

Good Practices Compilation

GOCORE project

Community engagement, empowerment
and impact demonstration



Interreg
Europe



Co-funded by
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GOCORE

Good Practices Compilation

GOCORE Project

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About GOCORE Good Practices Compilation

On March 1, 2023, the Interreg Europe project Governing Community Resilience (GOCORE), started. The goal of GOCORE is to create resilient communities by increasing local engagement and participation. With seven partners in Europe, we exchange knowledge how to involve communities in policymaking and demonstrate the impact of bottom-up initiatives.

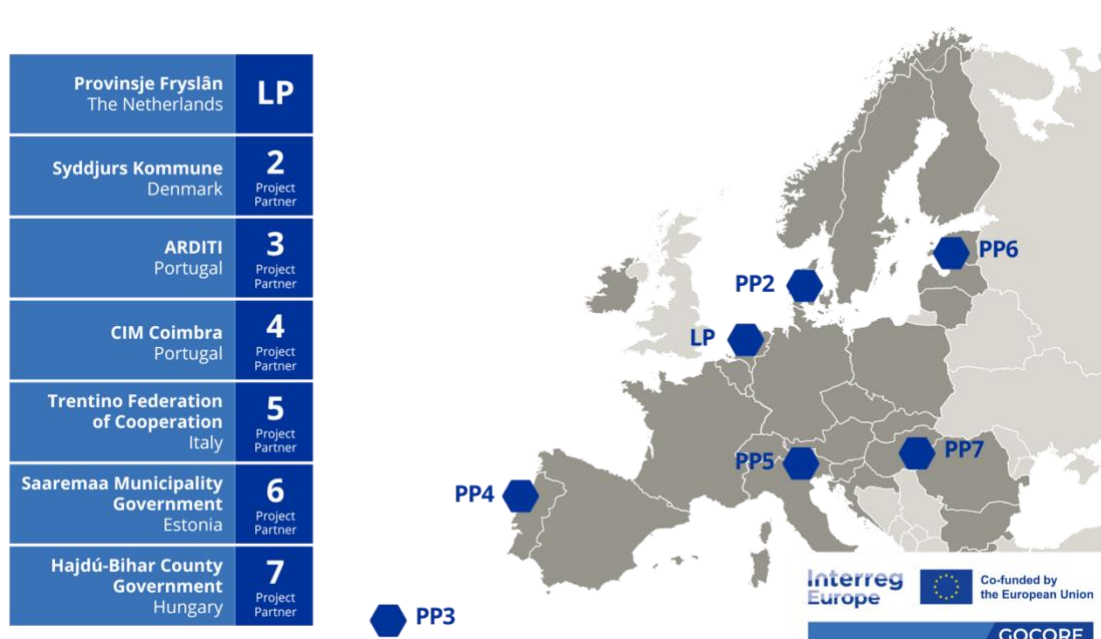


Image: GOCORE partners' map

The terms "engage, empower, and demonstrate" are recurring themes in this project.

- **Engage communities** in policy delivery, including hard-to-reach groups and areas (elderly, remote villages) by innovating outreach and participation practices.
- **Empower community actors** with financial and non-monetary means to autonomously implement actions that support regional goals and improve their lives and communities.
- **Demonstrate and communicate** the impact of community actions on regional development goals, to motivate and mobilise community actors and to deepen the commitment of regional leaders.

Within the framework of the GOCORE project a start was made with a collection of good practices around the themes of GOCORE. The following is written in the application about this good practice analysis:

“We collect and analyse existing practices in community engagement, empowerment and impact demonstration from partners and other sources. The resulting compilation forms the basis for policy learning. We continue adding new practices and insights as they emerge during the project. We plan to bring in external academic support in participative governance to deliver this analysis”

From the compilation of good practices at least 8 good practices will be submitted to the Interreg Europe good practice database.

Methodology

In the kick off meeting the GOCORE partners indicated that they don't want to hear just success stories of practices, but also the valuable insights gained from the mistakes encountered while implementing effective practices.

Bilateral meetings took place with each of the partners, discussing about the following questions:

- What best practices do you have to offer to the partnership?
- What exemplary practices do you aspire or have learned about?
- What kind of examples would help you to hear about?
- How practical or theoretical should the descriptions be? Understanding that the transferability of practices depends on various factors such as legal frameworks, political climate, community dynamics, living standards, and cultural contexts.

To use a metaphor: should the focus be on the '**seed**' or on the **ground** in which it planted. A seed can flower in Fryslân but when you put it in the soil in Hungary it may not flower.

This interviews with the partners were very useful identifying the challenges in the regions and points to learn from other regions.

A format was created bearing in mind that it should also reflect the learning from challenges (attachment 1). All good practices are displayed in the same format so the information is better accessible.

