the rural world is undergoing socio-economic transformations, the gaps between female and male members of society tend to be the last ones narrowed or eliminated.

**Methodology**
This analysis was limited to countries with regions and rural areas (i) with a considerable agricultural sector and (ii) eligible to benefit from the EU Structural Funds under the EU Objectives Numbers 1 and 5b.4 This includes Finland, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, France, Italy and Greece, most of which suffer from development constraints and have strong dependency on the measures and programmes of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and EU Structural Funds. This selection was determined by the fact that the ECTs - some of which are already candidates for EU membership - will become beneficiaries of the EU Structural Funds aimed at the EU Objectives Number 1 and Number 5b. The per caput GDP in these countries is considerably lower than the upper limit of eligibility for Structural Funds and in all except Slovenia, the employment rate in agriculture is higher than 10 percent. Furthermore, there are similarities in the socio-economic and gender-related conditions between the EU regions presented in this study and the rural regions in the ECTs.

Since most national rural development policies in the presented countries and regions are linked closely to the existing EU policies for agricultural, social and regional development, as well as to the use of the corresponding EU Structural Funds, the basic source of information in Section 2 (Policy Framework for Agricultural and Rural Development) is a selection of EU documents. In the analyses in Section 3 (Socio-Economic and Gender-Related Conditions of Rural Youth),

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4 EC Objective Number 1 is to provide assistance for structural adjustment to developmentally lagging regions, mostly with GDP lower than 75 percent of the EU average. EU Objective Number 5b is to diversify areas characterized by low population density, high agricultural employment, low agricultural income levels, depopulation trends, sensibility to the evolution of the agricultural sector, and a highly peripheral position in relation to major urban centres.
the basic territorial unit is the Nomenclature of Statistical Territorial Units (NUTS) II. The EU statistical data suitable for cross-country and cross-regional demographic and socio-economic analyses are available only at the level of the NUTS II. For the purpose of this study, a selection of both rural and predominantly rural NUTS II was made, based on combinations of the following criteria:

- at least ten percent of the region’s active population is employed in agriculture;
- the region is included under EU Objective Number 1; and/or
- the region has rural zones included under EU Objective Number 5b characterized by (i) population density of less than 100 per km² and (ii) a per caput GDP equal to or less than 90 percent of the EU average.

In Section 4 (Mechanisms for Increasing the Involvement of Young Women and Men in Rural Development), the description and analysis of the mechanisms for increasing the involvement of the young in rural development are based on documents of the EU Commission’s Structural Funds which are the most important source of cofinancing such mechanisms.

**POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

Agricultural and rural development in countries/regions selected for this study depend heavily on EU funding that is based on EU sectorial or transsectorial policies devoted to agriculture and social and economic cohesion among countries and regions. Such strong linkages between national and supra-national development policies call for constant and increasing adoption, adjustment and modification of policy goals and measures at all levels. The signing of the Treaty on European Union (Maastricht, February 1992) added a final touch to the strengths of EU linkages, especially for the countries/regions eligible for the application of the EU's structural and Cohesion Funds.

The following section reviews the changes, implementations and linkages of EC policies and national policies dealing with agriculture and rural development, with reference to rural youth when applicable.

**The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)**

The initial objectives of the CAP, established by the 1957 Treaty of Rome, were to increase productivity, raise the standards of living of farmers, stabilize prices, and guarantee supplies and reasonable prices to consumers (Descheemaeker, 1992). The price guarantee was the main instrument adopted to achieve these objectives.

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5 NUTS I are territorial divisions that correspond to planning areas such as the German Länder or British Standard Regions. NUTS II are the key reference for political administration and territorial planning and management. They correspond, in most cases, to specific regions into which the countries are divided. NUTS III are for analysing specific questions, such as employment pockets in crisis, declining industrial zones, etc. (Labasse, 1994). The list of the selection of NUTS II in Finland, Ireland (the whole country is a NUT II), Portugal, Spain, France, Italy and Greece, grouped by EC regions, is in the Annex.

6 Analysis is based on data from EUROSTAT, the central statistical service of the EU.

7 The European Union Treaty set up a Cohesion Fund to finance construction of major transport networks and environmental protection projects in the four least developed Member States (Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain) and to aid in efforts to fulfill the criteria of convergence toward European monetary union, related to price stability, public finances, exchange rates and interest rates. The fulfillment of such criteria implies application of restrictive monetary and fiscal measures that directly affect public investments.
By the mid-1980s, it was evident that the major result, as well as the major problem, of the CAP was surplus production, and that it had to be subjected to a substantial reform. In 1985, the European Commission established a series of regulatory mechanisms intended to enhance the effectiveness of the CAP prior to its reform in 1992 (Descheemaekere, 1992; Illery, 1994).

However, the initial effects of these mechanisms were not satisfactory. They were based less on reduction of guaranteed prices for subsidized products and more on the reduction of production itself through cessation of agricultural activity or re-conversion of surplus.

The impact of these measures was varied. The peripheral agricultural regions of the EU suffered the most negative consequences, such as the abandonment of farmland and consequent environmental degradation, decreased value of the rural landscape and out-migration. Out-migration, especially of the young, was induced partly by the extensification of agricultural activities and, hence, diminishing job opportunities.

The CAP Reform was introduced in 1992 with the following objectives:

- maintain the EU position as a major agricultural producer and exporter by promoting its farmers’ competitiveness at home and in external markets;
- adjust the level of production to market demand;
- channel support to farmers’ income where it is most needed;
- encourage farmers to remain attached to the land in order to retain rural population; and
- enhance ecological balance by encouraging environmentally sound activities, conservation of traditional rural landscapes and by cofinancing non-agricultural use of farmland (tourism, recreation, hunting, etc.).

Various measures have been introduced to achieve the above objectives as well as to reinforce the mechanisms linking subsidies to farmland and the quality of the produce rather than the size of the yield. The measures imposed by the present CAP Reform have resulted in the diversification of rural activities which have become a major orientation in rural development policy. By promoting an extensive use of farm lands and competitiveness in agriculture, the CAP Reform has contributed to lower employment in the sector.

The effects have differed in various regions of the EU. Rural areas in the developed EU regions with small employment in agriculture due to intensive modernization have been less affected by such policies than rural areas that still have important agricultural sectors. The implementation of measures in favour of settlement agriculture are intended for the latter areas, though, paradoxically, these areas suffer most from population ageing and exodus of youth.

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8 The EU is responsible for one-fifth of the world’s total exchange of goods. Since the 1994 Uruguay Round of the GATT, there has been a liberalization of customs tariffs on goods and services. Today the World Trade Organization (WTO) regulates agreements and to a great extent sets the terms of the CAP and, thus, indirectly sets the agricultural policies of the Member States.

9 The final two objectives are the basis of so-called ‘settlement agriculture’.
A forthcoming CAP Reform, proposed in Agenda 2000 of the European Commission, should further the deregulation and competition in agriculture that were initiated in the 1992 CAP Reform. There is a persistent agricultural dualism in the EU. Intensive and market-oriented production in more developed and most favoured areas is in sharp contrast with marginalized, locally oriented production in less developed areas with low employment opportunities (Ilbery, 1994: 290-291). The establishment of the European Single Market in 1993, which removed barriers to the circulation of capital and goods among EU Member states, has meant considerable disadvantages to countries/regions with high production costs and market prices. The quality requirements for agricultural products, a condition for their entrance into the external market, have contributed to further increases in production costs. The European Single Market has raised inequalities among rural areas within the EU, especially between less developed and more developed countries and regions. This agricultural dualism has been reinforced by the globalization of the economy because only the already competitive areas can meet new, globally imposed challenges efficiently.¹⁰

**National Agricultural Policies¹¹**

Member states maintain the autonomy of their national agricultural policies through differential use of EU financial support, complimentary national versus EC measures, and implementation of active policies in specific spheres, such as those related to social and fiscal benefits for farmers. In addition, Member States devise their own policy strategies for the application of the EU policy measures that are particularly favourable to national interests.

The scope and financial strength of national agricultural policies vary greatly among countries. For example, France’s budget covers all areas of national agricultural policy, including modernization and renewal of the production system, and offers higher financial assistance to young farmers than to other farmers. In contrast, the Italian agricultural policy is determined regionally and has been marked by weakness in implementation and by a lack of transparency. The restricted role of Italy’s central government probably limits the capacity to implement a more coherent policy, including ensuring greater benefits from the EU funding to farmers. Such a situation has been compensated to some extent by direct aid to market-oriented agriculture, in particular through direct payments for products. In Spain, agricultural policy promotes modernization of the sector and provides financial aid to investments. Since joining the EU, the budget for the agricultural sector has been restructured.

**EU Rural Development Strategy**

The EU Rural Development Strategy (launched in the 1980s) aims at providing promotion and support to non-agricultural activities, such as creation of small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs), and developing and/or strengthening local craftsmanship, traditional agricultural products and fisheries, and rural tourism. Its priorities are to:

- revitalize the CAP, through attempting to make agricultural production meet demand, as well as by funding the modernization of farms and assisting young farmers in starting their own businesses;

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¹⁰ Adjustments induced by globalization have meant reductions in employment because of technological improvements in agriculture, forestry and fishery industries, and consequently contributed to rural out-migration. Meanwhile, new enterprises and residents have been attracted to some rural areas thanks to competitive and comparative advantages (OECD, 1996).

¹¹ The discussion in this section is inspired mainly by the article *Entre les constraintes des marchés et les hétérogénéités structurales des agricultures nationales* (Perraud and Bonnet, 1996).
encourage non-agricultural rural activities, particularly through employment creation, financial
support to new enterprises, elaboration of environmental protection projects and developing
tourism;

improve infrastructure; and

finance educational and training programmes for employment in crafts and SMEs. (Comissão
Européia, 1992)

The instruments established to support these priorities include the Structural Fund, the Cohesion
Fund, and the EU LEADER (Links among Rural Development Actions) Programme which was set
up to promote local development in rural areas of regions covered under Objectives Number 1 and
Number 5b.  

EU Regional Development Policy

Some EU policies intended to promote regional development explicitly address rural areas, specific-
ally the valorization of their economic potentials and the elimination or narrowing of develop-
mental gaps among them, mainly through use of the ERDF.

For rural areas included under the EU Objective 1, the main measures are diversification and reori-
tentation of agricultural production, promotion of quality local products, village rehabilitation, con-
servation of rural heritage, tourism investments, irrigation, financial engineering for manufacturing
and commercialization, etc. The same rural areas also benefit indirectly from the ERDF through
direct investments in production, basic infrastructure and environmental protection, as well as
through support to services for SMEs, research and technology development, social infrastructure
and services (health and education) and professional training.

Support provided through the ERDF to rural areas included under the EU Objective Number 5b
mostly relates to the creation of SMEs, development of the craft and tourism industries, environ-
mental protection, establishment of infrastructure in favour of new employment opportunities
(including use of new communications technology), programmes for the sensibilization of develop-
ment agents and assistance in the design of projects for spatial and/or sectorial development.

Regional Development Policies of Member States

Since the 1980s, the objectives of regional development policies have undergone radical changes in
most of the Member States – from including income and employment redistribution to incentives
for structural change aimed at diversification and increasing the potential for economic growth
(Lorenzi, 1996).

The central countries have reduced financial aid to regional development policies in the context of
budgetary restrictions. The peripheral countries of the south, as well as Ireland, have maintained
or even increased their regional development expenditures. This has been supported by the EU
Structural Funds (especially in relation to Objective Number 1) and by liberalization of conditions
for increasing competitiveness. However, as stressed earlier, convergence criteria will continue to
restrict public investments in regional development, including those intended for rural areas.
(Comissão Européia, 1994a).

12 LEADER is discussed further in Section 4: Mechanisms for Involvement of Young Women and Men in Rural
Development.
EU Social Policy

EU social policy is covered by the European Charter of Fundamental Social Rights of the Workers and the European Social Fund (ESF). The ESF, established in 1960, is the main instrument, covering the entire EU with the following objectives:

- combat long-term unemployment and encourage the professional insertion of youth (EU Objective Number 3); and
- help workers adapt to industrial transformation and the evolution of production systems through preventive measures (EU Objective Number 4), in less developed regions (EU Objective Number 1), in regions affected by industrial decline (EU Objective Number 2) and in fragile rural areas (EU Objective Number 5b).

Activities funded by the ESF are normally coordinated with interventions financed by the ERDF. A good example of such coordination in rural areas is the Portuguese programme Local Employment Initiatives which works for the establishment, implementation and consolidation of small productive initiatives based on endogenous resources, as well as for meeting local needs by increasing employment opportunities for young people in search of a first job, and for the unemployed youth. The ESF’s Support for Crafts Programme in rural Portugal is intended to encourage professional training and creation of job opportunities and to encourage the transfer of knowledge between artisan masters and their young apprentices.

A number of EU initiatives, including YOUTHSTART (see Section 4: Mechanisms for Increasing the Involvement of Young Women and Men in Rural Development) are also financed, entirely or partially, by the ESF.

Converging toward Monetary Union

Rural areas with insufficient or inadequate social infrastructure and services have been adversely affected by the application of governmental measures meant to fulfil the criteria for a single currency for the EU. These measures have more to do with economic efficiency than with socio-economic equity. “A country involved in a monetary union cannot pursue a policy designed to reduce employment when its partners are involved in pursuing policies designed primarily to reduce the level of inflation. If the country wants to pursue its preferred policy stance, it must first of all win the political battle over the objectives of economic policy” (Lintner, 1994:15).

Although all EU Member States included in this study (except Greece) have fulfilled the convergence criteria, income and employment disparities among regions in these countries actually increased from 1983 to 1995 (Comissão Europeia, 1997).

In the above context, the less developed Member States will continue to depend heavily on the EU’s Structural and Cohesion Funds, as well as on private investments and initiatives promoting development, in order to meet population needs, particularly in rural areas.

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\[13\] This section relies on analyses presented in the EU publication *Europa Social* (Comissão Europeia, 1991)
SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND GENDER-RELATED CONDITIONS OF RURAL YOUTH

The exodus and unemployment of youth are often called the most striking features of contemporary rural Europe. There is a volume of literature with cross-country and cross-regional analyses of rural development issues in Europe, but an overwhelming lack of concrete, empirical information on rural youth, or on specific socio-economic and gender-related issues. Even in official EU publications, few studies or reports focus on socio-economic issues related to rural youth and even fewer touch upon gender-related dimensions.

In view of the above limitations, this section largely addresses demographic, cultural, social and economic characteristics of the entire population, while rural youth (female and/or male) is explicitly addressed to a lesser extent, depending on the available data. Also, geographical and environmental conditions are reviewed, as well as the organizational/institutional aspects of rural development, particularly (when data exists) those that directly affect young women and men. As mentioned in Section 1 (Conceptual Framework and Methodology), a selection of NUTS II was made to present the situation in rural areas, since there is not enough data for cross-country analyses.

Geographical and Environmental Aspects

All selected NUTS II are located in the following EU Regions where there are considerable geographical constraints: the Atlantic Arc, the Western and Central Mediterranean, the Continental Diagonal, the Alpine and Perialpine Arc, and the Nordic Regions (Comissão Europeia, 1995: 171). Each of these areas faces considerable geographical constraints (mountainous, interior or peripheral), which are in part responsible for low population densities, the predominance of traditional agricultural systems, weak transportation and communication networks, and overall isolation.

The natural environment is also adverse. The soils are poor and fragile due to unfavourable climatic conditions (especially irregular rainfall in the Mediterranean region and the Continental Diagonal) and to specific relief and rock formations. This allows only poor agriculture and contributes to soil erosion which is often quite severe due to past over-exploitation or present day abandonment.15

Forests that cover vast zones of these rural areas have suffered from fires and inappropriate selection for afforestation (e.g. pine trees in Northern Portugal and eucalyptus trees in Portugal and southern Spain which are both exogenous species that spread rapidly and prevent other trees from growing).

Scarcity and irregularity of water resources and inadequate water management have been serious problems in the Mediterranean region and the Continental Diagonal, constraining market-oriented agriculture which requires irrigation schemes.

On the other hand, these isolated conditions have helped preserve the natural and cultural landscapes, which are still undervalued but certainly constitute enormous potential for tourism and leisure activities. However, low population densities and depopulation (particularly the exodus of young people) create difficulties in using these potentials.

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14 This section relies on statistical data from “Regions 1996” (EUROSTAT) and on information contained in the EU series “Regional Development Studies”.

15 The rural areas of Finland suffer from soil and landscape degradation mainly caused by livestock.
Low accessibility in terms of transportation and communication is another common characteristic of all selected NUTS II, particularly in the rural areas. The most adequate solution to this basic problem seems to be the improvement of links with those local urban centres that are best served in terms of national and international road and railway networks. This could, in turn, enhance diversification of economic activities. However, if there are no dynamic small or medium-sized cities, the probability of further migration from the region, especially of young women and men, will remain great.

**Demographic Features**

In most of the selected NUTS II, population density is between 50 and 100 per km². In one-third of the regions (mainly the Spanish and Portuguese interior and Finnish regions) densities are very low (fewer than 50 per km²). Regions with population density considerably above the EU average (116 per km²), are those where urban centres are located, such as Napoli in Campania, Bari in Puglia, Palermo in Sicilia, all in Italy, and Porto in northern Portugal. Lowest densities are typically related to adverse natural and environmental conditions and to low accessibility.

Rural areas generally have stagnant population growth. Some rural areas, such as the Interior and the Açores and Madeira in Portugal, and northwest and central Spain, are experiencing demographic decline.

During the last ten years, these regions experienced a decrease in inter-regional out-migration and an increase in intra-regional migration from rural areas to small and medium urban centres. There also has been an exodus of young people from rural areas and the counter-flow of an older, retired population, especially in the interior regions of Spain and France and the Atlantic Arc Region.

Out-migration of youth is much more intense in more distant and/or isolated rural areas still heavily dependent on agriculture than in rural areas close to urban centres. In the case of relative proximity of urban centres, out-migration has been replaced (at least partially) with commuting (e.g. northern Portugal and rural Austria), or there has been diversification of income combining part-time farming with employment in industry or services.

However, evidence shows the propensity of the young to migrate from rural areas is tending to decrease because of the urban employment crisis, and because some young women and men today seem to prefer to count on their parents’ support and search for employment opportunities locally. It is likely this will further increase unemployment of rural young people in the near future.

In all regions, there are more young men than young women. Such differences are probably even more accentuated in rural areas, since it has been evidenced that young women, particularly those with higher education, are more likely to out-migrate than men. This has occurred in southern Europe and Ireland (Braithwaite, 1994:14).

It is also worth noting that rural regions of southern Spain and southern Italy have experienced significant immigration from North Africa, consisting mostly of young men who are seasonal agriculture workers.

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16 Data analysed in this sub-section are presented in Table 1 in the Annex.
Socio-Economic Sphere

Employment

All rural areas in the selected regions have experienced a decrease in employment in the agricultural sector throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Nevertheless, according to 1993 data, most still depend heavily on agriculture. In fact, the agriculture sector exceeds 20 percent in regions such as Centro and Açores in Portugal, Galicia in Spain and all Greek regions.

The ageing of the farm population in almost all areas is illustrated by the fact that the percentage of farmers under age 35 who manage a farm-holding is less than 10 percent and continues to decrease. The farms managed by young farmers are significantly larger than those run by older farmers (Comissão Europeia, 1996:3).

The participation of young women in the rural (agricultural and non-agricultural) labour force is less than that of young men, mainly because of lack of opportunities for rural young women and cultural constraints. It may also be the case that women’s farm work is not being adequately recorded in the statistics (Braithwaite, 1994).

The selected regions are also characterized by pluriactivity, a major feature in the European agricultural sector today. Young farmers tend to opt for part-time farming when they replace their parents, particularly in the peripheral regions (Comissão Europeia, 1996:4). The non-agricultural sources of income for farm households range from traditional rural manufacturing industries and services to new dynamic activities such as agrotourism and producer services. In all regions of Portugal, in central and southern Spain, northern and central Greece, and in Ireland, the share of part-time farmers is between 30 and 50 percent, while in inland France, north and northcentral Spain, southern Italy and southern Greece, their share remains between 10 and 30 percent (Comissão Europeia, 1995: 115).

Parallel to decreasing agricultural employment, there has been an increase in self-employment and the creation of new jobs in the SMEs. The share of SMEs in total industrial employment is particularly high in the Spanish Galicia (94.3 percent), the Portuguese Centro (90.3 percent), the Austrian Burgenland (95.1 percent), the Finnish Ita-Soumi (91.4 percent) and the French Limousin (84 percent).18

In the period 1988-1992, employment in most of the regions increased in the industrial SMEs (i.e. those with ten to 99 employees). Furthermore, the SMEs have registered higher employment growth than the larger enterprises in all regions, except in some Greek regions and the French Poitou-Charantes and Corsica. At the same time, micro-enterprises have had even better performance regarding employment than the SMEs in all regions, except in Galicia and Murcia (Spain) and the inland French regions.

