

Activity Report: Interregional site visit to GEMER region, 24 – 26 April 2017 **Summary of findings and outcomes**

In accordance with the project activities plan, the Slovak project partners, EPIC and MLSAF were the first to organize an interregional site visit.

Although the original project timetable envisaged two maximum three days for this type of activity, given that the regions of our project are somewhat remote, not easily accessible or even cut off from the main traffic veins and means of transport, as is the case of our region and its municipalities which we wanted to visit, our partners had to book 4 or even some of them up to 5 days to complete the visit and travel to and from the destination.

Visiting the region GEMER 24 April 2017 – 26 April 2017

Interreg project: SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN SPARSELY POPULATED (SOCENT SPAs)

Site visit program

Monday 24 April 2017: Travelling to Gemer

13,00 Pick-up and departure by minibus to Gemer region/Rimavská Sobota
The transfer to the first destination **Rimavská Sobota** was completed by mini bus.

17,00 After arriving at the destination, check-in at hotel Zlatý Býk Hotel, Rimavská Sobota
Short walking tour walking tour through the centre of Rimavská Sobota and subsequent dinner at hotel restaurant (own expenses).

Tuesday 25 April 2017: Site Visit – 1st day

09,30 – 11,30 Ms Ingrid Ujváriová from MoLSAF presented the findings of the regional study report of the Gemer region, which was followed by a short discussion round. Next, Ms Miroslava Vargová from the Local Action Group Malohont presented the activities of the Action Group and the region's specific challenges. This was followed by a discussion round. Ms Vargová provided us a valuable insight into the region-specific situation in social entrepreneurship, incl. past experiences and current initiatives.
12,00 – 13,15 Lunch in the hotel restaurant, own expense

Transfer to Jesenské

14,00 – 15,00 Visiting municipality **Jesenské** (representing bigger municipality of the region). Jesenské is home to about 2 300 residents – of Slovak, Hungarian and Roma origin. The mayor of Jesenské, Mr. Gabriel Mihály, presented adopted Action Plan for the district Rimavská Sobota belonging to lagging behind districts fighting with long-term high rate of unemployment, lack of job creation, complexity of ethnic composition, low level of qualification of local people and outward migration. The regional action plan comprises visions, measures and actions of strategic development for 107 villages and towns with over 16 200 inhabitants. Journalists from local TV Rimava interviewed the project representatives from each region about their situation and project aims. Among other mentioned measures - one of the promising opportunities for the future growth and sustainable economic management of the regional municipalities is setting up common offices in expert topics for multiple smaller municipalities

Transfer to Rakytník

The mayor of **Rakytník**, Mr János Rencsok, introduced the visit's participants to the challenges of the village and presented actions taken to improve the low employment rate and improve the villagers' mobility. There are 317 residents of Rakytník with proportion of half Roma and half Slovak origin. There is no infrastructure, neither school facility in the municipality. Nevertheless, there are 3 civic associations active and some previous experiences with funding of social entrepreneurship activities in the municipality. Rise of the number of employees of the municipality from 2 to 8 have been made possible through external funding as well. The mayor adopts a very active attitude towards the future plans for development of the municipality: funding of municipal social business, ecological hoover dam, building of social housing, reconstruction of cultural houses, setting of agriculture activities (planting and sheep keeping). The project of „Social Integration in Green“ is being developed on the nearby lands – as a unique concept of social and farming agriculture in Slovakia. It was introduced by Mr Miloslav Kováč, Druživa Association. The presentations were followed by a discussion.

Transfer to Zbojská

18,00: Arrival and dinner at Chalet/Salas Zbojská

The dinner was an invitation by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic. On our arrival there we had an unique opportunity to observe from close range (*though from the car, which gave us a sense of security but still did not prevent us from surprise and amazement*) a herd of free-grazing horses of special breed, so-called Norik of Muran type, which has become one of the dominant symbols of the Muran Plateau.

Having a dinner at chalet type of restaurant gave another opportunity, which we could not miss, to taste typical regional dishes and buy some small gifts from local producers.

Wednesday 26 April 2017: Site Visit – 2nd day

9,00: Departure from Zbojská and transfer to town **Revúca**, where the participants discussed the high unemployment rate and solutions to it with the director of Regional Labour Office of Revúca Mr Jaroslav Demian and city officials – mayor of Revúca Ms Eva Cireňová and Head of District Office of Revúca and Chairman of the Council for development of the District Revúca Mr Peter Balog. We were discussing local specific unfavourable long-term situation in the labour market, structural economic changes caused by unmanaged restructuring and insensitive privatization in the 1990s and current structure of job seekers in Revúca region. There is over half of job seekers with primary level of education and over 62% of job seekers are long term unemployed. Migration and brain drain is significant foremost among the young people.