To help us with the compilation of good practices, contacts were sought with two departments of the University of Applied Sciences: European Studies and Public Management. Students of European Studies focused on identifying and describing good practices from various European countries, using the format provided. Similarly, students of Public Management described good practices according to the same format, but with a focus on the Netherlands. Additionally, colleagues from the province of Fryslân were invited to contribute and describe their region-specific best practices. Furthermore, GOCORE partners were encouraged to share existing exemplary practices from their respective regions.

These identified good practices served as a dataset for further research on participatory governance conducted by students. The findings from this research will be used for the *community guide to resilient communities*.

We continue adding new best practices to the list as they emerge during the project by continuously adding new practices in this document, but also using a Padlet board. On that board, links, literature or description of good practices can be added.
<https://padlet.com/rsterk1/best-practices-t5mqy7bw23mzxefk>

While the ultimate goal is to categorize the best practices under themes such as 'engage,' 'empower,' and 'demonstrate,' categorization proves challenging for all practices. Hence, the decision was made to initially list the practices by country. Future considerations will explore alternative organizational structures for these practices.

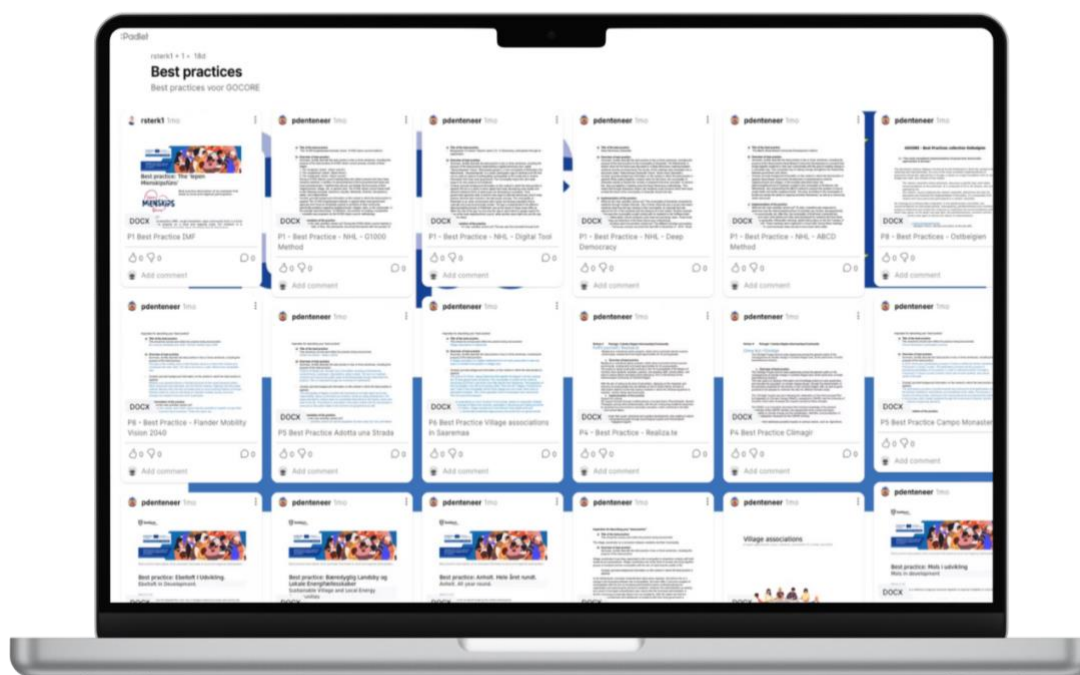
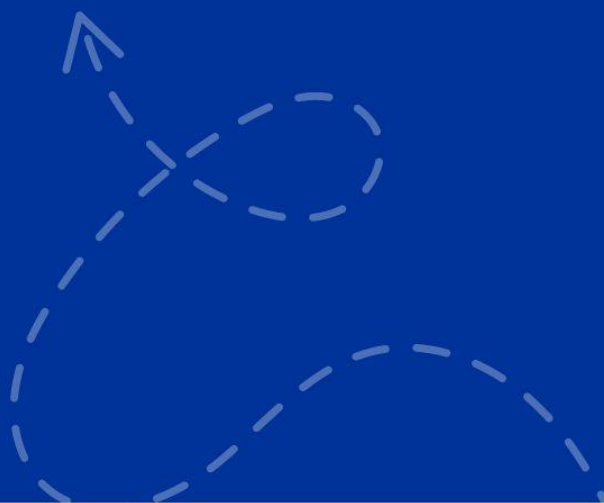


Image: GOCORE padlet board



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GOCORE project



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GOCORE

Province of Fryslân

Fryslân, The Netherlands



Subsidy Scheme Iepen Mienskipsfûns

IMF funds local projects and encourages both community involvement and bottom-up participation.