However, the growing importance of SMEs as generators of employment does not compensate for the high unemployment among the young in the selected regions, especially in those covered under EU Objective Number 1. This is because there is a crisis in the traditional manufacturing industry diffused in rural areas and largely linked to agriculture and/or cheap labour, as well as a decline in

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17 Data analysed in this sub-section are presented in Table 2 in the Annex.

18 ENSR, 1995:130
traditional activities, such as retail commerce and educational and health services.
There is evidence that unemployment rates for young women have been higher than for young men.
This partly explains why young women leave rural areas more than men (Braithwaite, 1994).

**Agricultural structures**

The share of agriculture in the GDP and in the value-added in all of the studied regions is decreasing.

However, in almost all rural areas, there has been an increase in the average size and a decrease in
the number of farm holdings due to abandonment of agriculture and/or land consolidation. These
processes have been more intense in northern than southern regions, mostly because of the differences
in traditional inheritance and property rights that have led to a higher degree of fragmentation
in the south. Land consolidation is a consequence of agricultural modernization and specialization.
Small and medium farm holdings are frequently bought by large (often foreign) firms. The
same occurs with small and medium food processing enterprises that cannot fulfil the EU norms
and which tend to become absorbed by large distribution chains.

Land concentration in the Mediterranean regions and inland Spain has been an obstacle to the cre-
ation of new enterprises, largely due to the small middle class. Nevertheless, in some of these areas,
especially in the coastal regions, considerable technical improvements were undertaken in produc-
tion (e.g. irrigation), commercialization and marketing, especially in industrial agriculture and horti-
culture.

There also has been a general increase in the ha/employed ratio as a result of extensification, which
explains, in part, the increase in unemployment.

Although some improvements took place in all studied regions, their agricultural productivity and
efficiency are generally low.

To counter these trends requires a high degree of professional training in the use of new agro-pro-
duction and management techniques. However, the ageing farm population and a decreasing young
population make such requirements difficult to meet, although EC cofinanced training programmes
are normally available in a considerable number of rural areas.

**Financial and Legal Issues when Starting New Agricultural SMEs**

Financing is the major problem young farmers face.

Limited financial resources, high land costs and high taxes often prevent young farmers from pur-
chasing land. Even inherited farms can present obstacles, e.g. unless all heirs decide to continue with
the agricultural activity, they must divide the land which can lead to discord, or the person who
continues the agricultural activities must use revenue to pay off other heirs rather than re-investing
in the enterprise itself.

Furthermore, production licences for certain farming activities now have market value. This aggra-
vates the financial situation of young farmers who must buy not only the land and means of pro-
duction, but also the licence to produce. Similarly, a young farmer often must restore the produc-
tion potential that diminished during the previous generation’s activity.

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19 This sub-section is based on an EC Commission Report on young farmers and problems of reactivating European agri-
culture (Comissão Europeia, 1996)
Young farmers quite frequently face difficulties in obtaining credit. Banks grant loans more easily to already established farming businesses than to unproved projects. The result is selective crediting.

When the younger generation takes over the activities, but the parents remain on the farm, the transition is difficult. This actually means that the agricultural enterprise must yield sufficiently high revenue to support two family households during a considerably long period of time (ten to 15 years). Also, in a majority of small farm enterprises, this period of transition is characterised by a strong economic dependency of the young and by a small division of responsibilities. It also can be difficult to assure adequate housing for two families, due to economic or other difficulties because of the legal constraints to new housing construction.

**Socio-Cultural Sphere**

**Education and Professional/Vocational Training**

In most of the selected regions, the percentage of youth enrolled in secondary or college education is below national averages, particularly in inland and southern Spain and southern Italy. In rural areas of these regions, the educational level of the young is probably even lower than at the regional levels (NUTS II), since many young men and women move to the local and regional urban centres for secondary schooling, or leave their regions to attend colleges.

Young rural women have lower educational levels than young urban women and, in some cases, than young rural men. Such evidence is strongest for Spain, Ireland and France. In Greece, the educational levels of young women is much lower than in other rural areas of Europe because many parents feel that their daughters should only marry and have children (Braithwaite, 1994:28-29).

However, the desire to continue education is generally stronger for young rural women than young rural men, often because sons are often the heirs of parental farm holdings, thus education, when available and affordable, is the only way young rural women can improve their social status.

Professional training for rural economic activities, cofinanced by the EU Structural Funds, has been increasing since the mid-1980s. Most of these courses are organized for young people who are searching for a first job or are already unemployed. A major problem facing such initiatives is the lack of qualified trainers, particularly when the courses are in traditional rural arts and crafts. There is also a problem attracting participants who must travel long distances to the classes and often lack transportation. Young women and men who complete the courses often are not given the necessary financial or organizational support to start their own business so they leave for more prosperous rural areas or even for cities, in search of more satisfactory employment.

Fewer young rural women participate in professional training courses than young rural men, mainly because of family burdens and/or household responsibilities. Their participation is frequently in short-term courses or in courses at inferior levels that cover traditionally female activities. It is important to note, however, that the enrolment of young women in training courses has been increasing, even in traditionally male domains such as farming technology and management (Braithwaite, 1994).

Although women represent about 35 percent of the active labour force, only 10 percent of agri-

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20 Data analysed in this sub-section are presented in Table 3 in the Annex.
cultural entrepreneurs are women. However, according to the EC, an increased role for women in management of farm enterprises is unavoidable because of women’s capacity and competence in efficient management.

Many imaginative ideas regarding diversification of entrepreneurial activities in rural areas have come from women because women are often in a position to generate supplementary, and sometimes indispensable, income to the family household through off-farm employment, usually part-time which is a new work concept in rural areas. (Comissão Europeia, 1996:4-5)

Quality of Life
The quality of housing in all selected regions is below national averages. In the Portuguese NUTS II, for instance, from 18 to 25 percent of the houses are not equipped with modern bathrooms (e.g. bathtub, shower). In Italy and France, the proportion is even higher (21 to 39 percent). Furthermore, the share of houses constructed before 1950 is higher in all selected regions than the averages of their respective countries.

However, in rural areas which experienced strong immigration, especially from the 1960s through the mid-1970s, construction of new houses for immigrants became a flourishing local business. Unfortunately, in many cases instead of traditional housing construction, the styles and building materials popular in the immigrants’ homelands were used in the new housing construction causing a significant loss of authenticity and diminishing the value of cultural landscapes of those rural areas. Today, there are signs of a return to tradition, and old houses are being restored in many areas which opens new opportunities for involving young men and women in rural tourism and the complementary cultural and environmental activities.

The degeneration of housing standards is most apparent in regions with ageing populations. Houses are frequently abandoned even in villages or small towns with historic and architectural value. In more dynamic rural areas, where there is diversification of economic activities mainly related to tourism, restoration and reconstruction works offers new job opportunities to the rural youth. On the other side, in rural areas that attract tourists or people seeking a country house, the housing rents and real estate prices have been inflated to such an extent that they contribute to out-migration of young people who cannot afford them (Fielding, 1994).

The decline in the number of education and health care facilities, as well as in the quality of their services, has been one of the most serious rural problems. In areas dealing with out-migration and ageing of the remaining population, the small local population cannot support or provide sufficient health care, educational facilities or services. This only reinforces the vicious circle linking the exodus of young women and men with the overwhelming lack of local amenities and opportunities. For instance, if the young aspire to higher education, they must commute or move away. Also, young couples who have difficulty finding health and child care facilities in rural areas often decide to migrate to local or regional urban centres and either commute to their rural jobs or find new work in the city (Bryden, 1992).

Young rural women tend to be more deprived of educational and social services than young men (Braithwaite, 1994).

Due to rural exodus and/or negative natural increase, there is a growing concentration of utilities and services, such as shopping centres in bigger villages, small towns or at highway junctions. Consequently, and parallel to insufficient public transport services and infrastructures, there is a
growing dependency on private transportation to meet consumption needs. The young, as well as the old, are usually the most affected among social groups because the majority cannot afford to buy or maintain a private automobile (Knox, 1984). Consequently, they depend on retail and personal services available in rural areas, although the prices there tend to be higher.

Lacking and low quality of transport networks are also major obstacles to young farmers' decisions to assume management of their family enterprise or to start a new business on their own.

**Socio-Cultural Change**

Rural lifestyle is affected by the radical changes caused by the economic and cultural globalization that results, in part, from the development of communication and information technologies. Even remote and lagging rural areas with problems of physical accessibility now can be linked to the world through satellite TV and telephone, and the Internet.

There are positive effects of such changes. For example, because of the generally higher quality of their natural and social environment, rural areas have increasingly become attractive to those engaged in telework, firms that provide services for businesses in the manufacturing sector and environmentally friendly high tech industrial plants. However, because most newcomers choose to move to rural areas where there are already physical infrastructure and social facilities, this new trend could actually result in a further increase in the economic disparity between rural and urban regions.

Technological progress in communications, especially in mass media, also contributes to the homogenization of consumers' habits, values and attitudes which diminishes cultural distance between rural and urban people. This normally means transfers of urbanities to the rural world which contributes to the disruption of traditional rural mores.

The intense transformation of rural lifestyles affects mainly rural young people. For instance, in the mind of a young person, the perception (increasingly virtual) of the world brought by TV is confounded with his/her views about the immediate world. Normally the expectations in terms of jobs, earnings, leisure, etc. cannot be fulfilled by opportunities available in the immediate rural area. Thus, young women and men dream of leaving the countryside even though they are aware that high expectations are increasingly hard to meet in urban areas, especially big cities. This perceived inability to satisfy individual and group aspirations is related to increasingly problematic social behaviour among young rural men and women, such as violence, drugs, alcohol abuse and even criminal behaviour. This is also connected to a high degree of uncertainty/insecurity that generally governs all spheres of the contemporary world.

There are also other social problems specific to rural areas that directly affect the youth, e.g. risk of losing cultural identity as traditional lifestyles disappear or feeling unable to participate in public life or decision-making processes related to their lives (Comissão Europeia, 1996). Such problems are more frequent among young rural women than men and have to do with certain cultural traditions (Braithwaite, 1994: 32-33).

At the same time, there is a search for local/regional cultural identity in an increasing number of western European rural areas, and there is an intense desire to revive traditions such as folk music, poetry, storytelling and festivities as well as traditional recipes, clothing construction and design, etc. Young women and men are increasingly engaged in such activities through active participation in various clubs and associations. This also reflects economic interests related to the growing demand for tourism and leisure.
Organizational Sphere
Institutions and Decision-Making
According to an 1995 EU study on youth policies, two models of youth services have been adopted by national authorities of the Member States. In the first model, youth-related activities are considered a function of the civil society, particularly youth associations and private institutions, and the only role of the state is to define a legal support framework in terms of funding and social infrastructure. In the second model, the state and public administration have a strategic role, planning and coordinating youth-related policies, designing programmes to encourage youth initiatives in the economic and cultural spheres, and supporting mechanisms enabling the young to participate in economic, political and social life. Among the countries studied here, only Ireland adopted the first model. All other countries implement the second model, using the principle of subsidiarity.21

Over the last ten years, factors common to all areas of Europe have led toward a convergence of these two models, in terms of objectives and working methods. These factors include:

- unemployment and inadequate education and training among the youth, often resulting in their marginalization and exclusion;
- the changing labour market which requires that workers be provided with specific technical skills; and
- increasing poverty among youth, especially among those from the lagging rural areas.

The regional and local levels are the best environments for establishing and implementing coherent, efficient, transparent and lasting youth policies. Supporting non-governmental youth organizations and cooperatives also can contribute to the success of efforts to involve young women and men in local and regional development.

In terms of decision-making, most of the studied regions either have a certain amount of power on their own (e.g. Italy and Spain), or have only limited power (France), or have no power whatsoever (in Ireland, Portugal and Greece). Application of the principle of subsidiarity to the institutional aspects of rural youth assistance requires greater empowerment of regional and local authorities. This can ensure their greater efficiency and competitiveness in making use of future investments, especially those based on the EU Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund.

At present, however, most important decisions are made by central governments and, since the regions do not participate in defining objectives, the true interests of the people in the regions are hardly taken into account. This is especially true in rural regions where political and administrative structures are less developed than in urban settings and local authorities have limited power to implement decisions of the central government. Effectiveness of activities at the regional level are often inadequate due to insufficient opportunities for a democratic decision-making process (Wiehler and Stumm, 1995: 97-98; 103).

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21 According to the Treaty of Maastricht, subsidiarity means that a higher authority may not and must not act, if an objective can be achieved satisfactorily at a lower level.
Perspectives for Rural Development

Without interventions, the current socio-economic processes in rural areas probably would lead to further decline of agriculture, stagnation of industrial activities, insufficient service increases, low value-added employment opportunities, etc., parallel to a further concentration of industries and services in urban centres and growing problems of access for rural people in dispersed villages and small towns in the countryside.

Most rural areas selected for this study will continue to depend heavily on agriculture, although the growth of agricultural production is not an EU policy priority and the agricultural economy will become more limited by global and EU trade measures, and by environmental protection laws.

It is, therefore, imperative to build a strategy of rural development where economic diversity, social equity and decentralization of decision-making are the key factors in making efficient and sustainable use of comparative advantages and local dynamism. Such a strategy should be supported by necessary infrastructures and facilities and by development of small and medium-size urban centres in the rural areas (Bryden, 1992: 9-10).

The most promising use of comparative advantages of rural areas includes the following agricultural and non-agricultural activities:

- specialization of agricultural products with local/region-specific qualities,
- industrial activities based on endogenous resources and modern technologies,
- tourism and leisure,
- retirement residences, and
- residences for the active population within commuting distance from large urban centres.

In order to ensure success, preliminary activities that will enhance industrial projects in the areas (e.g. labour force recruitment, quality of life, integration of local development programmes) and local initiatives (e.g. monitoring, marketing, management consulting) should be supported. The establishment of productive activities also can create employment in a variety of related areas such as cultural and leisure activities, and services to improve the quality of life and environment (Comissão Europeia, 1995).

The most disadvantaged rural areas, such as those eligible for EU Structural Funds, do not have sufficient comparative advantages. However, maintaining rural population and agricultural activities in these areas is increasingly considered indispensable for a number of important reasons, such as preservation of the environment and biological diversity, and prevention of desertification. Policies should be designed to encourage involvement in environmentally friendly and supportive activities such as organic farming, management of forests and protected areas, and waste processing.

Many activities that make good use of the comparative advantages suggested above are more suitable for the young, since they are the most prone to innovations, open-mindedness and risk-taking. Rural women, both young and old, have qualities and advantages that can be developed, e.g. domestic management skills could be applied to rural tourism, cooking skills could form a basis for
the development of small-scale food and beverage production, experience in working with children and the old could be useful in the establishment of local social care services (Braithwaite, 1994:34-35).

MECHANISMS FOR INCREASING THE INVOLVEMENT OF YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Across the EU, particularly in the less developed countries or regions, few mechanisms are devoted to the involvement of rural youth in development. This is a paradox in view of the fact that youth unemployment is a major social and economic problem leading to rural exodus and/or marginalization in all rural areas of the Member States. However, there is a set of mechanisms that promotes the role of young women and men indirectly, that is, without specifically addressing this segment of the society.

Most national mechanisms favouring rural development in the studied countries have been designed, established and implemented in coordination with EU structures, since almost all national/regional development programmes are cofinanced by the EU Structural Funds or the Cohesion Fund. The involvement of the young can be encouraged through direct measures (e.g. incentives to start business, vocational and professional training) or through indirect measures (e.g. those that lead to the creation of new employment, training, community action opportunities).

The following mechanisms have been established to enable the active participation of young women and men in rural development for their own benefit and that of their community.

Direct Youth Policy Mechanisms

EU Objective Number 3

The European Social Fund gives financial support to mechanisms that help young women and men to find their first stable job after completing secondary or college education, as highlighted below.

- Vocational training – for young people who are school drop-outs without basic skills and capacities – providing skills, adapted to their own capacities as well as to market needs, including both practical experience and theoretical training, and offering job search orientation.

- Basic training – for gaining professional experience in enterprises or appropriate centres.

- Training programmes – for introducing use of new technologies and acquisition of new skills required by employers.

- Financial aid to hire employees – for re-established, more stable jobs, as well as for self-employment initiatives.

Such ESF-related actions cover the entire EU, but priority is given to regions under the EU Objectives Number 1, Number 2 and Number 5b, with special efforts to meet the current and prospective needs of their labour markets.

22 This does not advocate that women be confined to traditional female chores, but suggests that undervalued domestic activities could become a means for young women's social and economic empowerment.
EU Objective Number 5a
Within the EU Objective Number 5a (structural adaptations in the agricultural and fisheries sectors, in line with the reform of the CAP), the EAGGF finances the following mechanisms for the establishment or improvement of farm holdings run by young farmers.

- Aid to the establishment of, and investments in, farm holdings of young farmers by providing them with necessary financial resources to meet business start-up costs, specifically acquiring real estate and capital goods, and covering risks associated with new responsibilities. The age limit is 35/40 years (depending on the criteria in individual countries). This kind of assistance is also extended also to part-time farmers engaged in forestry, tourism or craftsmanship. Member States can apply these mechanisms totally or only partially and can complement them with national resources. The amount and type of such assistance differ considerably among countries.

- Professional training of young farmers, as a pre-condition for the above-mentioned aid, is directed to young farmers without required professional skills (i.e., secondary school, or college degree in agronomy), and provides financial support to organize or participate in at least 150 hours of skill training courses. A considerable part of the funds is used for courses in environmental protection, management of forests and reorientation of agro-production.

YOUTHSTART Programme: Insertion of Unskilled Young Persons in the Labour Market
This programme was established in 1994 as part of the EU initiative ‘Employment and Valorization of Human Resources’. It has five major areas of interest.

- Actions by public and private sectors that complement other ESF supported actions, as well as those under the Leonardo Programme (which offers initial vocation training to the young people who have completed basic schooling). This includes defining objectives and norms in subjects such as orientation, training and learning, evaluation, introducing innovative methods for the social and economic integration of youth and the transfer of good practices, and strengthening relations among education, professional training and the labour market.

- Actions based on experience with pilot-activities or with EU programmes (such as Leonardo) including training and employment programmes for the young that valorize entrepreneurial spirit, training of trainers in employment centres, acquiring experience in areas such as arts, architecture, environment, urban rehabilitation, social work and application of innovative models for local development.

- Aid in creating employment opportunities, especially through inter-country exchange networks, including trade organizations and associations of young entrepreneurs, cooperation among local development agencies and local employment initiatives aimed at social and economic integration of young women and men.

- Support of regional and local information services.

- Promotion of the YOUTHSTART programme itself among the young.
**Indirect youth policy mechanisms**

**CAP Reform Supporting Measures**

- Aid to farming operations that encourages early retirement for farmers (54 and older), permits the hiring of younger replacement workers and restructuring and improvements in the economic viability of the remaining farm units. This can indirectly provide better conditions for the establishment of young farmers and contribute to the development of their farm holdings. This is optional for Member States.

- Support of environmentally friendly production methods that preserve the environment or promote afforestation. Such measures are attractive to young farmers who are more ready and willing to adapt new ideas in the agricultural sector such as organic farming.

**Mechanisms Envisaged under the EU Objective Number 1: Development and Structural Adjustment of Disadvantaged Regions**

Objective Number 1 stresses improvement in several areas related to development.

- Production: direct investment to create lasting jobs.

- Infrastructure: for economic development and environmental protection.

- Services: based on making the best use of local and regional potentials.

- Research and development (R&D).

- Investment in infrastructure for education and health.

- Vocational training in teaching, research and administration.

- Employment assistance in employment.

- Rural development measures such as adaptation of agricultural structures, encouragement of tourism, preservation of heritage and quality standards.

All these measures can provide support to young rural women and men either as direct beneficiaries, or indirectly though improvements in rural areas, especially through measures that promote living and working in the countryside.

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In Beira Interior, Portugal, a programme to rehabilitate historic villages has been implemented to develop rural tourism and retain the resident population.

In the Peloponnisos region of Greece, the construction of a highway and the rehabilitation of cultural heritage are the basis for a tourism development programme.

In Alentejo, a Portuguese region heavily dependent on agriculture, a project on technological improvements in the extraction and treatment of ornamental stones was set up to help curtail the exodus of the young population.
Mechanisms Envisaged under the EU Objective Number 5b: Development and Structural Adjustment of Rural Areas

EU Objective Number 5b measures are intended to promote alternative activities in rural areas.

- Investments in infrastructure that enable the creation of jobs outside agriculture such as small firms, tourism or environmental protection.
- Services for small firms.
- Research and development.
- Training in land management and agricultural work.

Support is provided to active participation of all development agents at the EC, national and local level, and includes young women and men.

EU Innovative Measures

ERDF Supported Programmes

The following types of pilot-projects within the programmes financed by the ERDF are the most attractive and beneficial to young rural women and men.