The Gemer Development Agency's representative Mr Stefan Horvath presented its agency and projects related to the previously mentioned phenomena – by supporting young entrepreneurs, experience and challenges of the regional agency to the participants. The remaining time was used for discussion and the brain storming of possible ideas for future project cooperation. Chairman of the Council for development of the District Revúca Mr Peter Balog provided us information about the formation of local action plans for the district.

Transfer to Muránska Dlhá Lúka

12,00 - 13,00: Lunch was served in the Municipal Office canteen of **Muránska Dlhá Lúka** and was offered to the participants by EPIC (*also here we could not and did not want to avoid tasting regional food typical for Gemer region – so called Gemer meatballs. To our pleasure, we got no complaints from the participants!*)

13,00 – 14,30: A meeting with the Mayor of Muránska Dlhá Lúka municipality, Mr Marek Nosko, was held, where he outlined his village's challenging situation and possibilities of community development using social entrepreneurship, developing employment opportunities for low-skilled citizens and ways of social inclusion of the Roma minority. The discussion was followed by a visit to the village and its local development projects. We were visiting different places – such as playground, gym, kindergarten, library or local cemetery where all the work was done by local unemployed, mostly from the nearby Roma settlement through the active policy measures and organised by the municipality. Success of these works gave the mayor encouragement to set up real municipal social business. One of the areas in which he focuses is planting and drying of fruits and development of labour opportunities for low-skilled citizens as a way of inclusion for Roma community as well. The local Roma settlement was introduced to us mainly through photo presentation, as there is currently a hepatitis warming.

15,00 – 19,00h: Transfer to Bratislava, departure of participants (the same day or following day)

(Thursday 27th April 2017: Travelling day)

Key finding of the study visit:

There is a substantial need in development and targeted work with the human capital of the region. High level and long term unemployment, and significant proportion of low qualified job seekers is one of the main obstacle in further development and more flexible restructuring of the local labour market. Due to different factors, the economic situation of the region has been deteriorating since 90's, which is the consequence of badly managed privatisation, low investment, financial and economic crises of

the first decade of 21st century, continued depopulation of the region and loss of high skilled professionals and young people.

Nevertheless, there is a perceivable hope and new incentives in the region associating with the synergy of activities of the governmental support for districts with similar socio-economic problems: in form of creation of a special state support for the “least developed 12 districts in Slovakia”, together with provision of mix of financial instruments for the foundation of social entrepreneurs. One of the prerequisites for the special funds targeting on low-developed districts is the formation of the local action plans.

One of the aims of the site visit was to get more first-hand information about these initiatives and create an environment for discussion of local needs and plans for the future activities.

Slovak hosting group and Slovak partners’ participants:

Ingrid Ujváriová, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

Mária Nádaždyová, EPIC

Ela Klementová, EPIC

Michaela Mudroňová, EPIC

Project partners’ participants of the site visit:

Ana Gómez Garcés, partner: ONGD Cives Mundi, region: Kastília a León, SE

Marlene Kohllechner-Autto, Lapland University of Applied Sciences, Laponsko, FI

Eila Linna, Lapland University of Applied Sciences, Laponsko, FI

Florian Birk, Social Impact, Brandenburgsko, DE

Visited places, public offices and persons:

Labour Office of Rimavská Sobota, Ms director Koóšová Livia, JUDr.

Local action group /MAS Malohont, project manager Ing. Miroslava Vargová

Municipality of Jesenské, Mayor, Mgr. Gabriel Mihályi

Municipality of Rakytník, Mayor, Ján Rencsok

Civil association Druživa, o.z., Jablonec, Miloslav Kováč

Labour Office of Revúca, director, Ing. Jaroslav Demian,

Municipality of Revúca, Mayor, MVDr. Eva Cireňová

Council for development of the District Revúca Mr Peter Balog

Agency for Development of Gemer, director, Mgr. Štefan Horváth

Agency for Development of Gemer, coordinator of foreign activities, Ing Dana Trombitášová

Municipality Muránska Dlhá Lúka, Mayor, Ing. Marek Nosko

Disclaimer:

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