Cooperation for integrating the concept of information society

- Objectives: introduce the concept of information society in the regions included in EU Objective Number 1 with priority given to employment policies.
- Spheres of action: strategy and action plans to develop an information society in the lagging regions through partnerships of public and private local development agents; and pilot-projects to illustrate good information society practices for regional development, including applications related to creating employment and appropriate training activities for the disfavoured regions.
- Beneficiaries: regional authorities, public or private entities.

Cooperation for technological innovation and transfer

- Objectives: improve incentives for innovation and promote technological R&D in the lagging regions.
- Spheres of action: innovative strategies developed through partnerships among regional agents to promote cooperation among enterprises, technological R&D institutions and public institutions that are aimed at evaluating business needs and providing SMEs with innovative approaches to management, organization, training and technological development; pilot-projects on technology transfers, demonstrations of technological innovations and appropriate practices for regional development, especially those that enhance the diffusion of technology and valorize the research done by businesses that have had a positive effect on the economy of depressed rural regions.

Source: Comissão Europeia (1995b)
Beneficiaries: regional authorities, public or private entities.

Cooperation based on new employment opportunities

- Objectives: to promote regional and local strategies for new employment opportunities and verify possibilities to create proximity employment through pilot projects.

- Spheres of action: priority areas for creating proximity employment such as social care, rehabilitation and modernization of housing, public transportation, retail convenience shops in rural areas, environment-related activities such as recycling, protection of natural zones and pollution prevention through (i) local and higher-level strategies for removal of development obstacles to proximity activities (monitoring and marketing of commercialized products; training courses), (ii) structuring of the supply side needed to start new businesses, and (iii) pilot projects to support creation or diversification of enterprises through facilitation, mediation, consulting and financial engineering.

Beneficiaries: partnerships among local and regional authorities, development agencies, associations, foundations and private enterprises in zones with at least 200,000 inhabitants.

Pilot-projects of territorial planning

- Objectives: to reinforce economic and social cohesion and to promote sustainable development across the EU that is balanced and meets the needs of regions and their populations; to provide relevant authorities and local communities with tools supporting more effective decision-making; to encourage such authorities to take into account interdependencies involved in territorial planning and, thus, to face particular problems through close cooperation among directly affected states or communities; and to develop a global perspective of the EU territory and non-EU countries.

- Spheres of action: specific zones such as coastal, mountainous or rural zones, river and lake basins.

Beneficiaries: partnerships between local and regional authorities of Member States.

EAGGF Supported Programmes

EAGGF finances the implementation of pilot projects for adapting agricultural and forestry structures and demonstrative projects, including development and valorisation of forests and the transformation and commercialization of agricultural products. The main purpose is to illustrate the possibilities of new systems and techniques and, above all, to disseminate knowledge and experiences (Comissão Europeia, 1996: 9).

EU Innovative Measures and the Rural Youth

Although empirical records of direct participation of the youth in pilot projects are not yet available, there is reason to believe that young rural women and men can benefit from the above-mentioned innovative measures through:

- direct employment creation and/or training courses, particularly in communication and information technology and R&D, since the young are the most receptive to innovation;

- new employment opportunities in non-productive support activities such as child care, environmental protection, activities valorising young rural women’s skills, etc.
improvements in infrastructure and social services in rural areas attractive to high tech firms
because of environmental quality and of human resources.

EU initiatives

Links among Rural Development Actions Programme (LEADER)

Created in 1991, LEADER promotes a bottom up approach to development. It is the only EU ini-
tiative based on local development strategies based on rural communities’ proposals for solving
their own development problems. Its main objective is to elaborate and implement innovative
actions addressing problems in rural areas through the valorization of their endogenous human,
economic, cultural and natural resources.

At the local level, the programme is executed and managed by local action groups (LAGs) estab-
lished by public and private partners to create and implement a common strategy and innovative
measures for the development of rural areas. Other public or private local agents can also benefit
from LEADER by implementing more focused activities within the local development strategy
defined by the LAGs.

Territories eligible for financial support through LEADER are those included under EU Objectives
Number 1 and Number 5a, which are relatively small and have strong socio-cultural, economic and
/or environmental identities, such as micro-regions, valleys and small settlements.

In the first phase (1991-1994), most of the 217 territories benefiting from LEADER were located
in southern Europe, had low population densities and difficult geographical conditions.
In its current phase (1994-1999), now called LEADER II, it finances technical assistance (prior to
investments) for diagnostic studies, social research and designing development strategies, and
implements programmes with replicable/transferable innovations. The financial support is given to:

- technical assistance for rural development;
- execution and management of local development projects;
- professional training (facilitators, local population, insertion of people in precarious working
  and living conditions);
- development of rural tourism contributing to the economic diversification of the rural world;
- establishment of small scale enterprises (access to high level services, assistance in launching
  proximity services, telework);
- valorization and commercialization of local agricultural, forest and fishery products (innovative
  investments);
- preservation and improvement of the environment and of living conditions (village rehabilita-
  tion, cultural creativity and diffusion, protection and valorization of natural resources and land-
  scapes, waste elimination and recycling).

LEADER II also supports establishment of a European network to facilitate the interchange and
transfer of experiences and know-how. All projects must involve partners from at least two
Member States which supports inter-country cooperation.
These measures affect young women and men directly through employment creation and professional training, as well as indirectly through improvements in basic infrastructures and environmental protection. It was recorded that young women and men participated actively during the preparation and monitoring of the first phase of the LEADER operational programmes.

In Amvrakikos, Greece, territorial planning actions aimed at protecting the environment of this exceptional biotope and at enhancing the local economy in order to develop eco-tourism.

In Ireland, a marketing plan was designed by a rural tourism cooperative to promote the country's stagnant sector in the European market.

In Serra do Caldeirão, Portugal, child care services were established which opened employment opportunities, particularly for young women.

In Teverina, Italy, a visitor accommodation system was established through rehabilitation of buildings located in rural areas or historic centres suitable for the development of tourism.

In Ireland, a LAG gave support to the creation of a Centre of Technological Information and Training, based on the concept of telecottages (community teleservice centres) in an effort to overcome problems related to the peripheral situation, and to promote tourism.

In Massif Central, France, pedestrian circuits and mountain tourism were developed by a local sports and cultural association.

In Cantabria, Spain, a LAG established an itinerary network that enables visitors to learn about the area's culture, history, economy and environment.

In Ireland, technical assistance was provided to a group of farmers that established a nursery for the production of decorative plants. More than 2 ha were cultivated and, for the first time in the country's history, flowers were exported to Holland.

In Orense and Sierra de Gata, Spain, LAGs established plant nurseries aimed at producing species appropriate for reforestation.
Programme NOW
NOW provides equal employment opportunities for women through professional and vocational training, better access to adequate employment and to leadership at work.

The following measures supported by NOW are aimed at young rural women:

- personalized and flexible training, particularly for employment in SMEs;
- training for enterprise management;
- cooperation and networking among local employment initiatives for women; and
- creation of self-employment, SMEs and cooperatives plus related financing tools.

In the regions included under the EU Objective Number 1, support is also provided for: creating linkages among training establishments, universities and enterprises; innovative teaching materials; social support infrastructures; and sensibilization on the need for equal opportunities for women.

Programme SME
The objective of this EU initiative is to help small and medium industrial or service enterprises, particularly in the regions included under EU Objective Number 1, adapt to the EU single market and to ensure their competitiveness at the international level. This initiative can contribute directly to the expansion of self-employment and the creation of new job opportunities among young women and men in rural areas, because they are the most likely group to take risks. The following measures are eligible for financial support:

- improvement of organization and production systems;
- environmental protection and rationalization of energy consumption;
- efforts to enhance cooperation among research centres, technology transfer centres, universities, training centres and SMEs in R&D activities;
- access to new markets within and external to the EC;
- development of cooperation and networking among SMEs, large enterprises, sub-contractors and clients;
- reinforcement of professional skills in the SMEs; and
- better access of the SMEs to credit.

Programme RETEX
RETEX promotes the economic diversification of areas heavily dependent on the textile and clothing industry. Declining industrial zones are eligible under EU Objective Number 2, and rural areas are eligible under EU Objectives Number 1 and Number 5b. Young women and men in rural areas can benefit directly and indirectly from the following measures that promote technological transformations to generate employment for the highly skilled young cadres, such as fashion design and information technology:
consulting and equipment to improve know-how;

- support of local enterprise associations;

- networking market information aimed at developing know-how;

- rapid diffusion of new production and organization methods and establishing links between research and enterprises and between suppliers and clients, etc.;

- temporary support for the remuneration of highly skilled personnel contracted as part of modernization plans conceived with the help of external expertise; and

- training of the employed in enterprise or producer services.

Programme INTERREG
INTERREG, started in 1990, promotes and/or develops the integration of neighbouring areas (regions, counties, etc.) across international borders of the EU. The following measures, directly or indirectly related to rural areas, are eligible for financing:

- development and support of SMEs, specifically through the creation of transborder economic networks;

- agrotourism;

- local water, gas, electricity and telecommunications services, development of renewable energy sources, pollution prevention and control, rational use of energy, waste removal;

- rural development;

- improvement of agricultural productivity and support of transborder trade;

- improvement of basic infrastructure networks;

- educational and cultural cooperation, including universities; and

- support to employment and professional training, especially for unemployed women.

Cohesion Fund Measures
The EU Cohesion Fund measures support environmental protection projects and the Transeuropean Transport Network, which ultimately can contribute to an overall improvement of living conditions in the rural areas covered by EU Objective Number 1 (Ireland, Portugal, Spain and Greece are the only countries eligible for support from this fund).
**EU Structural Funds Mechanisms and Regional Development**

Between 1986 and 1991, a slight increase in the per caput GDP (from 61 percent of the EU average in 1986 to 64 percent in 1991) was registered in the group of regions under the EU Objective Number 1. However, the economic performance of individual NUTS II was quite diverse in the 1980s and this entire group of lagging regions became more heterogeneous.

Some regions registered increases in productivity related to falling employment and rapidly rising unemployment. Unemployment has risen in regions under the EU Objective Number 1 as a whole, particularly from the mid-1980s, in southern Italy and Ireland. It seems that increased investment injections from economically stronger regions of the same Member State or from EU Structural Funds have not been sufficient to promote sustainable development, especially in rural areas.

Furthermore, in regions under the EU Objective Number 5b as a whole, there was a stagnation in the per caput GDP and a slight decrease in the rates of unemployment (below the EU average) from mid-1980s to the beginning of the 1990s.

The LEADER programme had considerable success in its first phase (1991-1994), creating a favourable environment for a variety of initiatives in the rural milieu, especially those promoted by the young. In regions under the EU Objective Number 1, more than one-third of the LEADER projects were directed to the creation and improvement of rural tourism, 16 percent to the valorization of agricultural products, 15 percent to training and assistance to development actions and 12 percent to the creation and development of small scale enterprises. In rural areas of regions under the EU Objective Number 5b, the distribution of LEADER projects was a more balanced 25 percent for tourism, 23 percent for training and assistance to development, 19 percent for agriculture and 21 percent for small-scale enterprises.

However, some difficulties were encountered in the implementation of LEADER. The dimensions of the targeted areas were not optimal – either too large for efficient management or too restricted in terms of their human resources potential. Also, the territories with LEADER projects rarely matched the administrative divisions. Some belonged to more than one administrative unit, which often caused difficulties in reaching the desired outcomes.

Of the 217 established LAGs, only 18 included training programmes specifically for women as part of the development strategies. This means that most LAGs generally had neither identified nor met the gender-specific needs of rural population (Braithwaite, 1994: 56). Such findings have been reconfirmed by an analysis of development strategy documents of 16 LAGs in Ireland, which revealed a low level of sensibilization to gender-related problems and to women’s needs and capacities. The gender issue also was not given due attention when the first phase of the LEADER programme was designed and evaluated at higher levels.

**CONCLUDING REMARKS AND SUGGESTIONS**

In many rural areas of the EU countries and regions, important experiences have been gained in implementing mechanisms for increasing the involvement of young women and men in rural development. Conceptual, methodological and/or practical aspects of this experience could be applied in the ECTs.

In assessing the potential to transfer these experiences with EU mechanisms that promote the social and economic integration of rural youth, the following characteristics inherent to the process of
change in the ECTs have to be kept in mind.

- In most ECTs, the process of (re)privatization of the agricultural sector is being completed (FAO, 1996). However, the structure of farm holdings varies among and within these countries. The same holds for the whole morphology and social structure of the rural areas, partly due to the decades of centrally-planned economy but also from earlier times.

- The characteristics of today’s rural youth in the ECTs are varied quantitatively and in terms of their socio-economic structure. The process of rural exodus, population ageing and related depopulation is very intensive in some countries (e.g. Croatia). In others, the young still comprise an important segment of rural population. At the same time, unemployment and marginalization among the youth are at critically high levels (e.g. Poland, Romania).

- An increasing social cleavage between landowners and landless rural people has been recorded as a common tendency in the ECTs. Young women and men have been in a particularly negative situation. There has been conflict between the landowners (largely urbanites and retired people) whose priority is to maximize real estate rent and the landless rural population wishing to maintain existing or ensure new employment in the agricultural sector (Sivignon, 1996).

- An urgent need has been recorded to reduce the agricultural labour force in the ECTs as a precondition to approach levels of labour productivity comparable to those in the EU (FAO, 1996). In addition to the modernization of agriculture, this requires introduction or intensification of non-agricultural activities in rural areas that will create new employment opportunities, particularly for the youth. Such activities should be environmentally sound. Rational use should be made of the considerably undervalued potential of the natural and cultural landscape and resources in these countries.

- In many cases, rural youth do not have access to, or lack the possibility for, vocational training which would prepare them for agribusiness or new non-agricultural employment opportunities that could appear in parallel with structural changes in rural areas (FAO, 1996).

- On the other hand, necessary changes in the rural sector of the economy are sometimes difficult to implement because of the lack of modern physical and social infrastructures. Existing infrastructure even tends to deteriorate in the process of transition towards market economy (European Commission, 1996).

- A major negative consequence of the Communist era for today’s rural youth in all ECTs, except Poland and countries of former Yugoslavia, has been that collectivization of agriculture actually meant the loss of a bond to the land for large segments of the rural population. This now makes the viability of family farming as small-scale enterprises very difficult. Many old people, but also the young, are not prepared to accept economic risks and actually prefer to remain employees in large state or already privatized enterprises (Maurel, 1996).

- Another problem is the lack of confidence in cooperatives or associations, which are still considered symbols of forced collectivization, low productivity, etc. (Maurel, 1996).

- The prospects for admission to the EU have been a differentiation factor among the ECTs. Most of the ECTs have applied for admission, but only five candidates have been accepted so far. When the candidates become Member States, they will be able to make use of the measures
available through the Structural Funds, especially those envisaged under the EU Objectives Number 1, Number 5a and Number 5b. In the transitional period, prior to their full EU membership, these countries have been granted financial support to prepare for admission. On the other hand, the remaining ECTs also need to prepare for future admission to the EU by implementing measures that will enable approximation of their economy and society to those of the Member States.

In view of the above, the following four groups of mechanisms presently available in the EU Member States can be considered suitable for implementation in the ECTs, as part of their efforts to increase the involvement of young women and men in rural development.

Mechanisms related to financial and technical support of the process of modernization of agriculture, with the aim of making it more competitive and encouraging young women and men to take over small and medium-scale farming enterprises:

- CAP Reform measures, especially the ones envisaged under the EU Objective Number 5a, financed by EAGGF;
- measures envisaged under the EU Objective Number 1, directed to support the adaptation of agricultural structures and products with the designation of quality; and
- measures within LEADER, related to the valorization and commercialization of local agriculture and forestry products (p. 23).

Mechanisms designed to prevent or to combat rural youth unemployment, particularly through vocational/professional training programmes on the use of new technologies and acquisition of new skills, such as:

- measures conceived under the EU Objective Number 3, financed by the ESF, which provide young women and men with high skills, adapted to their own capacities and to the needs of the market;
- measures conceived under the EU Objective Number 1, supporting vocational training, most needed in the lagging regions;
- EU innovative measures, supported by ERDF such as cooperation aimed at integrating the concept of information society, cooperation directed toward technological innovation and transfer, and cooperation based on new employment opportunities;
- EU measures supported by the guidance sector of the EAGGF; and
- the EU initiatives, such as Programme YOUTHSTART, Programme NOW, Programme SME, Programme RETEX and Programme LEADER.

Mechanisms for encouraging diversification of rural activities, particularly those that could offer new job opportunities to the young who have the propensity to accept new techniques and technologies as well as to engage in environmentally sound activities such as:
measures envisaged under the EU Objective Number 1 and LEADER, particularly those intended to provide physical and social infrastructure required for economic development and environmental protection;

measures envisaged under the EU Objective Number 1 and LEADER, comprising technical assistance to services for SMEs based on making the best use of local and regional potentials; and

measures envisaged under the EU Objectives Number 1 and Number 5b and LEADER, primarily intended to promote alternative activities in rural areas, including investments and training in R&D.

Mechanisms could also be introduced to encourage creation of new forms of cooperatives and associations that favour local and regional development, based on the experiences gained with EU initiative LEADER, where the basic model for associations are local agents and other development stakeholders (LAGs). This type of collective endeavour focused on development interventions should be given particular attention and support in the ECTs because their creation embodies the decentralized, bottom-up, participatory and democratic approach to development, which is the opposite of the formerly centralized, top-down orientation of state-controlled agricultural cooperatives and associations.
REFERENCES

Official Publications of the European Communities. Luxembourg.


## ANNEX

### Selected EC Regions and NUTS II

#### Atlantic Arc
- Ireland
- Poitou - Charntes (France)
- Norte (Portugal)
- Centro (Portugal)
- Alentejo (Portugal)
- Algarve (Portugal)
- Açores (Portugal)
- Madeira (Portugal)
- Galicia (Spain)
- Asturias (Spain)
- Cantabria (Spain)

#### Western Mediterranean (Latin Arc)
- Andalucia (Spain)
- Murcia (Spain)
- Corse (France)
- Sardegna (Italy)

#### Continental Diagonal
- Aragón (Spain)
- Castilla y León (Spain)
- Castilla - La Mancha (Spain)
- Extremadura (Spain)
- Limousin (France)
- Auvergne (France)

#### Central Mediterranean
- Molise (Italy)
- Campania (Italy)
- Sicilia (Italy)
- Basilicata (Italy)
- Calabria (Italy)

#### Central Mediterranean
- Basilicata (Italy)
- Campania (Italy)
- Sicilia (Italy)
- Basilicata (Italy)
- Calabria (Italy)
- Basilicata (Italy)
- Campania (Italy)

#### Central Mediterranean
- Kentriki Makedonia (Greece)
- Dytiki Makedonia (Greece)
- Thessalia (Greece)
- Ipeiros (Greece)
- Ionia Nisia (Greece)
- Dytiki Ellada (Greece)
- Sterea Ellada (Greece)
- Peloponnisos (Greece)
- Voreio Aigaio (Greece)

#### Alpine and Perialpine
- Burgenland (Austria)
- Steimark (Austria)

#### Nordic Region
- Ita - Soumi (Finland)
- Vali - Suomi (Finland)

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N.B.: All NUTS II are eligible under the EC Objective N°1, except Aragon, Poitou-Charantes, Limousin, Auvergene, Steiemark, Ita-Soumi, and Vali – Suomi.
Table 1. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Selected Regions of the EC

<table>
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<tr>
<th>NUTS II</th>
<th>Population density (in 000/km²)</th>
<th>Population increase (% annually)</th>
<th>Migration balance (%)</th>
<th>% males aged 15-24 in total male population 1.1.1993</th>
<th>% females aged 15-24 in total female population 1.1.1993</th>
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Table 2. Socio-Economic Characteristics of Selected Regions of the EC

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<th>% farms on 20 ha</th>
<th>% farmers aged 35 years</th>
<th>% employed in agriculture</th>
<th>% employed in industry</th>
<th>% employed in services 15-24</th>
<th>% employed males 15-24</th>
<th>% employed females 15-24</th>
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Source: Eurostat (1996); Eurostat (1997)
* For Greece 1995
Table 3. Socio-Cultural Characteristics of Selected Regions of the EC

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<th>COUNTRY/REGION</th>
<th>Medical doctors per 1000 population</th>
<th>% aged 15-24 enrolled in secondary or higher education</th>
<th>% homes equipped before 1994/95</th>
<th>% homes per 1000 population</th>
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Source: Eurostat (1996)

* 1989-90
Case Studies
POSITIVE EXPERIENCES IN INCREASING
THE INVOLVEMENT OF YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN
IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN PORTUGAL

by Zoran Roca

INTRODUCTION

Rural areas in Portugal are facing problems similar to those in other peripheral, less developed European countries. Small-scale agriculture is declining leaving cultivable land underutilized or abandoned, the exodus of young men and women is depleting the human resource base, there is a lack of investment in economic and social services, and in infrastructure and business ventures. Cultural identity is fading.

During the past ten years, considerable efforts have been made to reverse these trends. National economic and social development strategies in Portugal, especially regional development interventions, have given due priority to depressed rural areas. Also, a significant portion of the financial aid from the European Union (EU) has been directed to these areas.

Initially, emphasis was placed on infrastructure development and economic diversification. Now the development of human resources has become the highest priority. This is intended to encourage young men and women to remain in rural areas and to participate in the development process. However, the problems in rural areas of Portugal have deep-rooted structural and cultural causes, and are likely to remain for the foreseeable future.

Nevertheless, in rural areas where programmes and projects aimed at the social and economic integration of youth have been launched, some signs of positive change have been noted. Local development agencies recently formed in many parts of Portugal have played a major role in these activities. Some of these agencies already have achieved significant results and have demonstrated that the prospects for the socio-economic revival of rural areas depends largely on locally created and implemented initiatives and interventions directed to young men and women and to the community as a whole.

This study is intended to illustrate how the goal of reviving the economy and restoring social cohesion in depressed rural areas may be achieved through local development initiatives. Two agencies are highlighted, the Southwest Alentejo Local Development Agency (ESDIME) and United Artisans Co-operative of the Lima River Valley (ARVAL). These agencies operate in rural areas that are environmentally, culturally and socio-economically different from one another, but both show how opportunities for integrating young people in rural development planning can be increased through local organizations. Highlighting their common features and the conditions that led to their establishment, development and operation might inspire similar initiatives in depressed rural areas of other regions or countries.

Both desk and field research were used in the study’s preparation. The desk research reviewed the experiences of local development agencies in rural areas of Portugal, based on written reports, consultations with governmental and non-governmental sources and with the agencies themselves. It also included an examination of the books, articles, press releases and other material published by
local development agencies, as well as their internal documents (planning documents, project documentation, reports, evaluations, etc.).

The field research, carried out in the summer of 1997, involved visits to the headquarters of the two selected agencies and to the areas in which they operate. The research included: semi-structured interviews with management and staff; group discussions with the staff; meetings with the local population; observations of on-going activities and available facilities; and examinations of the agency documentation.

SELECTED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES
WITH POSITIVE EXPERIENCES IN INCREASING THE INVOLVEMENT
OF YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

ARVAL - United Artisans Co-operative
of the Lima River Valley
Renewing artisan production of linen

ESDIME - Agency for Local Development
in South-western Alentejo
Empowering the young
ESDIME: EMPOWERING THE YOUNG

Objectives and Strategies

Founded in 1989, ESDIME was one of the first organizations in rural Portugal devoted to local development. It works in the southwest region of the province of Alentejo, situated between the Tejo River and the province of Algarve in southern Portugal. The region is characterized by vast plains with thin, poor soil and suffers from severe periodic droughts. Alentejo has been viewed as the least developed rural region, not only in Portugal but in the entire European Union. Its current problems include desertification (both natural and induced), low productivity in the agricultural sector which is dominated by very large landholdings (latifundias), rural out-migration, a population whose average age is increasing, an underqualified workforce and an overwhelming lack of entrepreneurial initiatives.

EDISME’s principle objectives are to stimulate and support integrated and participatory economic, social and cultural development, and to provide consulting services and technical assistance to small businesses in southwest Alentejo.

To achieve these objectives, ESDIME has adopted an approach that makes the most of the region’s strengths (accessibility, unique landscape with characteristic cork oak trees and rich cultural heritage) while addressing the region’s weaknesses (limited human resource base, low entrepreneurial spirit, negative demographic trends and a fragile productive sector). The strengths offer a basis for expanding the local economy, promoting local products and making the area more attractive to outsiders.

In order to address the weaknesses, ESDIME has concentrated on increasing the number of qualified men and women capable of revitalizing the region’s social and economic life in a diversified, innovative and sustainable manner and attracting professionals and entrepreneurs to settle and invest in this region.

Background

Messejana, in the municipality of Aljustrel in the district of Beja, is a typical small town in southwest Alentejo. In the late 1980s, Messejana had a population of 1500 and 50 percent unemployment. The closing of a local carpentry firm that had more than 100 employees made the situation worse. There were few opportunities for self-sustaining economic activities. In 1989, a human resource development project was launched in Messejana by the Portuguese Federation of Service Producers Cooperatives which was a member of the Portuguese and the European Cooperative Movement.

The project, called ‘An Experimental Project for the Development of Micro-Regions in the Interior of Portugal’, was set up to initiate change by training men and women and encouraging them to develop and manage their own entrepreneurial activities. It also created a locally based association.

1 ESDIME, C.R.L.: Agência para o Desenvolvimento Local no Alentejo Sudoeste (Southwest Alentejo Local Development Agency). Address: Rua do Engenho 10, 7600 Messejana Portugal. Phone (351) 84-65118; fax (351) 84-65274; email < ew.esdime@ip.pt >.

2 After the 1974 ‘Revolution of Carnations’ when Portugal’s dictatorship was overthrown, the government enacted legislation providing financial and technical support for the establishment of cooperatives, non-governmental organizations, professional associations and community groups. Some of these new organizations have played a leading role in Portugal’s socio-economic development. EU Structural Funds, such as the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund, have contributed greatly to their success.
or cooperative to provide support for their individual and group projects which would contribute to the socio-economic development of Messejana and of southwest Alentejo. ESDIME is the local development agency created as a follow up to this human resource development project.

At first, ESDIME functioned almost exclusively as an advisory body, without its own programmes of intervention. It provided guidance and support to men and women who wanted to set up microenterprises in and around Messejana. A few years later, ESDIME expanded its operations to cover the entire region of southwest Alentejo. It concentrated on assisting small-scale entrepreneurs and unemployed women, as well as organizing numerous professional training activities and encouraging entrepreneurial initiatives among young men and women.

**Present Profile**

ESDIME’s headquarters is in a renovated barn in the centre of Messejana, equipped with modern information technology tools, including a data bank and reference library. ESDIME also has offices in Beja, the largest city and the capital of southern Alentejo, and in the town of Santiago do Cacém.

Initially, ESDIME was supported financially by the Instituto de Emprego e Formação Profissional (IEFP—Institute for Employment and Professional Training), part of the Ministry for Professional Training and Employment. Later, it began receiving financial aid from the European Social Fund. It has also benefited from other EU financing with funds made available through EU Objective Number 1, which provides assistance to Europe’s least developed regions, usually those with a per caput gross domestic product (GDP) 75 percent lower than the EU average. Currently, ESDIME partly supports itself with income generated from its consulting and professional training services.

One of ESDIME’s most distinguishing features is that it is run by young men and women, mostly between the ages of 20 and 31, all of whom are highly educated professionals. Some staff members have come to the region from other parts of Portugal or from abroad. However, most are natives of Messejana and other parts of southwest Alentejo and have returned to the area after completing university. Their decision to return to Alentejo goes beyond local patriotism. It reflects a genuine professional interest in contributing directly to local development at a grassroots level.

Also, increasingly adverse economic, social and environmental conditions in Lisbon and other large cities are causing many young, university-educated men and women to seek alternatives to urban living.

**Areas of Intervention**

Individually or in small task-specific teams, and sometimes backed by external specialists, staff members conceive, plan and implement ESDIME’s programmes and projects. They have organized their activities into four distinct, mutually supportive areas of intervention: (1) the promotion of an entrepreneurial culture among the young; (2) the socio-economic mobilization of local communities; (3) the promotion of entrepreneurial initiatives; and (4) the creation of alternative economic activities through a process of experimentation.

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3 The staff includes economists (2 men); sociologists (5 women, 1 man); psychologists (2 women); social worker (1 woman); and business management specialists (2 men and 1 woman).

4 The president of ESDIME, José Carlos Albino, is a native of Alentejo. After receiving a university degree in management economics in Lisbon, he returned to the region to take part in ESDIME’s foundation. Driven by a desire to contribute directly to the region’s revitalization, he has lived in Messejana since 1989.
ESDIME also has managed the Links among Rural Development Actions II Programme (LEADER II) in the southern and coastal regions of Alentejo. All of these activities have been complemented by ESDIME’s vocational training courses, research studies, publications and network building. The following descriptions of ESDIME’s various projects and activities are listed under their area of intervention category. Activities related to the LEADER II programme, vocational training courses, networking and publications are presented in the subsequent sections.

1. Promotion of an entrepreneurial culture among the young

Discovering an Active Life

In 1995, ESDIME, with financial support from the Ministry of Education and private businesses, developed the Discovering an Active Life project in cooperation with high schools in the four neighbouring municipalities in southwest Alentejo. These municipalities all have high drop-out rates, structural unemployment caused by the closing of mining operations, and a population with little interest in starting businesses. The project is geared to benefit high school students by:

- improving conditions for the social and professional integration of young men and women;
- ensuring access to accurate information about employment alternatives, so that individual aspirations are in line with the actual employment and investment potential in the region; and
- encouraging youth to participate in projects that they have conceived and organized themselves, as a means of developing their creativity and initiative.

The project involved a number of activities including educational and professional orientation sessions, discussions with experienced professionals, visits to businesses, acquiring practical experience through short-term work opportunities in local firms, the organization of a trade fair, and creating a data bank with information of interest to young people.

A leaflet entitled “Discovery”, and the student radio station were used to disseminate information about employment and development activities throughout the community.

Technical support materials were developed for educational games. These games are designed to engage the students in a process of self-evaluation and to sensitize them to issues relating to their future employment, to the importance of entrepreneurial initiatives and to the workings of the labour market.

The contents and methods used in this project are based on diagnostic studies of students’ aspirations, educational levels and socio-economic conditions. The contacts made with local firms and workshops of local artisans emphasized traditional vocations that are already important in the region’s economy as well as more innovative and experimental professions.

The Discovering an Active Life staff consists of a sociologist, specializing in extension and rural development, and a psychologist, specializing in education. The staff plans programs and implements all the activities in this project in cooperation with teachers, school officials and local youth organizations.
Active School - Active Place
This project is part of a larger, nation-wide programme managed by the Institute of Community Education. It places priority on elementary schools which are viewed as places where community activities that encourage participation in the region's socio-economic revival can be organized. Active School-Active Place works in cooperation with elementary schools in two rural municipalities and involves students, teachers, parents, local governments and other institutions. The goal is to overcome problems in the educational system in small, geographically isolated and depressed communities. These problems include low student performance levels and school dropouts. Other issues dealt with are teachers' self-esteem and professional development. This project also promotes partnerships and networks among local elementary schools and other organizations and institutions.

Raising Awareness About Youth Organizations
Financial assistance for this project was provided by the Operational Programme for the Region of Alentejo (PORA) at the Regional Co-ordination Centre for Alentejo (CCRA) in the town of Evora which operates under the Ministry of Infrastructure, Planning and Territorial Administration, as part of the European Community Support Framework. In small rural communities in five neighbouring municipalities, ESDIME organized meetings to encourage young men and women to create new local associations. These meetings led to the formation of youth groups made up of young men and women eager to organize cultural and athletic activities and other projects in their communities. Most of these men and women had dropped out of school and were either unemployed or underemployed.

React
ESDIME has applied to Youthstart, an EU-funded programme aimed at integrating unskilled young men and women into the labour market, to fund a project called ‘React’. The objective of React is to improve the methods used by education and training institution professionals who work to integrate those young men and women into society who have dropped out of the school system or are at risk of doing so, who have no professional qualifications and who face great difficulties entering the labour market.

International cooperation
A six-month exchange programme between staff members of ESDIME and ARCI Nazionale, a non-government organization in Rome, has been arranged within the framework of the European Voluntary Service for the Young.

2. The socio-economic mobilization of local communities

Raising Awareness about Local Associations
As part of its efforts to promote the establishment of local associations, ESDIME has submitted an application to PORA/CCRA to cofinance the preparation and organization of a series of focus group sessions in communities throughout southwest Alentejo.

Criss-crossing Projects for Regional Development
This project was launched within a larger programme for the Socio-Economic Integration of Disfavoured Groups sponsored by the European Social Fund. The objective is to strengthen the self-confidence and self-respect of unemployed and underqualified young and adult women, in order to enable them to organize activities that benefit the entire community. At a later stage, the intention
is to broaden the project’s scope to include both men and women who are either unemployed or at risk of unemployment.

Overcoming Difficulties, Launching Projects
The suspension of mining activities in the town of Aljustrel in 1996 sparked a demand for innovative and diversified solutions to the problem of unemployment. This project, sponsored by the European Social Fund, has been created to take practical steps toward the effective social integration of unemployed men and women.

ESDIME, in conjunction with a local governmental authority, recently succeeded in convincing Papelaco, an important Portuguese company that makes automatic banking machines and other high-tech electronic equipment, to invest in a new factory in Aljustrel. Papelaco is also Panasonic’s sole Portuguese partner. ESDIME has been given the responsibility for the employment training of 45 unemployed young men and women and 30 former miners. All 75 trainees have guaranteed employment in the new Papelaco factory.

3. Promotion of entrepreneurial initiatives

Preparation of Grant Proposals for Micro and Small Enterprises
In order to stimulate the creation of new businesses and to strengthen existing businesses owned by local entrepreneurs, ESDIME provides consulting services (pre-feasibility and feasibility studies, legal advice, etc.) and technical assistance in the preparation of grant proposals. It has helped men and women submit applications for grants made available through national programmes for small business promotion and has monitored the evaluation process and the approval of these applications. The following three programmes offer financial incentives to local men and women.

- **Regime de Incentivos às Microempresas** (RIME—Incentive Programme for Micro-Enterprises) offers grants to investors starting businesses with fewer than ten employees. The grants cover 50 to 60 percent of the initial investment. If the new business offers jobs to unemployed young men and women, the grant is usually higher. The value of the initial investment can be up to 20 million Portuguese escudos (PTE).

- **Sistema de Incentivos Regionais** (SIR—System of Regional Incentives) offers grants to investors who are either starting a new business or modernizing an existing one. The grants cover 30 to 70 percent of the total investment, depending on the impact it has on the region’s economy. The amount invested must be between 20 million and 100 million PTE.

- **Iniciativas Locais de Emprego** (ILE—Local Employment Initiatives) offers grants to investors starting small businesses that use local resources and provide self-employment or other jobs to young men and woman who are either looking for their first job or are unemployed. A lump sum of 500 000 PTE is granted to such projects, with 20 percent more available to businesses started by women. Priority is given to business devoted to a revival in local arts and crafts production. The value of the initial investment can be up to 20 million PTE.

Between 1989 and 1997, ESDIME helped establish almost 200 new micro and small enterprises with a total value of 1700 million PTE. These enterprises were located in nearly every town in southwest Alentejo, although most were in Messejana and Aljustrel. In the municipality of Beja, ESDIME assisted in 90 percent of the grant applications submitted by small businesses. The Regional Bureau for Employment in Beja now refers its clients to ESDIME.
Between 1989 and 1996, businesses that received assistance from ESDIME created almost 600 new jobs. About one-half of the newly employed were men and women 30 years old or younger. However, few new business initiatives have been generated by the young. In this region, traditionally marked by poverty and lack of entrepreneurial spirit, where the overwhelming majority of the employed population is landless agricultural labourers, miners and unskilled workers, the chances are slim that young men and women would choose to start a new business. Most of the young men and women who did approach ESDIME for technical assistance in starting a small business received substantial financial support from their families. However, those who can count on such backing are generally from middle class families which represent a small segment of region’s population.

The activities of these new micro and small enterprises have been wide-ranging. They include coffee shops and retail stores, food production services, civil, mechanical and electric engineering and construction firms, customizing and repair shops, health care centres and senior citizen’s homes, tourist accommodation facilities, dentists’ studios and other ventures.

Initially, ESDIME charged consulting fees only to those projects which had been approved for funding. Today, consulting fees usually are charged to all clients.

Information about Government Incentives
ESDIME organized a series of meetings, held in municipal town halls and in communities across southwest Alentejo, to inform men and women about national policies and the existence of financial incentives for job creation available to small and medium enterprises. Funding for these meetings has been obtained from the PORA/CCRA. Also, assistance was provided to the Cortiçoel Cooperative, in the small town of Castro Verde, to organize similar meetings with communities in their municipality.

Research
In collaboration with Geoidea, a Lisbon NGO, ESDIME recently completed a study of arts and crafts production and its economic potential in the large area of central Alentejo. Alentejo is expected to benefit from the multi-purpose Alqueva Dam scheduled for completion in 2005. EDISME financed this study by submitting the winning proposal in a competition sponsored by the Enterprise for Development and Infrastructure of Alqueva.5

4. Creation of alternative economic activities through a process of experimentation
ESDIME organizes experimental activities designed to stimulate the creation and circulation of alternative and innovative development practices. The areas considered most relevant to the regional development strategy are:

- the development of professional and community-based associations geared toward providing new services;

- the promotion of alternative sustainable agricultural practices and environmental protection;6

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5In 1997, it was announced that construction would soon begin on the Alqueva Dam on the Guadiana River. This announcement came after a long period of negotiations with the European Commission and an exhaustive national debate, prompted by pressure from the environmental lobby. It will be the most expensive project ever financially supported by the EU. Damming the Guadiana River is intended to solve the problems created by severe droughts, which are considered the main obstacle to the economic development of Alentejo. Public and local development agencies are concerned about the environmental, social and economic impact the enormous artificial lake and irrigation system will have on the region.

6Activities in this area include demonstrations of garbage sorting and composting prepared in cooperation with the Messejana Association for Environmental Protection, and the distribution of the publication Fauna and Flora which is part of ESDIME’s series, Coleção Temática Baixo Alentejo.
the promotion of innovative cultural, educational and vocational models; and

the valorization of local products and services, which includes providing assistance in certification and classification, quality improvement, and mining local expertise regarding recipes, arts and crafts, artefacts, etc.

**LEADER II**

ESDIME has recently assumed the responsibility of managing the LEADER II programme, called LEADER al Sud, in southwest Alentejo. LEADER is an EU initiative promoting a bottom-up approach to development. It puts institutions that offer financial and technical aid together with local groups and individuals in order to revitalize the economy of depressed rural areas. ESDIME’s tasks in managing LEADER al Sud from 1996 to 1999 were stipulated in the Protocol on Cooperation between the Association for the Development of Coastal Alentejo and the Association Alentejo XXI, the two local development agencies which jointly submitted the successful proposal to implement LEADER II in the region. About 90 000 people live in the 5656 km² area covered by the LEADER al Sud programme. It pays 85 percent of the salary of two of ESDIME’s professional staff and 15 to 20 percent of the cost of ESDIME’s various activities, including social mobilization and employment training.

EDISME’s principal tasks are to administer the funds available to men and women who start new businesses in the region and to provide technical assistance.

The LEADER al Sud strategy focuses on increasing the potential for the development of local entrepreneurial initiatives. It has three main areas of intervention.

- Increase the role of local groups and individuals by promoting the establishment of community associations and developing a spirit of entrepreneurial initiative which requires young men and women to face risks, solve problems and assume responsibility. To accomplish this, LEADER al Sud provides specialized vocational and technical training, and provides a forum for the exchange of experiences and ideas.

- Revitalize and develop entrepreneurial capacities through non-material investments, i.e. offering technical support for efficient business management, providing information about grants available for small businesses and assisting in preparing grant proposals.

- Improve marketing strategies which focus on local identity, goods and services, forge links with the external market, and highlight the region’s cultural and natural assets as development resources.

The LEADER al Sud’s local plan of action involves a series of project activities in several areas. ESDIME’s work is to establish links among these activities and to integrate the participation of young men and women into all of the other activities. The following highlights the plan of action and lists supporting activities.

**Support programmes run by local associations**

Concurrence with the LEADER strategy
Support integrated local development programmes
Support service qualification programmes in local communities
Support participation of youth in rural development

Support school-based activities that benefit the young
Support local initiatives that benefit the young

Vocational training
Analysis and implementation of methodologies
Training leaders and managers of local associations, professionals and entrepreneurs
Provide on-the-job training

Assistance in recruiting
Support recruitment of full-time professionals
Support contracting of part-time professional services

Assistance in improving qualifications
Support rural tourism
Support artisan activities, including food production

Promotion of experimentation
Develop applied experimentation

Strengthening existing services
Improve marketing and organization, and promote business services

Support business
Support micro and small businesses

Support the enhancement and promotion of local economic activities
Support networks, associations and enterprises in promoting and marketing local products
Support promotional projects and activities

Support environmental programmes
Support programmes for environmental awareness
Support economic valorization of environmental resources

Support heritage preservation
Support programmes to increase awareness of region’s cultural heritage
Support promotion of the region’s cultural heritage

Further to this list, the following specific support is envisaged for the participation of youth in rural development.

- Improve the availability of information relating to local development issues, investment potential and guidelines, incentives programmes for starting new businesses, employment opportunities and vocational training, etc.

- Promote the creation of new community associations and assist in setting up and equipping these associations in cooperation with schools, public and private organizations and institutions, etc.

- Provide vocational training to the unemployed and to young men and women searching for their first job, with an emphasis on locally viable professions, on creating awareness about local and regional development issues and on strengthening self-esteem and motivation for entrepreneurial initiatives.

- Assist in preparing for job competitions and hiring professional staff.

- Identify and promote the skills necessary for the preservation of the region’s natural and cultural resources.
Foster international cooperation through the exchange of publications, study visits, joint programmes and projects, etc.

**Vocational Training Courses**

Human resource development has been at the core of ESDIME's activities since its inception. Equal emphasis has been placed on technical and vocational training and on promoting entrepreneurial initiatives.

ESDIME's first experience in vocational training came with the Experimental Project for the Development of Micro-Regions in the Interior of Portugal, launched in Messejana in 1989. This was a two-year project, offering 1300 hours of courses dealing with occupations that were both in demand and locally viable. These occupations included catering and tourist accommodation, carpentry and furniture manufacturing, agricultural production, accounting services, conservation and restoration of culturally significant buildings and artefacts, audio-visual and graphic design, and textile manufacturing. One hundred trainees (both young and adult) were selected from 250 unemployed men and women, and 86 completed their courses. Of those trained, 40 presented investment proposals, and ESDIME prepared their grant applications to ILE.

In addition to the training activities in the LEADER al Sud programme (the training of leaders and managers of local associations), ESDIME prepared and financed a number of training courses on its own. One of these, ‘A Complete Course for Professional Vendors’, offered between September 1997 and May 1998, was aimed at improving the marketing skills of men and women selling products made in southwest Alentejo.

ESDIME has also prepared a training programme intended to strengthen ties between agricultural producers and service providers seeking to modify, diversify and improve their activities. The envisaged training courses deal with such subjects as:

- agrotourism,
- traditional goat cheese production,
- small-scale processing of agricultural products,
- promotion of animal husbandry,
- alternative crop rotation in traditional rain-fed farming,
- adapting agricultural practices to environmental protection requirements, and
- use of information technology in agricultural production.

**Network building**

ESDIME established a network of partnerships with institutions, associations and local governments during the Experimental Training Project in Messejana in 1989. These partnerships contributed not only to the success of the initial project, but to ESDIME’s on-going development.

ESDIME belongs to two major networks of local development agencies, the Portuguese Association for Local Rural Development (ANIMAR) and IDEIA-Alentejo.
ANIMAR was founded in 1993 and represents a nationwide network of development agencies in rural areas. Initially inspired by the Trans-European Rural Network (TERN), ANIMAR moved away from representing Portugal in an international forum, to deal exclusively with national development issues. After overcoming difficulties caused by a lack of a permanent funding source, ANIMAR has earned an excellent reputation as a highly qualified partner in the promotion of local development in rural Portugal. Its membership today includes 48 groups (cooperatives, associations, enterprises, public and private organizations, etc.) and some 100 individuals (researchers, teachers, entrepreneurs, etc.) from throughout the country. Its annual general meetings and “MANIFesta” Fairs, such as those held in Santarem in 1994 and in Tondela in 1996, have established ANIMAR’s national importance. Communication among the members is ensured through the network’s highly participatory monthly bulletin “Vez & Voz” (Turn and Say) which contains news, reviews, ideas, debates, etc. Since 1997, ANIMAR and ESDIME have shared the same address.

IDEIA-Alentejo was formed in 1993, the result of a collective effort by several local associations in southern Alentejo to produce a stronger joint proposal for a government subsidy to support the project ‘GloCal - Program for Local Development of Alentejo’. Although the proposal was not accepted, its members have continued to collaborate with one another and share a common approach in dealing with national and regional governments. IDEIA-Alentejo’s headquarters is in the city of Evora.

Membership in these two networks has strengthened ESDIME’s connections with similar associations both in Portugal and abroad. ESDIME considers such network building essential for maintaining its creativity and ensuring that it doesn’t become isolated.

Publications


This book is a follow-up to a 1995 conference organized by ESDIME. Both the conference and the book were financed by the Institute for Employment and Professional Training, Ministry of Professional Training and Employment, Lisbon. At the conference, agencies involved in local development training were invited to discuss their work. Their main topics, the development of training programmes and improving teaching methods, are included in the book.


Largely based on ESDIME’s experiences, this reader-friendly book is intended for men and women managing micro and small enterprises and covers entrepreneurial conditions in Alentejo, micro and small business management, controlling payments and receipts, price calculation and making the best use of accounting methods.

The book received technical assistance from the Autonomous Economy Section of the *Instituto Superior de Ciencias do Trabalho e da Empresa* (ISCTE), Lisbon, and financial support from FEDER/PORA (Operation Programme for the Region of Alentejo), Ministry of Infrastructure, Planning and Territorial Administration, Lisbon.
This book presents a conceptual and practical synthesis of methodological approaches to local
development interventions in Alentejo. Largely based on eight years of ESDIME’s own experience,
it also drew on the experience of other development agencies in the region. Throughout the book,
an enthusiastic attitude toward overcoming obstacles to local development initiatives prevails.
Financial support was received from PORA/CCRA, Ministry of Infrastructure, Planning and
Territorial Administration, Lisbon.

ARVAL: RENEWING TRADITIONAL LINEN PRODUCTION

Objectives and Strategy
ARVAL7 was founded in 1982 as an association of artisans from the Lima River Valley in the Alto
Minho region of northwest Portugal. The region is hilly, with Mediterranean and maritime cli-
mates, dense vegetation and a sparse population. Agricultural production remains the principle eco-
nomic activity. Grapes for wine, corn, fruits and vegetables are grown on small and fragmented
parcels of land. However, farm work has increasingly become a part-time activity that is combined
with employment in manufacturing and service industries. In the past, relatively high birth rates off-
set heavy emigration to Latin America and northwestern Europe. In the early 1980s, birth rates
dropped and the average age of the population increased. In the 1990s, population growth has stag-
nated in many municipalities, and in some it has declined. Since the mid-1980s, emigration has been
replaced almost entirely by daily rural to urban commuting, made mostly by men.

ARVAL’s mission is to reverse rural out-migration and the loss of cultural traditions by involving
the local population, especially young women, in every phase of linen production, including culti-
vation and processing of flax (Linum usitatissimum), preparation of yarn, fabrication of thread,
weaving of linen fabrics and manufacturing of clothes and other items.

ARVAL’s specific objectives are to encourage the renewal of linen production as an income-gener-
ating, family-based activity and to develop the entrepreneurial spirit and self-esteem of rural
women, especially young women, who are prone to out-migration and emigration.

The strategy is to provide extension services and technical assistance for the cultivation of flax in
the Lima River Valley, maintain expertise in traditional linen production and promote entrepre-
neurial initiatives among local women.

Background
The Lima River Valley is known for its rich cultural heritage, especially the traditional handicrafts
produced in the villages. Pottery, stone sculpting, wood carving, weaving and other arts and crafts
have been popular activities practiced by skilled individuals and groups of farmers as a main or
additional source of income.

Among all the handicrafts produced in the Lima River Valley region, home-made linen has occu-

7 ARVAL: Cooperativa dos Artesãos Reunidos do Vale do Lima (The United Artisans Cooperative of the Lima River Valley).
Address: Terreiro 4990, São Martinho da Gandra, Portugal. Phone: (351) 58-948464.
pied a respected position because its production motivated farm families to keep their land under cultivation and properly tended, it provided an important source of income for many households, and it strengthened family and community cohesion.

Although women assumed the most responsibility in linen production, it was common for all family members, male and female, young and old, and often neighbours, to perform specialized tasks either in the various phases of flax cultivation and processing or in the production of yarn and thread, weaving linen materials, embroidering and adding other decorations, as well as the marketing of linen products.

Traditionally, linen products had a guaranteed market in every village and town along the Lima River Valley. A family's supply of linen was almost worth its weight in gold. Everyone respected the painstaking work and invaluable expertise of the women weavers and embroiders. Linen production was essential to the region's livelihood and cultural identity.

Since the 1960s, the region has undergone a decline in small-scale agriculture and a general breakdown in the traditional rural economy. This process led to losses in human resources (emigration, an end to extended families, an ageing population) and to a diminished cultural identity. The endogenous knowledge and traditional skills upon which traditional family-based economies relied could no longer be sustained.

Under these conditions, the production of linen in the Lima River Valley rapidly lost its popularity and prestige, and came close to extinction. The traditional linen production could not keep up with market demands which were driven by large textile industries that encouraged mass consumption and product uniformity, and used cheaper fabrics.

Since the mid-1980s, however, there has been a renewed appreciation of local traditional products. In the cities, affluent men and women have reacted against mass produced articles and the loss of cultural diversity brought on by the increased globalization of the market. The revival of lost traditions, including traditional arts and crafts production, was an essential part of the government's policies to stimulate development in depressed rural areas. The EU advocates ‘A Europe of Regions’, a development concept which promotes the renewal of regional cultural identities. These shifts in attitudes have allowed traditional linen production to flourish again in the Lima River Valley.

In the late 1970s, the village of São Martinho da Gandra and its surrounding area were selected for field study as part of a UNESCO research project on rural out-migration in northern Portugal. The expected visits of UNESCO’s experts to this area inspired local government authorities to organize a major exhibition of local arts and crafts from the Lima River Valley in the village of São Martinho da Gandra.

For this exhibition, locally hand-crafted articles had to be gathered from many scattered villages. This required considerable knowledge of the artisans working in the region and a well-organized campaign to inspire the entire community to participate in the project. The villagers responded by donating many examples of local crafts, some of them very old and rare. In some cases, only fragments or a part of the artefact remained, and many of the tools brought in were rusted and in very bad shape. During this campaign, many of the villagers expressed an interest in either learning or teaching about the production of these arts and crafts.
Unfortunately, due to circumstances beyond the control of the Portuguese development agencies, the UNESCO project did not materialize. Nevertheless, the exhibition was a success, for it marked the beginning of the renewal of traditional arts and crafts in the area. For the first time, local politicians and government institutions indicated their readiness to work toward the preservation of the region’s heritage.

Local officials entrusted the organization of this exhibition to the Community Improvement Group from São Martinho da Gandra whose members had already made a significant contribution to the community’s development. In 1974, they worked to bring electricity to São Martinho da Gandra and its neighbouring villages. In 1997, they succeeded in reviving a popular fair with a centuries-long tradition that had nearly died out.

Traditional linen production was featured prominently in the exhibition because the members of the Community Improvement Group felt strongly that restoring the prestige of hand-made linen could be an economically viable way of strengthening the Lima River Valley’s cultural identity. They were also convinced that community associations were essential for the successful promotion of small-scale economic activities and so in 1982, they founded ARVAL.

**Present Profile**

ARVAL currently has 19 staff members (5 men, 14 women) who live in São Martinho da Gandra and other villages in the Lima River Valley. In addition to management positions, there are full-time embroiderers and weavers who work at headquarters or in their homes. There is also an executive board and board of directors representing the community.

There are 35 linen producers who use ARVAL’s training and technical facilities on a permanent basis, as well as a network of promoters and volunteers. The volunteers are mostly young men who help with the more physically demanding aspects of linen production, such as harvesting and preparing flax for submersion in water and processing flax into yarn.

Initially located in the president’s home, ARVAL’s headquarters now occupy a spacious modern building, recently constructed with financial support from the EU LEADER Programme. There are workshops with spinning wheels, looms and other tools, a gift shop, a multi-use auditorium, lecture rooms, and offices equipped with modern information and communication technology. To maintain better communication and contact with the community, ARVAL’s management often holds meetings in local restaurants and other informal places.

**Main Activities**

ARVAL’s principal activities are providing training in traditional linen production and offering technical assistance in flax cultivation and the marketing of linen products.

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8 Ms. Júlia Caldas, 68, is ARVAL’s president and leader of the Community Improvement Group. A native of São Martinho da Gandra, Ms. Caldas comes from an affluent local family and is a qualified nurse and a teacher. She is also successful in business, manages her own farm, has owned and operated the local gas station, and has bought and restored historic homes. She is well-known in the Lima River Valley for her social work and for promoting local culture and community development. Ms. Caldas has consistently worked to improve the self-esteem and socio-economic status of women in the region. She sought to create a financially self-sufficient organization that could generate income for local women by making use of their traditional knowledge and skills. Because linen production was one of the most important regional crafts, Ms. Caldas brought together the local linen enthusiasts who now operate ARVAL.
Training
Almost all the people ARVAL has trained in traditional linen production have been women from the villages and small towns in the Lima River Valley. Their ages range from 16 to 50, although most are younger than 35. These women generally have little education. Most of the young women are unemployed and have looked for work in larger cities without success.

In view of the social background of those enrolled in ARVAL's courses, the curriculum provides practical skills and knowledge about every aspect of linen production, from flax cultivation to the marketing of linen products, as well as general education courses in arithmetic, basic accounting, Portuguese and the history of arts and crafts. This is designed to give each individual the necessary foundation for more complete personal development, to improve self-esteem and to deepen appreciation for their craft as a profitable vocation or a source of additional income.

Between 1989 and 1997, when these courses became a regular part of ARVAL's activities, 375 people received vocational training in traditional linen production. Since Portugal's entry into the EU, ARVAL's vocational training has benefited from financial support of the European Social Fund. ARVAL easily obtained this support based on the impressive results it achieved with the training programs for local women it developed for the Ministry of Professional Training and Employment. The region's experienced local artisans form ARVAL's training staff in keeping with the policy of re-affirming, sustaining and developing the region's endogenous skills and expertise. Toward this end, ARVAL organized a major inventory of the existing tools and fabric patterns in villagers' homes. Tools and patterns were selected, collected and stored at ARVAL headquarters and many spinning wheels and looms were repaired for use in the training programme. Traditional fabric patterns and region-specific embroideries were carefully studied and now serve as models for another generation of artisans.

At present, those who have successfully completed their vocational training are encouraged to enrol in a special training of trainers programme, so they can eventually become part of ARVAL's training staff. This, however, is not always easy, because instructors must have a wide variety of specialized skills. Also, some of these potential teachers have less than four years of basic education which makes it difficult for them to handle the training of trainers curriculum.

The fact that many enrolled in these vocational training programmes and even the members of the training staff have little education is a problem that has been overcome in large part through the efforts of a small but dedicated group of ARVAL's members and collaborators. Their readiness to step in and offer remedial education to those in need has been an indispensable condition for ARVAL's continuing success in human resource development. In 1989-1990, the training of trainers programme received occasional technical and material support from the Regional Arts Centre Foundation in the city of Porto, which operates under the Ministry of Culture. However, ARVAL's management has at times been reluctant to work with government institutions because they often demand a great deal of time-consuming paperwork, which for a small organization with an already heavy work load, can be more trouble than it's worth.

Internal and external evaluations, recent studies and reports, and field observations have all shown that ARVAL's training activities have had a remarkable impact on the region. Linen production has become a significant additional source of income for many families. ARVAL's activities are also contributing to a greater social cohesion at family and community levels and to an improvement in the status of women, as it is mothers and daughters who are most responsible for linen production.
Technical assistance

As part of its training activities and as an independent activity, ARVAL has supplied seeds and provided technical assistance to flax cultivators. Often, this has been done in cooperation with the extension services of the Ministry of Agriculture. Extension agents have tested different varieties of flaxseeds to improve the quality of locally grown flax, so that it conforms to EU standards. This will ultimately lead to the acquisition of the EU Seal of Quality for the region's linen products, which should, in turn, greatly enhance their success on the international market.

ARVAL has made a substantial contribution to the re-introduction of flax cultivation in the Lima River Valley. Presently, there are 45 new flax growers who make regular use of the cooperative's services. Most of them own their land. Farmers receive subsidies for sowing flax, which is becoming a more important crop as a result of this increased assistance.

Clearly, this increased interest in traditional linen production is likely to have many positive effects on agriculture in the region. Flax production will lead to a diversification of household incomes and consequently will strengthen the region's economy. It will also give local farmers an incentive to return to the land and recover abandoned fields. Also, it is estimated that between 500 and 600 looms are currently being restored in the Lima River Valley.

Women, especially young women, have benefited the most from the revival in traditional linen production. For some, it has become their main economic activity and for many others it has become an important source of extra income. Sixty percent of flax cultivation is managed by women. The entrepreneurial spirit among those who use ARVAL's services is growing. Women today show less fear in taking on responsibilities related to generating income and have proven themselves effective farm administrators.

When interviewed in a recent study, women linen producers who worked in collaboration with ARVAL showed a much more positive attitude regarding their social status than those who did not. One young woman said that she was less of a slave than her mother, “because knowing embroidery helped me to feel a lot more secure.” Many expressed their deep appreciation for the cooperative, saying, “There is a lot of paid work for us every day ... Orders are constantly increasing because buyers prefer to deal with the cooperative and not with individual producers ... Our products have the guarantee of origin, which is greatly appreciated by knowledgeable clients ... Knowing arithmetic and the basics of accounting allows us to know exactly what the final product will cost and how much revenue to expect for a given number of hours of work ...” (Martins, 1997).

There is evidence that women have developed high self-esteem and that they are aware of the economic value and social relevance of their activity. Weavers and embroiders at ARVAL regularly register the use of their time and have made detailed descriptions of their work for marketing purposes. An hour's worth of weaving is said to have the same economic value as an hour's worth of stone sculpting.

A growing market for hand-made linen in Portuguese cities, where it is highly valued by interior decorators and fashion designers, has contributed to making flax cultivation and linen production economically viable. Also, rural tourism has been booming over the last ten years in the Lima River Valley, attracting mainly middle and upper class visitors from Portugal and abroad. Many old aristocratic homes and palaces have been renovated for the tourist trade, and much of their interior decor requires locally produced linen. In 1997, the demand for linen had increased to such a point that ARVAL no longer needed to advertise its products and services.
Marketing Local Artisania

ARVAL provides assistance in marketing the region’s hand-made linen products. LEADER II has subsidized 60 percent of the cost of ARVAL’s marketing activities, including the production, presentation and circulation of printed and video materials, its participation in popular fairs and the organization of exhibits. ARVAL was able to obtain this support thanks to its partnership with the Association for Integrated Rural Development in the Lima River Valley (ADRIL), which manages LEADER II projects in the region.

The linen products have been catalogued according to their use and great efforts are being made to have them officially labelled as products made exclusively in the Lima River Valley. Local producers are striving to modernize their equipment and to improve and standardize the quality of their linen fabric. This is considered an essential next step in order to break into markets outside the region.

There has been no government funding specifically targeted for traditional linen production, and it is extremely difficult for products from this region to acquire official region-specific status which would make them more attractive to national and international markets. At the moment, only two products from the region enjoy this special status, the pottery from the town of Barcelos in Minho province, and Vinho Verde, a brand of wine produced in the Lima River Valley by the cooperatives in the towns of Ponte de Lima and Ponte de Barca.

Traditional linen products from the Lima River Valley were included in a national newspaper supplement on the outstanding arts and crafts that are an indispensable part of Portugal’s cultural heritage.9 This influential publication demonstrated that the production of crafts can be profitable and thus contribute to reducing rural out-migration. Acknowledging the value of local craftsmanship can increase awareness of the potential in rural areas for financially and socially rewarding occupations for young men and women.

Prospects seem bright for the immediate future, but it will be necessary to take further steps to improve the commercialization of linen products. Employment opportunities for young linen producers could be increased if ARVAL links its training, technical support and marketing activities to rural tourism, which is expected to continue growing in the region and throughout Portugal. However, this would require ARVAL to expand its activities and human resource base. Considering ARVAL’s track record and the dedication and resourcefulness of its management, staff and network of collaborators, there seems little doubt that the cooperative will be able to respond to these challenges.

CONCLUSIONS

ESDIME and ARVAL operate in different environments and have different objectives, activities and internal structures, yet both have shown that reducing rural out-migration and attracting young men and women to live and work in rural areas depends on:

- individuals and associations within the community who are committed to local and regional development; and

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strategies that recognize young people's needs for satisfying employment and a higher quality of life, and that channel their energies toward the development of the region's economic, cultural and environmental potential.

In their efforts to match young people's needs with opportunities for local development, ESDIME and ARVAL have succeeded in designing programmes that have made use of local resources and contributed directly to greater youth employment. Although their specific objectives and projects differ, both agencies share four major areas of concern: (1) building economic and cultural foundations for local development; (2) preparing young men and women to enter the labour market; (3) creating employment opportunities for the young; and (4) strengthening the institutional framework for local development. The following section details what is involved in each of these areas.

1. Building economic and cultural foundations for local development requires:

- identifying strengths and weaknesses in the natural and human resource base;
- setting goals and strategies that integrate economic, social, cultural, technological and environmental factors;
- linking human resource development with employment opportunities; linking agricultural production with other economic activities, such as arts and craft production and tourism; and linking products made and sold at a local level with larger, more competitive national and international markets; and linking the supply of traditional knowledge and craftsmanship with contemporary society's growing demand for these products;
- developing programmes and projects which are run by young men and women, or that benefit them directly;
- reducing rural out-migration by creating opportunities for paid employment for young men and women;
- encouraging educated and skilled young men and women to return to the rural areas where they were raised;
- attracting educated and skilled young men and women from other regions;
- introducing appropriate new technologies and cultural practices to the region and adapting them to local conditions;
- raising community awareness of local development issues;
- building men's and women's self-esteem and an appreciation of their heritage;
- instilling an entrepreneurial spirit in the community; and
- encouraging local investors, as well as those from outside the region, to start new businesses that make use of the available labour force.
2. Preparing young men and women to enter the labour market requires:

- offering general remedial education, especially to young women who have had little success in school or who have left school at an early age;
- providing vocational training;
- improving personal self-esteem, especially among women;
- encouraging self-reliance and an entrepreneurial spirit;
- providing vocational guidance counselling;
- assisting young men and women in acquiring practical work experience;
- raising awareness about the labour market; and
- helping unemployed young men and women search and apply for jobs.

3. Creating employment opportunities for the young requires:

- hiring local men and women as full-time staff members of the development agency (this was the policy of both ESDIME and ARVAL);
- contracting local men and women for projects and programmes run by local development agencies;
- providing technical advice and guidance (feasibility studies, market research, etc.) and direct support (extension services, agricultural inputs, etc.) for the creation of small businesses and family-based economic activities; and
- encouraging the young to establish community groups, associations, cooperatives and other local organizations.

4. Strengthening the institutional framework for local development requires:

- motivating young men and women to participate in identifying community needs and potential for development;
- encouraging business initiative among the young;
- encouraging men and women of all ages to establish community groups, associations, cooperatives and other local organizations;
- increasing public access to information regarding the decision-making process of public and private organizations, and to their activities in the community, especially those activities that affect the employment prospects for young men and women; and
collaborating with local and national governments, schools and other public service institutions, businesses, community associations, cooperatives, informal groups, volunteers, etc.

In addition, networks with national and international development agencies must be established to exchange information, expertise and experience, coordinate joint projects, arrange exchange programmes among staff members and lobby for programmes and projects that benefit the young. ESDIME’s and ARVAL’s success is due largely to the fact that they have been created and operated by men and women, many of them young, who are natives of the regions in which they live and work, have high educational levels with solid professional qualifications and are genuinely devoted to regional and local development.

This is not meant to suggest that professionals and agencies from outside the region cannot make important contributions to rural development. However, emphasis should be placed on encouraging local men and women to assume leadership roles in the socio-economic development of their communities.

Each of these agencies has established itself and implemented effective programmes and projects because its staff has been able to:

- earn community confidence and cooperation, a basic condition for any agency seeking to organize activities responsive to the needs of local population;

- understand the local cultural, economic and environmental situations and adequately assess what changes need to be made;

- address sensitive issues such as gender bias, the causes of social and economic marginalization and exclusion, the reasons for out-migration, etc.;

- carry out human resource development projects and related activities that meet local needs and conditions and thereby make efficient use of financial and technical resources;

- increase the economic viability of small-scale agriculture and other traditional activities (e.g. traditional linen production in the Lima River Valley has given farmers, who had relied almost entirely on grapes as a cash crop, an opportunity to cultivate and market a new crop, flax);

- introduce, in an appropriate way, new cultural ideas and adapt them so that they are acceptable to the local population (e.g. entrepreneurship had been alien to the working-class men and women of southwest Alentejo, and local community associations and small-scale cooperatives had not been common in the Lima River Valley);

- lobby on behalf of the community for local development projects (e.g. in approaching government institutions, establishing partnerships, etc.);

- attract public and private financial aid and investments to new economic ventures; and

- reduce dependency on external financing by generating their own income (e.g. ESDIME earns money through its consulting services and ARVAL raises funds through the sale of linen products).
Throughout Portugal, increasing numbers of men and women are becoming involved in rural development and the socio-economic integration of the young. This is largely the result of national and EU programmes that have provided financial aid and other forms of support to stimulate economic growth in depressed rural areas and reduce out-migration from these regions. The policies that have helped establish effective local development agencies in Portugal and the projects and programmes of ESDIME and ARVAL, could be implemented in other regions or countries.\textsuperscript{10}

\textsuperscript{10} The author extends his sincere gratitude to the members of the management and staff of ESDIME and ARVAL for their collaboration without which this study would not have been possible.
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POSITIVE EXPERIENCES IN INCREASING
THE INVOLVEMENT OF YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN
IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN SLOVENIA

by Mateja MEŠL, Žare TOMŠIČ

This study presents two examples of successful rural development programmes in Slovenia. Each of these programmes improved the quality of life in rural communities by giving opportunities and responsibilities to local young men and women to create new sources of income and employment.

THE MEŽA VALLEY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME,
THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEW COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY:
ACTIVATING LOCAL POTENTIAL (ALP)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This case study presents the results and experiences of Activating Local Potential (ALP), a community development agency established in 1994 to create and support economic activities in the Meža valley of northeastern Slovenia. The men and women who founded ALP recognized that revitalizing the economy in depressed rural areas demanded knowledge and creativity and an improved entrepreneurial climate. Unemployed young men and women were invited to work with the agency as project managers, to design and implement projects that would generate employment opportunities for themselves and their community. As they did this, they motivated other young men and women to participate in ALP’s activities. This substantially improved the economic situation of young men and women in the Meža valley and thereby increased the prospects for long-term sustainable development.

Description of the area

The narrow Meža valley is surrounded by high mountains on Slovenia’s Austrian border. It is the most heavily forested area in Slovenia. The three major cities in the valley are Mežice, Črna na Koroškem, and the industrial centre of Ravne na Koroškem. There are a number of small villages and individual farms, called ‘cells’, in the mountains. The valley covers an area of 304 km² and has a population of 27 000 inhabitants, averaging 88 people per km². Sixty percent of the population live in the valley’s three cities, the other 40 percent live in small villages and settlements in the mountains. Because of its population distribution, the valley is considered a predominantly rural area.

Two large companies dominate the valley’s economy: the Mežica Lead and Zinc Mine, and the Ravne Steel Works. At the end of the 1980s, these two companies accounted for 70 percent of the area’s gross domestic product (GDP). Agriculture and forestry are also an important part of the economy, accounting for 11 percent of the GDP and employing about 20 percent of the active population. The service sector represents only a small part of the entire economy, but has had the highest growth over the last six years.

The Meža valley, especially its northern region, has suffered some of the most severe out-migration in Slovenia. From 1961 to 1991, the population decreased by 11 percent. The demographic picture
shows that the average age of the population is increasing, and that the number of college or university educated men and women is declining. These trends were considered the primary constraints to regional development. According to the 1989 analysis provided by the Institute for Economic Research, out-migration was mainly caused by:

- an economic structure dominated by labour intensive industries which provide few quality jobs;
- a lack of motivation for local entrepreneurs;
- geographic isolation, poor communications and limited access to educational facilities and information centres;
- a lack of development institutions and technical infrastructure;
- environmental problems; and
- a low quality of life.

**History of ALP**

In the early 1990s, the global economy began a period of restructuring that affected the Meža valley’s major industries. In 1990, the Mežica mine began closing for economic and environmental reasons. This has led to the direct loss of 800 jobs, and even more have been lost indirectly. The shutdown process is expected to continue until the year 2000, so more jobs will disappear in the coming years. Because the Mežica mine and its smelters operate in a narrow valley and use antiquated technologies, the region suffers serious environmental problems. Air pollution has caused severe degradation of the landscape and significant forest damage.

At the end of 1989, the Ravne steel works had 8000 employees. However, it was forced to reduce production substantially and as a result, 2000 men and women had lost their jobs by 1993.

The economic downturn severely affected young men and women. Even for those with a higher education, job opportunities became more and more limited. The unemployment rate for men and women between ages 16 and 25 reached 25 percent.

This unemployment crisis in the Meža valley created an urgent need for strategies that could revitalize the region’s economy. A 1993 study on rural development, prepared by NOV'NA, determined the potential areas for regional development as well as the obstacles to economic growth. The study concluded that the valley’s potential for development lies in the following areas.

- **Natural resources**: The region has the richest forests in Slovenia, yet wood processing remains an underdeveloped industry.

- **Geographic location**: Situated in the heart of the Alps on the Austrian border, the valley offers many opportunities for tourism and trade.

- **Experienced workforce**: Three hundred years of mining and steel processing has created a skilled workforce and industrial capacities favourable for economic development.
Cultural heritage: The Meža valley is known for its scenic beauty, its parks and monuments, and its regional cuisine and handicrafts.

According to the study, the main obstacles to realizing this potential were:
- a lack of knowledge and motivation for the development of new activities outside traditional industries;
- an exodus of educated young men and women from the area;
- the local population’s generally low level of education;
- the passivity of the local population and dependence on social security;
- a lack of investment and start-up capital, due to fears concerning the existing labour-intensive industries, low wages, and the area’s environmental problems;
- poor access to educational facilities and resource centres;
- an absence of institutions of higher education or regional development; and
- a poor communications infrastructure.

The study concluded that the valley could strengthen its economy by taking advantage of its cultural and natural resources, and that this economic development could only be achieved through community-based and professionally organized development projects.

An initiative began in 1993 to bring together local men and women to work toward building the region’s development potential, stimulating new entrepreneurial activities and encouraging the entire community to participate in reviving the region’s economy. Motivational events were organized to share the positive results achieved by community-based development agencies in other countries.¹

All three municipalities and several companies in the region agreed that a development initiative based on the IRD concept might work in the Meža valley. In November 1994, ALP was established. Its 21 founding partners included three local municipalities, six development and consulting agencies, three large state-owned industrial companies and nine privately owned businesses.

ALP was conceived as a non-governmental organization (NGO). It is owned in partnership, with each partner holding an equal share, and is managed on the basis of mutually agreed upon development strategies and operational programmes. It is a non-profit agency which invests any income and profits in local development projects.

ALP’s main goals are to:

¹ The concept of Integrated Resource Development (IRD) in which a local partnership agency made up of private businesses, government bodies and community organizations coordinate development programmes and projects in a professional manner was used as an example of an effective development approach for depressed rural areas. IRD has been successfully implemented throughout Ireland and an Irish development agency from County Mayo, Moy Valley Resources gave a presentation of its projects and results. This agency later became a partner in the Phare Tacis/Lien Programme which supported ALP’s establishment by offering financial support and technical assistance from Irish development workers who helped design ALP’s organizational structure, created planning strategies and provided training for staff. The Phare project started in 1994 and was successfully completed in 1996.
create a link between knowledge and capital to stimulate economic development in the community;

coordinate individual efforts into a comprehensive and professionally led movement for economic development with trained project managers and leaders;

assure community control in planning and implementing development projects;

offer support for new business ventures (stimulating new ideas, business planning, product design, and marketing and financing);

serve as an incubator for new businesses by helping to establish and support them until they are capable of independent and successful growth;

consolidate in one resource centre, professional and technical support for new and already existing businesses; and

provide systematic development and professional marketing for regional products from one central location.

DEVELOPMENT OF ALP

Involvement of young men and women in ALP

To launch ALP, the shareholding partners invested about 2000 ECUs in venture capital and assembled a development team made up of a volunteer group of experts and five highly educated young men and women registered in the public works programme run by the National Employment Office (NEO). The NEO’s public works programme is designed to involve unemployed young men and women in community development activities mostly related to town and village improvement and social work such as child care. The NEO covers the employee’s basic salary and social security for one year and provides money for materials and employment training. The community is responsible for part of the individual’s wages and other overhead costs. In 1995 and 1996, about 3000 young men and women participated in the NEO’s public works programme. Because it has proven to be effective in creating permanent jobs, registration increased in 1997.

With the NEO’s support, young men and women were hired as full-time employees with ALP for one year. This support allowed ALP’s partners to reduce significantly their start-up costs but more importantly, it gave them the opportunity to build a young, creative and enthusiastic development team able to inspire the local population that had become passive and skeptical toward local economic development because of past experiences.

In 1995, when ALP’s development team was formed, its main task was to use the agency’s development strategies to create operational programmes and projects. The development team received support from a group of professional consultants and formal training in entrepreneurship, personal development, team work, project management, communication techniques and marketing. In June 1995, the shareholding partners accepted the development team’s first project. A Tourism Information Centre (TIC) was established in Črna na Koroškem, and two members of ALP’s development team were hired as permanent full-time staff.
Impressed by the effectiveness of the NEO's public works programme in stimulating community development, ALP's partners invited more young men and women from the programme to take part in its activities. By publicizing its activities, organizing promotional events and offering useful training courses, ALP has succeeded in attracting 23 young men and women to participate in its community development projects in its first two-and-one-half years of operation. All of these men and women were registered in NEO's public works programme, were looking for their first job or were unemployed, and were either college or university educated with degrees in a variety of professional fields, such as economics, sociology, journalism, information sciences, agriculture or law. While with ALP, these young men and women received professional training in different areas of project management which they used to design and implement several community development projects and improve their prospects for future employment.

Of these 23 young men and women, two continued their studies at university, while the rest found employment with one of ALP's partner companies or with small local businesses. They succeeded in not only creating jobs for themselves, they also strengthened the region's economic infrastructure by providing quality services and new business opportunities for the whole community. Because of ALP's accomplishments, many local young men and women have chosen to use its services and have obtained support for their business initiatives or received employment training.

Currently, an executive from one of ALP's partner companies, NOV'NA, manages the agency on a part-time basis, and five young men and women in the NEO's public works programme work as project managers. Another six to ten unemployed young men and women, also in NEO's public works programme, are receiving training in special services and project management.

Because of its innovative approaches to local development in the Meža Valley and its success in creating employment for young men and women, ALP has been recognized as one of the most successful community development organizations in Slovenia and has attracted financial support from national agencies such as the NEO, the National Small Business Center (NSBC), the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food, as well as international development programmes such as Phare.

**ALP's Development programmes**

ALP and its development team have established three resource centres to address different areas of community development.

- The TIC provides information and services to improve and promote tourism in the region.

- The Business Support Center (BSC) provides information and guidance to men and women who have an established business or who wish to start a new one.

- The Human Resource Development Centre (HRDC) provides training and employment services for the unemployed, small-scale entrepreneurs, farmers and young men and women who have left school.

**Tourism development**

The tourism development programme is the most advanced of ALP's initiatives. The TIC staff has designed the entire promotional strategy which advertizes the Meža valley as ‘King Matjaž’s Park’. The TIC team is made up of two permanent full-time staff members who are supported by four unemployed men and women registered in the NEO's public works programme. The TIC has pre-
pared special package tours that have been successfully marketed through three other tourism information offices, and new products and services are constantly being developed. The TIC hires 25 to 30 local young men and women on a contract basis to act as tour guides, improve local athletic and recreational facilities in Črna na Koroškem for use in the tourist industry, manage ski lifts, tennis courts, and playing fields and provide special mountain tours. This project is financially supported by the NEO, by the local community which pays for the cost of infrastructure and by Phare’s Austria-Slovenia Cross-border Cooperation Programme which promotes the development of outdoor activities such as mountain-biking, mountaineering and trekking. The plan is to develop this project into a self-sustaining business which would manage and market athletic and recreational tourist activities in the region and would employ four permanent full-time staff members.

The TIC, with financial support from the NEO, has designed a training programme for young men and women who have left school. Those in the programme receive in-class vocational training in occupations related to tourism and are given a three-month job placement in restaurants, pubs and other businesses to gain practical experience. In connection with this, the TIC, with support from Phare’s Partnership and Institution Building Programme, is working to establish a permanent training Center for tourism in rural areas.

The TIC’s strategies to promote tourism in the Meža valley have contributed to the region’s development and improved the economic situation of young men and women in the following ways.

- Tourism has created jobs for young men and women in the Meža valley and offers tremendous potential for generating more employment, not only in businesses directly related to tourism but in other underdeveloped service industries.
- By emphasizing the valley’s cultural traditions and natural beauty in its promotional strategy, the TIC has created a stronger sense of regional identity and community pride.
- Promotion of tourism has raised the profile of the Meža valley and opened new opportunities for marketing locally manufactured products and attracting outside investment.

**Small business development**

ALP has established the Business Support Center (BSC) to provide assistance to a variety of business initiatives in the Meža valley. The BSC is connected to a nationwide network of information centres and support institutions. The most important of these organizations are the NEO and the NSBC, both of which offer assistance to young men and women who want to put their business ideas into action. ALP has made a successful application to administer all of the NEO’s and NSBC’s projects and programmes in the Meža valley.

The BSC’s most important service for young men and women is its self-employment programme. The BSC has designed business strategies and provided training and financial support for new businesses in such fields as agro-tourism, farm-based processing of agricultural products, transportation and souvenir production.

The BSC feels its most important objective is to stimulate new business ventures. Towards this end, the BSC organized workshops with groups of local men and women in the village of Sentanel, where there are several farms offering tourist accommodations but few other tourist services. These workshops generated a number of ideas which led to the establishment of a village souvenir shop, a crafts studio, a farm museum and a tour guide service.
ALP is also developing programmes aimed at increasing employment opportunities for men and women from special groups in the community who traditionally have had difficulty finding full-time work. The most promising of these programmes are designed to provide:

- supplementary income for farm families through a central marketing system;
- employment opportunities in the domestic service industry for women with little education; and
- employment opportunities in telemarketing and at-home work for physically and mentally challenged men and women.

The BSC’s projects and programmes have contributed to the region’s development and improved the economic situation of young men and women in the following ways.

- Local entrepreneurs have greater access to information about effective business practices and better connections with national data bases through the BSC’s resource centre.
- By administering national support programmes in the community and by establishing a local small business development fund, the BSC has made legal aid and financial assistance more accessible to local entrepreneurs.
- By improving the region’s information and communication infrastructure, the BSC has provided local men and women with employment opportunities in the fields of innovation and technology.

**Human resource development**

In keeping with its general strategy for community development, ALP’s principle objective is to improve the educational level and the overall knowledge base in the valley. The HRDC is becoming ALP’s core programme because it has proven itself the most vital instrument for stimulating development. Vocational training programmes have been designed for several different groups, the most important of which are unemployed young men and women.

ALP continues to work closely with the NEO’s public works programme which remains an important source for employment training for young men and women in the Meža valley. Based on ALP’s successes, the NEO has developed a nationwide training programme for unemployed young men and women that involves them directly in community development projects. Project managers from ALP have been employed as instructors in this programme.

The HRDC also offers unemployed young men and women on-the-job employment training in small and medium size companies. Young women have been trained as administrative assistants in SMEs, and some have been given job placements in a variety of businesses, including restaurants, telecommunication companies, wood processing companies and financial services agencies.

The HRDC collaborates with students from the universities at Ljubljana and Maribor who carry out research studies on ALP’s rural development activities. Each year, an economics student is hired to work one day per week at ALP. ALP and the regional university students’ association jointly organize information meetings and social events in the community as well as an annual job fair with potential employers in the region.
By organizing motivational workshops for unemployed men and women, ALP has been able to monitor closely the local employment situation. In 1997, more than 150 men and women participated in these two-day workshops where they received personal guidance counselling and information concerning the local job market and new development initiatives in the valley. Regular evaluations of the local labour market and ALP’s human resource development programmes have shown that the region has benefited from ALP’s services in the following ways.

- ALP’s collaboration with the NEO’s public works programme has provided employment opportunities for local young men and women.
- By providing rural communities with training programmes that had been available only in urban centres and by developing new educational facilities locally, the HRDC has improved access to vocational training.
- The HRDC has helped integrate educational and employment policies into a broader community development strategy.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

ALP’s experiences in the Meža valley permit certain conclusions to be drawn regarding rural development and development programmes involving young men and women.

- Rural development requires the presence of effective local agencies that can coordinate the efforts of the private and public sectors, and assure that national employment programmes and business incentives are made accessible to those who need them and are implemented effectively. ALP, with its trained management team and technical infrastructure, filled this need in the Meža valley. Local men and women became less dependent on development agencies in the capital for training, information and financial assistance. Also, local development agencies, such as ALP, create quality employment opportunities in the region and as a result, increase the community’s overall knowledge base and capacity for innovation.

- Local development agencies have limited financial resources and often require additional funding from outside sources. Without the support of the NEO’s public works programme, ALP would have been far less effective in integrating young men and women in its development activities. NEO’s public works programme gave local young men and women the chance to create employment opportunities for themselves and provided the community with a highly motivated and well trained development team that is helping to spark an economic renewal.

- To increase the participation of young men and women in rural development projects, it is necessary that they be involved in every phase of the project, from its conception to its implementation. In the Meža valley, young men and women were given the chance to plan and carry out their own development initiatives. They rose to the challenge, and as a result, they became leaders in their community. With their knowledge, creativity and enthusiasm, they improved their own socio-economic position and the quality of life in the entire area. Fresh ideas from young men and women were needed in the Meža valley where a decline in traditional heavy industries and a dependency on social security programmes had left the local population feeling resigned to economic stagnation.
Rural development requires that vocational training be available locally and that the training methods promote community involvement. Before ALP began its activities, vocational training often was only offered in cities outside the Meža valley and was not formally structured. However, once the HRDC was established, young men and women from a variety of social groups could receive training locally in a range of areas, including personal development, team work, and community building. This was important for the success of ALP’s training programmes and projects which were all developed through workshops and were based on the principle of team work. The men and women of the Meža valley were not used to working together in teams and generating ideas in groups. By introducing group work techniques, men and women involved in separate projects learned to support one another. This is essential for community solidarity and effective rural development.

Successful rural development must instill a sense of pride in rural communities, otherwise there will be little motivation for the local population to become involved in development projects. By designing projects that validate and build on the region’s cultural and natural resources, local young men and women are more inclined to remain in the area and participate in the development of its potential. By promoting the Meža valley as an attractive tourist destination, ALP not only succeeded in increasing economic activity in the region, it also reaffirmed, for the local men and women of all ages, the value of their cultural identity.

THE INVOLVEMENT OF STUDENTS IN A DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF ŠKOFJA LOKA:
STUDENT OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This case study describes a rural development project which successfully encouraged young men and women to return to their communities after completing college and university in cities outside their region. The municipality of Škofja Loka’s Students Operational Programme (SOP) offered students professional training and a chance to manage projects which helped develop the local tourist industry. The community benefited from the fresh ideas the students brought to the tourism promotion campaign and from the projects they implemented. By increasing the students’ attachment to their native communities, the area improved its prospects for long-term economic development. The students were able to take advantage of the opportunity to use the skills and experience they acquired in business management to create employment for themselves.

Description of the area
The municipality of Škofja Loka, in central Slovenia, is an alpine area of narrow valleys and high mountains. Most of the region’s 39 000 inhabitants live in the 1000 year old city of Škofja Loka or in smaller towns and villages. The rural population of about 8000 is distributed throughout 16 communities that include both lowland and highland regions. Four of the these rural mountain communities have suffered some of the most severe out-migration in all Slovenia.

The area’s economy is primarily industrial, with about 75 percent of the GNP generated in urban centres compared to a national average of 54 percent. The economic situation is relatively stable in comparison to other parts of Slovenia. However, its industrial base is threatened by changes in the
global economy, and the region will have to develop its service sector in order to remain secure.

At the end of the last decade, rural areas were marked by severe out-migration. Rural economies were almost entirely dependent on agriculture, and in mountain areas growing conditions placed severe limits on production. Job opportunities were scarce and, as the national economy underwent profound changes, the local labour market became even more competitive and unemployment grew. It was clear there was a pressing need for new economic activities which could bring jobs and income into rural areas.

In the region of Škofja Loka, there are no education and training institutions for students who have finished high school. To continue their education, students must commute 30 km to Ljubljana, Slovenia’s capital. For students from rural areas travelling is especially difficult because public transportation connections are very poor.

Employment possibilities are limited for young men and women in Škofja Loka because the economy lacks diversity and is dominated by labour intensive industries which offer few quality jobs and which are increasingly at risk due to the global trend toward free trade. Instead of looking for work in their own communities, young men and women often prefer to search for jobs in Ljubljana or Kranj, the nearest large cities. If they find work there, they usually move away from their home towns because the daily commute is too difficult. A declining population, especially of young men and women with higher education in Škofja Loka was recognized as the main constraint for economic development.

**Regional Development Programme (RDP)**

In 1991, the Škofja Loka municipal council and NOV’NA, a consulting agency, designed the Regional Development Programme (RDP) for mountainous rural areas in the municipality of Škofja Loka. The programme’s objective was to improve the quality of life in the area by creating new economic activities that make use of local cultural and natural resources and that are safe for the environment.

A global management approach was used to identify the region’s development potential and the factors that inhibit socio-economic growth. The area’s potential for development lay in its natural beauty, rich cultural heritage, the wide variety of agricultural products and handicrafts, and the existing industrial infrastructure. All the rural communities lacked was information about business development and an entrepreneurial spirit.

Although agriculture is and will remain the basis of the region’s economy, tourism and traditional wood processing were seen as offering the greatest prospects for development.

Based on these findings, motivational activities were designed as a first step in RDP’s development activities. The following is a list of their most effective initiatives.

- To promote the programme throughout the region, trial projects in tourism and wood processing were organized in several communities. In Sorica, a beautiful village high in the mountains, RDP and the local community designed a campaign to promote tourism by improving accommodations, services and infrastructure. In Davča, the largest community in the region, local men and women established small workshops for wood processing. After the success of the first five of these workshops, other entrepreneurs expressed an interest in investing in similar ventures. In 1993, men and women in the community of Javorje took advantage of the existing tourism
facilities (ski lifts) to develop agrotourism in the area and, as a result, four farms were adapted to accommodate tourists.

- Information and support were provided to local communities and to interested men and women to help them develop new business ventures.

- Members of the municipal government as well as men and women participating in local development projects formed the Rural Development Initiative Group (RDIG).

As result of this initial phase of the rural development programme, new businesses were created in the tourism, service and manufacturing sectors. It was decided that priority should be given to developing the tourism industry since it was recognized as having the most potential for generating employment and supplementary income. Increased tourism also benefits other local businesses, in a way that does not disturb the environment or local cultural values.

Consequently, in 1992, to further the work of the RDP, the municipal government of Škofja Loka created the Rural Tourism Development Strategy (RTDS) with the aim of:

- laying the foundation for long-term growth of tourism in the region in order to diversify the local economy, create employment opportunities and spark economic growth in other areas;

- fostering an entrepreneurial spirit in the local population and encouraging men and women to participate in community development activities; and

- supporting already established development projects.

Its approach has been designed to build on the region’s strengths: its natural beauty and cultural heritage, the traditional knowledge and skills of local artisans and the existing infrastructure. It seeks to create high quality tour packages centred around the attractions of the historic city of Škofja Loka, in order to boost tourism throughout the region. All its development initiatives would be designed to meet the expressed needs of the local community and to be environmentally safe.

Its strategies, based on development studies and consultations with local men and women, provided the community with a long-term vision of its economic future and a practical programme for reaching immediate economic goals. It also outlined a step-by-step procedure for achieving community development; starting with a campaign to change the business climate in the area by encouraging local men and women to participate in community development projects and to make use of local resources to promote tourism and economic growth.

The main obstacle to economic growth in the region was the pessimism and passivity of the local population. Local men and women were skeptical about community development initiatives, and hesitant to take risks or incur debts. There was a lack of information about new economic trends and development opportunities. The local population was unaware of its own potential and continued to wait for the solutions to come from outside.

What the local population needed was encouragement and practical results that proved that community initiated development projects could improve the quality of their lives. Therefore, in the RTDS, priority was given to changing negative attitudes about community development. In every community in the region, motivational activities were organized to encourage men and women to
participate in community development activities and assume responsibility for improving their economic situations. Community development projects were designed in response to the needs and ideas that local men and women expressed during the motivational workshops. Consulting and support were offered to help develop and raise funds for these activities.

Support was also given to the development projects already under way in Sorica, Davča and Javorje. This included:

- the establishment of a regional tourism office and a community and tourist information centre in Sorica;
- providing promotional materials for locally made products;
- improving the tourism infrastructure in Javorje and Davča by creating and promoting theme tours through the area and by arranging package tours in cooperation with the local ski resort;
- creating a marketing network linking domestic craft production workshops with tourism; and
- expanding the development of theme tours and tourist products to other local communities.

THE STUDENT OPERATION PROGRAMME (SOP)

Background

By 1994, the Municipality of Škofja Loka had launched two development initiatives, the RDP and the RTDS, and had carried out successful projects in the villages of Sorica, Javorje and Davča. However, community leaders were faced with the problem that there were not enough qualified local men and women available to design and manage development projects. Local governments did not have professionally trained staff able to assume the responsibility of implementing the development strategies, and there were no community development agencies operating locally. The men and women who had initiated the development strategies were not experienced enough to take charge of project management.

SOP, an idea proposed by the RDIG, was designed to solve the region’s human resource problem by organizing a group of local students, training them in project management and community development work, and involving them in implementing local development strategies. The project was intended to benefit all 16 local communities by exposing them to the fresh ideas generated by the student development team. Local farmers, with meager revenues from agricultural production, would be able to explore the possibilities of finding supplementary income generating activities. Artisans, entrepreneurs and farmers, hampered by their limited access to larger markets, would receive input regarding marketing strategies. Above all, male and female students and unemployed university graduates, facing an uncertain employment future, would gain valuable work experience and have a chance to express their ideas about local economic growth and work toward securing a fulfilling career.

Members of the RDIG were aware that the most effective results would come from a coordinated effort by RDP and RTDS and that SOP, which provides a link between these two initiatives, plays a
role in both rural development and the development of the regional tourism industry.

**History of SOP**

SOP was presented in concept to the local government in every community in the region. Two communities voted to support the programme in its initial phase. The programme was then publicized in the local media, through the students association in Ljubljana and through a letter writing campaign. Any student who had finished three years of courses in any discipline was eligible to participate. Interested students were invited to a meeting in which the development strategies, projects and results of RDP and RDTS programmes were presented. Fifteen of the students (almost all) agreed to join the project. The Rural Development Initiative Group organized a training program for them which included seminars on the global management approach to rural development and on personal development. Funding proposals were sent to various national agencies, and the programme received financing from the National Programme for Rural Development and Village Renewal (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry), and the National Fund for the Development of Depopulated Areas (Ministry of Economic Relations and Development). Municipal governments covered the material costs for the students’ work. The programme began operating in January 1996 with a group of 15 students from a range of backgrounds, including agriculture, geography, economy, architecture, design, journalism and sociology. Ten more students joined the development team later. These students came from both rural and urban communities and worked together in teams. It is perhaps surprising that students from the cities were the ones who displayed the most enthusiasm for work on rural development projects.

**SOP Activities**

In the programme’s first phase the students used the knowledge gained in the training seminars and, with help from professional advisors, took stock of the region’s tourist services and facilities. After this, in conjunction with local authorities, they defined potential areas for tourism development and identified obstacles that would need to be overcome.

The next part of the initial phase involved organizing potential joint tourism ventures in cooperation with local members of the community, elaborating tourist itineraries which could be incorporated into an attractive tour package, and designing promotional materials.

In accordance with priorities established by the RDIG, three new projects were designed in the second phase.

- A three-student team worked on developing a tourist itinerary through the mountain villages to enhance and expand the tour package which was centered around Škofja Loka.

- Two students worked on restoring cultural monuments so that they could be used in the tourism promotion campaign. Financial assistance was given for the restoration of selected monuments.

- One student worked on civic improvements, especially a medieval castle in Škofja Loka, which is the prime attraction for the whole tourism package

Nine students, mostly designers and architects, continue to work on these programmes and projects.

**Problems, Obstacles and Recommendations**

Initially, the greatest difficulty the programme faced was convincing community leaders that students are capable of designing and managing local development projects. With SOP’s successes, this has become much less of a problem.
Obtaining adequate financing for training and other costs continues to be a major problem. Although local mayors have agreed to support the programme, there are no funds available to pay for the professional counselling and supervision necessary for student groups.

It was determined that younger students should be eligible to participate in SOP. One year was not enough time for students to complete their training and develop their projects into economically viable businesses offering permanent employment after graduation. Also, there is no financial aid available to support young men and women in the critical early stages of business development.

**Results and Recommendations**

SOP was able to implement programmes and projects for one-half the cost of professional development agencies. More importantly, because the development team came from the community, they were more aware of the region’s needs and resources and had greater incentive to achieve lasting results. The following is a list of the programme’s most significant results after its first year.

- Local young men and women became more enthused about community development. By contributing to the region’s economic renewal, the students grew more attached to their local communities. This inspired other young men and women to participate in rural development.

- Three existing development programmes which were in the implementation phase were expanded upon.

- The programme demonstrated to local communities that any young man or woman, regardless of educational background, can make an important contribution to community development, provided he or she has sufficient commitment and a willingness to work as part of a team.

- Students became more informed about development trends and policies, and funding programmes. Because the students lived and studied in Ljubljana, they acted as ambassadors, providing an important information link between the urban and rural communities.

- Students received training at no cost in areas essential for their professional development and that were not part of their university curriculum.

- The students used their practical experiences in their university studies and this improved their academic performance.

The results achieved during the first year of the project prompted other local governments to participate in the programme. Ten more students joined the programme and the scope of its activities was expanded to include the entire rural area. Because of this, the results obtained during the programme’s second year were more tangible.

- A tourist route is completely arranged and on the market.

- Three more packages are being designed, including a city tour of Škofja Loka, a cultural tour of the entire region and an agricultural tour.

- Promotional material and tour guides have been organized for tourists making day trips to the region.
A training programme for tourist guides has been established.

Three students are preparing dissertations on the development of rural tourism in mountain regions and the development of traditional craft production on farms.

Three members of the first team are now project leaders involved in creating an overall development strategy for the municipality of Škofja Loka. Four others are project managers for new programmes and initiatives. The programme created jobs for several of the students. One works in a travel agency, four are employed in municipal governments as administrative assistants, project coordinators and information technicians, and two others have become freelance designers for cultural organizations.

As a result of the programme’s success, the mayors of every community in Škofja Loka agreed to provide funding for SOP so that it can continue to provide training and opportunities to students seeking experience and employment in community development projects.
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POSITIVE EXPERIENCES IN INCREASING
THE INVOLVEMENT OF YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN
IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN NORTHERN IRELAND

YouthAction Northern Ireland

by Teresa Geraghty

Introduction
This study documents the work of YouthAction NI in rural areas of Northern Ireland. YouthAction has recently completed a 15-month research project examining the role of young people in rural community development. The research, presented in the report 'A Sense of Belonging', was conducted from August 1995 to December 1996, against a changing political background in three areas of Northern Ireland, all of which are designated disadvantaged in terms of economic activity and social infrastructure. The areas are the South Mournes, Castlederg and surrounding areas, and the Glens of Antrim. All of Northern Ireland is designated an EU Objective No 1 region.

In Northern Ireland, groups from two communities have been engaged in violent conflict over the region's political status. Loyalist forces from the Protestant majority favoured a continued political union with Great Britain, while the Irish Republican Army (IRA), whose members are from the Catholic minority, was seeking to establish an independent republic. In Northern Ireland, it is generally assumed that a person's religious denomination determines his or her political convictions. In this climate of violence, symbols and colours assume a heightened importance and serve to maintain solidarity within each community and entrench the divisions between them.

In 1994 both Loyalist and Republican groups declared ceasefires. The Republican ceasefire was broken in February 1996 but reinstated in July 1997. The peace process which followed has since resulted in the signing of the “Good Friday Agreement” in April 1998 and the election of 108 members to a local Assembly in May 1998.

Rural areas have not suffered the same physical damage as urban centres during this protracted civil conflict, known as ‘The Troubles’. However, the same atmosphere of suspicion prevails. Considerable progress has been made in the political backdrop in Northern Ireland, but it would be a mistake to think that issues of conflict resolution no longer need to be addressed. There continues to be a need to foster trust, cooperation, respect and mutual understanding both within and between communities. Those involved in local development groups that struggle to bring the two groups together often face criticism from within their own communities. This is also true for young men and women who participate in cross-community activities.

International experts in conflict resolution compare Northern Ireland to other contested societies, such as Bosnia, South Africa and Israel. YouthAction feels that its programmes and methodologies, designed to cope with sensitive social issues in areas where there is little trust among community members, could be transferred to other regions in conflict.
Youth Service Policy

YouthAction’s programmes and research complement youth services provided by government agencies and other independent organizations. Its activities respond to changes in government policies aimed at decentralizing youth services and promoting partnerships with volunteer and community organizations in order to develop citizenship and re-establish a sense of community. This involves a partial transfer of responsibility for youth services from state institutions to local community organizations or private agencies. Along with this decentralization of services, the government also has adopted a policy that seeks to enhance local democracy and increase local accountability for services.

Many government agencies have developed new approaches to deal with this shift toward community responsibility for youth services. However, the Northern Ireland Youth Service is one of the few agencies that has not, and it is under increasing pressure to do so. Pressures come from other government agencies that wish to integrate their services in order to provide more effective programmes and from communities demanding greater control over local programmes for young people. The Northern Ireland Youth Service also must adapt to government policies reducing public spending.

YouthAction’s research and other studies (e.g. North Eastern Education and Library Board, 1994) have shown that the majority of young men and women over the age of 16 are unlikely to use traditional youth services. It would appear that neither the policies nor the practice are relevant to them. Youth agencies have tended to provide their services in a manner that segregates young people from the rest of the community. This approach makes the young feel undervalued and ignored, and that they have little to contribute because they have not made the transition to adulthood.

Excluding young men and women from participation in a broad range of local activities is a waste of potential. It creates a situation with little social change, because the same mistakes are repeated. Until there is a change in the way youth services are delivered, young men and women will not attain the full citizenship rights and the recognition they deserve, and community development will be hindered.

The shift to local control and delivery of youth services opens the possibility of redefining community development. It creates an opportunity for youth service agencies, wherever they operate, to build partnerships with the young, to advocate on their behalf and to stimulate an exchange of ideas among young people and those in positions of power and authority. These agencies could play a role in creating opportunities for young men and women to stake their claims in local development.

YOUTH ACTION NORTHERN IRELAND

YouthAction NI is a voluntary non-governmental youth organization that cooperates with youth workers and concerned adults to support young men and women, especially those from communities considered disadvantaged, as they strive to define their identity and integrate themselves into society. Their activities focus on:

- helping young men and women assume active roles in their communities;
- providing employment and life skills training;
- offering appropriate and effective training for youth workers and community activists;

- promoting equality of opportunity;

- developing innovative programmes and resource materials that encourage self-reliance and entrepreneurship in young men and women; and

- creating opportunities for children and young men and women to participate in arts, sports and recreational events.

An important aspect of YouthAction’s rural research involves the development of new methodological approaches to enhance the quality of youth services and its role in community development. Four studies which were part of a 15-month research project will be reviewed later in this case study.

**Initiatives targeted at young women in rural areas**

**Moving On (funded by the EU Employment Initiative - Horizon)**

Moving On is an accredited pre-vocational course for young mothers between ages 18 and 25. The course is designed to suit the particular needs of the young women and offers training in such areas as parenting, personal development, computer skills, job skills, work placement, health and first aid. After completing the programme, some young women choose to continue their education and training, and others find employment, sometimes as a result of their work placement training. Course materials are developed jointly with international partners. YouthAction’s work with international partners has shown that the Moving On Programme can be transferred to other developing regions, including ECTs.

**Lifting the Limits (funded by the EU Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation - Employment Initiative)**

Lifting the Limits is a community leadership programme for young mothers between ages 18 and 25. This year-long programme combines training and practical work, in order to develop the personal and professional skills of young mothers and to improve their prospects for future employment and education. It also seeks to address the social barriers and inequalities facing young mothers and to support their integration into the workforce and the community. It is an accredited programme which can lead to higher education and training in youth, community and social work.

**Speaking Out (funded by the Rural Development Council)**

Speaking Out is a two-year programme that provides support and training to young women from different youth and community groups throughout Northern Ireland. Having acquired new skills, participants then can establish young women’s groups in their own communities and pass their experiences to other young women.

Currently in its second year, the women involved participate in monitoring and evaluating the programme’s development.

**Video Project (funded by EU Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation - Cross Border Initiative with the Republic of Ireland)**

This project involves 14 young mothers from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland who
have completed the Moving On programme. The young women in the programme are creating a video which deals with issues relevant to their lives and reflects the essential elements of Moving On. Each of the young women receives credits in video skills and techniques.

Rural Development Unit
YouthAction Northern Ireland is seeking to establish the Rural Development Unit to build on the results of the Action Research Project. The Rural Development Unit aims to develop and support work with young men and women in rural areas by:

- supporting projects organized by young people, in order to develop their skills and potential;
- supporting governmental, community and volunteer organizations in their work with young men and women in rural areas;
- making resources and information available on the social integration of young men and women;
- designing rural development strategies, both local and regional, that respond to the needs of young men and women; and
- promoting policies which seek to gauge how measures and plans are targeted at rural young people.

The Rural Development Unit’s current activities include:

- assisting various groups from LEADER II (Links among Rural Development Actions) and the Area-Based Strategy Rural Development Programme (Northern Ireland Department of Agriculture) in developing youth programmes;
- assisting agencies established under the EU Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in involving young people in their programmes and strategies;
- training members of rural development organizations and project workers to work with young men and women;
- assisting an Action Research Alliance group from the Rural Development Council in working with young people; and
- providing input regarding community development in rural areas for the University of Ulster’s Professional Community Youth Work training course.

RURAL ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

The Action Research Project, carried out between August 1995 and February 1997 provided a profile of the needs, hopes and aspirations of men and women between ages 14 and 25 in rural communities in Northern Ireland. It also:

- evaluated the quality of the services directed to young men and women;
designed community development strategies responsive to the needs of the young;

- established partnerships with rural development networks to design strategies involving young adults in overall development plans;

- reviewed initiatives from other European countries for examples of innovative programmes that integrate young men and women into rural development;

- provided feedback to youth service agencies which assisted them in evaluating their services;

- provided information to youth service agencies and local development groups concerning the attitudes of young men and women in rural communities; and

- designed strategies that encouraged participation of young adults in community development projects.

**Practice studies**

The research team used practice studies not only to gather information but to demonstrate potential new approaches for integrating youth services into broader community development. They also served to make a practical contribution to the community which was particularly important for the young men and women participating in the research project.

YouthAction researchers felt that for their practice studies to be successful, there needed to be a commitment from local men and woman from all age groups to work together for a common purpose, and that they must be willing to support and challenge each other in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect.

The methodological approaches the research team wanted to demonstrate made use of the following tools for community development:

- consciousness raising;

- participation - an essential element in community development, ranging from minimal to fully committed involvement, including participation in decision-making;

- conscientization - a term coined by Paulo Freire (1972) to describe a process in which experiences are shared, validated and reflected upon in order to support future action;

- partnership - a relationship in which men and women in groups or individually share power equally;

- self-help - the capacity within communities to engineer their own development but not a substitute for support from government agencies or other institutions;

- capacity-building - the validation and development of local knowledge and skills;

- collective action - social mobilization made possible by the transformation of individual issues into common concerns;
community education - education in the community, by the community and for the community which can involve both structured courses on subjects such as literacy and numeracy, and informal instruction concerning personal development; and

community politics - grassroots political activism that seeks to assure equitable distribution of local power and involve all members of the community in decision-making processes.

The following section includes a brief description of the four practice studies that were conducted and a listing of their major outcomes.

I. Video Project

Young men and women wanted to express their views at a community meeting which adults would be attending. They did not feel confident enough to speak at the meeting and decided to make a video that would deliver their message. A member of the YouthAction research team was asked to help with the video project, and her role as facilitator was agreed upon. Regular meetings were arranged, agendas set and responsibilities delegated. During the meetings, the video's content and style were decided democratically. The video was shown at the meeting and was well received.

While writing and producing the video, the young people had the opportunity to:

- discuss issues relevant to them and to express their needs;
- identify factors that both inhibit and encourage their participation in community activities;
- develop methods to facilitate the expression of their ideas to local adults and workers;
- learn new skills and gain experience in community affairs;
- feel that their ideas were heard by local community representatives;
- enjoy and appreciate the value of collective action; and
- share experiences and develop a greater understanding of each other's skills and abilities.

Adults and young men and women were able to share experiences and reflect on how these had affected them. This helped consolidate the relationship between the younger and older generations within this community.

The researcher had the opportunity to record the ideas and attitudes of local young men and women and observe the methods they used to express themselves.

II. Youth Workshop

A number of young people expressed a desire to meet with other young people in the area to discuss common issues. Consequently, the YouthAction researcher invited those who were interested to a general meeting to discuss the purpose and content of the proposed workshop. All agreed that the researcher would support but not supervise the project. During a period of several weeks at a series of preparatory meetings, the objectives for the workshop were agreed upon, and a contract was drawn up which clearly defined each person's responsibilities. An invitation list was drawn up, and the workshop was publicized in schools and throughout the community.
During the workshop, the young people acted as facilitators for the full group and small group sessions. At the end of the day, a member of the local community development association joined the workshop to praise their work and invited them to participate in the organization of a local festival. Also in attendance was an official from the local Education and Library Board who encouraged young people to use him as a resource in the future.

The group of young men and women involved in the project:

- developed and demonstrated leadership skills;
- gained greater awareness of the needs of other young people in the area;
- improved their self-confidence;
- learned to organize a workshop;
- became aware of support available to them locally;
- enjoyed sharing experiences and working together;
- became involved in other community activities; and
- became more pro-active in making their demands known.

Adults and youth workers saw that young men and women are able to organize community activities on their own when the appropriate support is available.

III. Planning a Local Festival

A community group approached a YouthAction researcher to coordinate a youth subcommittee that would plan events and activities for a week-long local festival. The subcommittee would then submit the plans to the main committee. It was hoped that some of the young men and women on this subcommittee would remain involved in the community group and would encourage others to join. The subcommittee and the researcher discussed past festivals before brainstorming for new ideas. The ideas generated during these discussions were then canvassed among their peers to gauge which were the most popular. The subcommittee then met to finalize the proposals and to determine how they would be presented to the main committee.

Initially, the members of the main organizing committee encouraged members of the youth subcommittee. However, their attitude became more harsh as deadlines drew nearer. Some ignored the work of youth subcommittee entirely, others dealt only with the YouthAction researcher. The main organizing committee's focus on money and control led to fears that the events planned by the youth subcommittee would be too costly, embarrassing or controversial.

The hostile behaviour of members of the main organizing committee was not only aimed at the youth subcommittee. They also tended to be dismissive, inconsiderate and generally non-supportive of each other's ideas.

The young men and women involved in the project:
n successfully organized a series of events at a local festival;

n demonstrated to themselves and others that they are capable of working on their own, if adult support (but not supervision) is made available;

n enjoyed being given responsibility and working with local community groups;

n observed how community groups operate; and

n identified factors which inhibited their participation in such groups.

The adults in the festival committee, as well as other members of the community, saw that local young men and women were willing to become involved in community activities. The potential for partnership was demonstrated but not entirely realized.

The YouthAction researcher identified the factors which hindered the participation of youth in community groups and was able to address them in a limited way.

IV. Community Meeting

A local community group asked a YouthAction researcher to attend a meeting organized to address the problem of hooliganism. Acting on a request by the researcher, a planning meeting was scheduled. However, the researcher was unable to attend because she was given only 24 hours notice. She did meet later with the chairperson and suggested that YouthStart's research questionnaires might be used as a starting point for discussions with the young people.

The researcher agreed to play the role of a facilitator. However, when she arrived at the meeting, she discovered that she and a youth worker were expected to act as chairpersons. A member of the community group decided against using the questionnaires and instead used some of the statements on the questionnaires as discussion topics. Following brief introductions, the assembly split into three smaller groups. The youth worker, the researcher and other adults facilitated the discussions. The district youth officer, a police officer and other adults observed the proceedings.

During the plenary discussion, several issues were raised, the conversation became heated and very personal. As the researcher did not wish to see anyone in a potentially embarrassing situation, she intervened and brought the discussion to an end. She proposed that if the young people wanted to meet again without adults present, in order to talk about the issues raised at the meeting, she and the youth worker were willing to act as facilitators. This was agreed to by all.

At the next meeting, the researcher found that another district youth officer had sent a senior staff member to the meeting to 'offer support' from the Education and Library Board. Despite knowing that the young people wanted to meet without adults present, he remained in the room. During the meeting, he constantly tried to promote the Education and Library Board's services and spoke of forming a structured group. Although plans were made to meet the following week, none of the young people showed up.

Young men and women:

n had a limited opportunity to discuss issues relevant to them with other members of the community;
opted out of the community activity; and

indicated that they were not satisfied by the procedures being followed.

Local adults saw that the younger generation was interested in working collectively.
Local service providers and security officials (district youth officers and the police) saw that some effort was being made by local adults and youth to come together to address community needs.
The researcher identified a number of different agendas at work.

Analysis and evaluation
An analysis of these practice studies offers useful information about how a community development approach to youth services might be implemented in Northern Ireland and other regions. In each of these practice cases, agendas, roles, relationships and procedures are considered in determining the strengths and weaknesses.

Agendas
For each of these projects, the YouthStart researcher’s agenda was to demonstrate effective methods for integrating local young men and women into community development activities. Establishing partnerships between all those involved was to be an integral part of the process.

The video group and youth workshop were successful because, in both cases, agendas were made clear, and there was a greater understanding of each participant’s viewpoint. This ensured a productive dialogue between the young people and community members.

In the community meeting, the local community group seemed to have a hidden agenda. Hooliganism was not really the problem. The real issue was a power struggle between the young and other members of the community, particularly those involved in promoting tourism. As for the local youth service agencies, it seemed that self-promotion was at the top of their agenda.

Successful social mobilization cannot happen when agendas are not explained, and when the participants see each other as rivals. Also, some of the men and women who participated in the community meeting were task oriented, while others were more interested in the process. This clash between people with differing, unexpressed agendas resulted in failure.

Roles
At the outset of any community activity that involves the young, the role of each person, including the youth worker, must be clearly defined. It is, in fact, an essential part of the activity itself. Defining roles helps to avoid confusion, inconsistency and conflict.

In the video group, those involved knew what was expected of them, because their roles were made clear from the start. It was also understood that these roles could be revised if necessary. For example, during the video project, the researcher and the young men and women assumed the roles of teacher and pupil interchangeably. This gave the video group the self-assurance to take risks and try new ways of communicating.

In the video group and youth workshop, a feeling of security prevailed. The participants knew that mutual support was crucial for the project’s success and, in this atmosphere of trust, any confusion or difficulties concerning individual responsibilities were resolved quickly. This was vital in achieving the full participation and partnership of the young people. In fact, in the youth workshop, the
YouthAction researchers role was minimal. The young people, recruited from their peer groups, organized their own tasks and took responsibility for carrying them out.

In contrast in the festival planning and community meeting, roles were not clearly defined. In both cases, the YouthAction researcher agreed to play the role of facilitator. However, during the course of events, the community groups involved tended to impose other responsibilities on the researcher (i.e. chairperson, supervisor, manager, recruiter and liaison officer) which created a situation in which it was very difficult to build partnerships among the different groups.

Although most roles may be agreed upon, there are others which are automatically ascribed to certain people. The members of the youth subcommittee pointed out that older men and women, whether they like it or not, are role models for youth in their communities. When adults fail to realize this, they can damage their relationships with young people. Adults need to be aware of how influential their behaviour can be and act responsibly.

Relationships
Relationships based on trust and mutual respect are crucial for community development. If such relationships are not present, participants will be reluctant to declare their agendas openly and accept constructive roles in community projects. In all of these practice studies, the YouthStart researcher tried to establish partnerships among all the men and women involved. The extent to which the researcher was able to do this determined the success of the activity.

In both the video group and festival planning, the team-building process was made easier because the researcher had already established a relationship of trust and mutual respect with the young men and women involved. However, in the community meeting, relationships between different groups had to be developed on the spot.

In the festival planning and community meeting, the community agencies often treated the YouthStart researchers more as employees than as partners. Perhaps the young men and women involved also saw them in this light, but nevertheless they were willing to give the process the benefit of the doubt.

In the community meeting, community groups and other members of the community viewed the local youth not as a partners in development, but as a problem that needed to be contained.

Clearly in a relationship which is explicitly defined as a rivalry, no trust will grow, no ideas will be exchanged and no risks will be taken.

Procedures
At the outset of any community project that involves young people, the participants should work together to design a process acceptable to all. Explicit procedures for dealing with difficulties, disagreements and/or dissatisfaction will help reduce frustration, tension and confusion. Taking time to do this can ensure that real partnership and participation is achieved. Planning how community projects will proceed is as important as the results, if not more so.

Also, evaluations should be integrated into any community activity. How these evaluations are conducted is important. All participants should be involved, and feedback should come from a variety of sources. It is preferable for evaluations to be facilitated by an outside observer.
The young men and women in the video group clearly defined the procedures they would follow and understood how the project’s objectives and the process were related. They recognized, however, that these procedures could be modified if they were not working. Building this safety net boosted their confidence and allowed them to enjoy taking risks. These procedures produced satisfactory results for all.

An explicit mission statement prepared by those involved in planning the youth workshop allowed the participants to focus on their respective tasks and understand their purpose. By reflecting on issues that were important to them, the young people involved were able to plan, implement and evaluate their own work. Separate evaluations were made by the students who organized the workshop and by those who participated in it. As a result, the student organizers learned from their experience and made plans for other activities such as participation in a local women’s festival and greater involvement in student council activities. This shows that once skills have been developed in one area, they can be transferred to other activities.

In the festival planning, the procedures adopted by the youth subcommittee conflicted with those of the main organizing committee. The members of the youth subcommittee, though they came from different backgrounds, succeeded in setting common goals which promoted self-reliance and partnership, and they agreed upon procedures that were mutually supportive. This allowed them to present their ideas with confidence. The members of the main organizing committee, on the other hand, followed procedures that seemed antagonistic and were oblivious to how this affected the young men and women they were working with. Because members of the youth subcommittee followed different procedures, they were dismissed by the members of the main committee.

In the community meeting, the absence of a proper planning strategy meant that the youth service providers were excluded from the process. They became merely observers at the meeting, and so the divisions between adults and the young became more entrenched and little was accomplished. Local youth agencies alienated potential users of their services because of their need for very formal procedures.

**Conclusions**

YouthAction research has demonstrated that the rural population in Northern Ireland has shown a genuine willingness to participate in community development. There is an understanding that all members of the community, men and women, young and old, need to be involved in the process. Many are working to find common ground to create mutual trust and respect. Community development networks are helping to promote change by providing a forum in which information and ideas can be shared.

The young men and women involved in these practice studies demonstrated an ability to be active and equal partners in community activities. They willingly assumed responsibility and showed that, while they may need support, they do not always need supervision.

Although the resources and the willingness for community renewal are present in Northern Ireland, the tools necessary for successful development are often lacking. The practice studies demonstrate that a combination of participation, capacity-building, partnership and collective action often is needed to integrate young men and women successfully in community development projects.

If agendas are openly stated, goals and procedures are clearly defined and evaluation is integrated into the process, community development activities can create a situation in which each person can
learn from the other, regardless of age, gender or social background. Establishing a relationship in which everyone benefits can change the dynamic of community politics, as all members of the community realize that sharing power is infinitely more constructive than struggling for power. If this is not done, a situation similar to that in the community meeting may arise, in which no one benefits and community issues remain unresolved. In that instance, young men and women lost an opportunity to contribute to local development, and the community was unable to take advantage of their potential.

**BLUEPRINT FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT APPROACH TO YOUTH SERVICES.**

As a follow-up to their research and practice studies, YouthAction has designed a blueprint for a community development approach to youth services. It is an approach that can be adapted by youth workers and community development associations to suit the local context and the particular objectives of individual projects.

**BLUEPRINT**

Cooperate with young men and women to establish their agenda for community development.

Establish a parallel process with other community members.

Identify and assess the needs of men and women of all ages.

Establish capacity-building with the entire community.

Facilitate dialogue among all participating in the development process.

Find common ground among different groups.

Develop action plans.

Implement development plans.

Support the process.

Evaluate both results and procedures.
YOUTH WORKER AS CATALYST FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community development that satisfies men and woman of all ages requires a catalyst, i.e. a facilitator who can work with all concerned. Professional youth workers trained in interpersonal skills, advocacy and community development are well-suited to this role. Because they are not authority figures as are teachers, police officers or social workers, they are in better positions to establish relationships of trust with young people that validate their experiences, enable them to express their needs and encourage them to participate in community activities.

Increasingly, the professional skills of youth workers are seen as being of use in other contexts. Youth workers also can work with other community groups whose members may feel the need for a safe environment where they can develop the confidence to contribute actively in local development. Expanding the scope of youth workers' activities to include a wider range of local associations would lead to a community development approach to youth services.

Such an approach would:

- develop the capacity of young people to articulate their needs, make plans and assert their rights;
- help rural community-based organizations develop strategies to promote the participation of young men and women in local development;
- provide technical assistance to young men and women and community groups in such areas as planning, training and support, identification of resources and project evaluation;
- develop parallel processes with adult and youth populations supporting the development of dialogue and mediate between the two groups; and
- create a forum in which needs of young people are given priority and in which development policies are influenced.

The use of such an approach could lead to:

- a more confident and skilled youth population, better able to make informed, critical decisions and to exercise rights as citizens, thus contributing to a more participative democracy;
- young people's active involvement in rural community development activities and strategies, resulting in more sustainable rural development;
- the creation of localized processes through which specific issues can be addressed and resolved;
- greater awareness among community development associations of the issues facing young men and women;
- more effective delivery of services for young people;
creation of structures at local and regional levels through which community groups can exert greater influence on policy developments; and

- a youth sector that can play a dynamic role in advocating and demonstrating partnership with young people.

If youth workers are to empower young people, they need to be empowered themselves. It is the responsibility of youth workers, particularly those working individually, and their employers to make sure that adequate support is available. This includes sufficient staff, appropriate training, and managerial and non-managerial assistance. If it is not available from within the agency, arrangements should be made to obtain it from outside sources.

The youth worker requires support, but also autonomy. A lack of autonomy can stifle creativity, undermine confidence and lead to resentment and a lack of motivation, all of which interfere with the youth workers ability to build constructive relationships with community members. Youth workers, while needing direction, rarely need to be given orders, and should not be supervised to the point where quality work is impossible.

Although a community development approach to youth services is intended to increase the social integration of young men and women, it should not eliminate opportunities for the young to develop independently. It should also validate their right to remain outside.

**CONCLUSION**

YouthAction believes that in order to tackle the problem of the social exclusion of young men and women, attention must be paid to community development which encourages true citizenship. To create well-informed, well-motivated and actively participating communities, the rights of young men and women must be acknowledged, and priority given to creating opportunities for them to play active roles in community development (WHO, cited in DHSS, 1996).

YouthAction feels that local youth workers can play an important part in achieving this goal because of their unique relationship with young people. The youth worker often has experience in creating safe environments for finding mutual understanding, where young men and women can feel secure enough to alter their traditional social roles, and where trusting, respectful and supportive partnerships can develop. By facilitating the development of such partnerships, the youth worker can challenge traditional power structures, which often exclude the young, and can provide new approaches to youth services and community development.
RESOURCE LIST

This resource list contains a sample of useful documents regarding the integration of young men and women in rural development.

HOUSING


Rural Housing for Youth, by Eleanor Button, 1992 published by Centrepoint Sobo.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT


The Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme, Review of Progress, 1996, DANI.

Rural Viewpoint is published monthly by ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England) Somerford Court, Somerford Road, Cirencester, Gloucestershire GL7 1TW.

Network News is published quarterly by RCN, 45 James Street, Cookstown, Co. Tyrone.

Various publications by RDC available from their resource centre at Loy Street, Cookstown.

Glen's of Antrim, Community Survey Report, 1994, GARICDA.

Strategic Regeneration and Development Plan for the MourneDerg Area by Murtagh and Logue Partnership for the MourneDerg Regeneration Initiative, 1995


Irish Rural Link, is an umbrella group for community development groups in rural areas of the Republic of Ireland.

The Queen's University of Belfast has a Centre for Rural Studies at Newforge Lane, Belfast BT9 5PX.

The Rural College, Draperstown offer a range of training programmes in Rural Development. Contact The Rural College, Derry, Draperstown, BT45 7DW, Telephone 01648 29100.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT


Poverty in Rural Ireland, edited by Chris Curtin, Trutz Haase, Hilary Tovey, 1996, Oak Tree
Press, Dublin.


Combat Poverty reports available from Combat Poverty, Bridgewater Centre, Conyngham Road, Islandbridge, Dublin 2.

The Voluntary Action Unit (VAU) hold responsibility for coordinating community development as an approach to work. They have a range of resource material relating to community development. Contact VAU, DHSS, Dundonald House, Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast. Telephone: 01232 524256.

The Northern Ireland Science Shop provides information and advice on research methods and design for community and voluntary groups. Contact 111 Botanic Avenue, Belfast, BT7 1JP.

HEALTH

Young Peoples’ Health and Social Needs, Northern Health and Social Services Board Area, 1996, Northern Health and Social Services Board and Homefirst Community Trust.

Health in Rural Areas, Seeking a Rural Policy, Conference Report, 1993, Rural Community Network, Cookstown.

Health & Wellbeing: Into the Next Millennium. 1997-2002, Department of Health and Social Services, Dundonald House, Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast.

YOUTH WORK


Policy for the Youth Service in Northern Ireland, Department of Education 1987.


Carbery Youth Survey, compiled by Carbery Macra na Feirme, undated.

Research into Youth Provision by Richard Louden, Sam McCready, Hugh Campbell, 1994, NEELB.


New Steps, A Pre-vocational Programme For Young Mothers, 1995, YouthAction Northern Ireland.

Youth in Rural Areas, compiled by Rural Community Network, Cookstown, YouthAction Northern Ireland, Belfast and Young Farmers’ Clubs of Ulster, Belfast. Undated.


Delivering Rural Youthwork, by Youth Clubs UK, 1984 Leicester.


Social Action Today, published quarterly by the Centre for Social Action, De Montfort
University, Leicester.

National Youth Agency publish Young People Now monthly and also have a resource centre from which materials may be purchased or borrowed, 17-23 Albion Street, Leicester LE1 6GD.

National Youth Federation publish Irish Youth Work Scene magazine and have a resource library from which materials can be borrowed, 20 Dominick Street Dublin 2.

Youth and Policy Journal published quarterly by Youth and Policy, 10 Lady Beatrice Terrace, New Herrington, Houghton Le Spring, DH4 4NE.

Youth Clubs UK publish a quarterly magazine and have a resource centre from which material can be borrowed/purchased, 11 St Bride Street, London EC4A 4AS.

“A Sense of Belonging” - YouthAction Rural Research Project. YouthAction Northern Ireland, Hampton, Glenmachan Park, Belfast BT4 1PY