Overview of best practice

The introduction of the Iepen Mienskipsfûns (IMF) in Fryslân was a response to the fragmentation of smaller funds within the province, each with its own specific purpose. The goal was to consolidate these funds into one comprehensive fund to support initiatives for the benefit of Frisian residents and non-profit organisations. The IMF expanded the scope of support beyond the existing purposes, making it more inclusive and user-friendly. The fund operates within the five regions of the province, with each region allocated a budget based on its population size. Annually, two tender periods allow groups and non-profit organizations to apply for up to 30% subsidy of their total budget, capped at €50,000. Up front there are easy to approach regional consultants who take a look at the plans and give advice on how to improve their plans and their application. Ideally, this takes place before the final application. Sometimes citizens just need advice and not money. An advisory committee, consisting of residents from each region gives a final judgement. These committees have the ultimate authority in approving initiatives, ensuring compliance with regulations and legislation. The IMF's structured approach enhances transparency and accountability in funding allocation, ultimately benefiting the diverse stakeholders and communities of Fryslân.

Implementation of the practice

The IMF is applied within the borders of the Frisian province. Basically, the province is divided in five regions. Each of these regions has their own budget. A total of 1 million euros per year is distributed among these regions based on their population. Each year, for the duration of four years, there are two periods, called tenders (according to the tender system). Only within these periods can a group of five people and non-profit organisations apply to the IMF.

Initiatives can apply for a maximum of 30% subsidy of their total budget and up to a maximum of 50,000 euros. We're working with two categories to put the initiatives: small (up to 10,000 euros) and big (10,001 to 50,000).

Not every initiative applying for a certain amount of money, automatically gets it. There are certain checks and balances. Up front there are the regional offices who take a look at the plans and give pointers on how to improve their plans and their application. Usually this takes place before the definitive application. After applying, the section of the province specialised in subsidies, judges the applications on financial and juridical grounds. If the application is all according with the rules and legislation, there will be a final check. The final check will be done by a committee existing of residents from the province. There are five committees in total, one for each region. The committee has the final call on the applied initiatives. After the gathering of the committee, a definitive decision is made for each project

Results of the Practice – outputs and outcomes

Over the past four years, the IMF received over 600 applications annually. While many initiatives have benefited, some were left without funding due to high demand. The fund supports various projects, from public playgrounds to educational programs, fostering community engagement and empowerment. The evolving societal and political landscape shapes the fund's form and content, making it a continuous process. The rapid growth in popularity among residents and companies had a positive outcome, yet limited funding led to some projects being unfunded. The involvement of an advisory committee with local citizens has proven effective, with members serving as IMF ambassadors and possessing in-depth knowledge of the region and the fund. Moreover, the financial justification for projects is easily accessible and is based on a high level of trust.

Lessons Learnt

The main features of the IMF that are proven successful are:

1. **Regional Prioritising** – 5 regional advice committees determine the regional priorities for IMF in their part of Fryslân.
2. **Flexible and low threshold** – the flexible IMF tool can quickly respond to developments and needs within communities. Project applications of various natures can receive funding as long as they contribute to the local community. All applications are assessed on the same criteria.

3. **Trust** – Due to the local nature of IMF initiatives, the Province of Fryslân trusts the social control within the regions, limiting the need for strict provincial interference.
4. **Integrated Approach** – Applicants value the fact that the IMF covers multiple policy themes, so they do not have to deal with all different funding schemes.
5. **Regional consultants** – Each Frisian region has a regional consultant who is easily accessible helping citizens with their application or improve their plans.
6. **Learning by Doing** – The IMF is built on the principle ‘learning by doing’. The Province continually seeks to improve the fund.

The past four years have taught us that the fund is a continue process based on a changing society and political field. Form and content depend on its current environment and so it will be a lasting process through time.

Things that need improving from lessons learnt in the past years are:

- The tender system is great for determining when people can hand in their ideas and projects for money, but it doesn’t give much space for improvements afterwards. An alternative can be found in a year-round opening of the fund. Whoever comes first has more chance of gaining a subsidy of the fund.
- An ongoing discussion on whether or not there needs to be more or less rules concerning the fund. Less means more freedom to anticipate and regulatory pressure for initiatives. With more rules, there is likely to be less room for speculation and gray areas that lead to a lot of discussion.
- The use of difficult and uncommon words is another improvement point. People often find it hard to understand words used in texts on governmental website. The same goes for the website of the IMF. Often government slang is used, whilst it doesn’t appeal to the society. The fund needs to be accessible and one of the key pieces is common language.

Conclusion

Seeing what the past years have brought. The fund can be called a good investment in society. The number of initiatives has grown, along with the welfare in the province. People have more saying in their own neighbourhoods and village. On top of that the province of Fryslân scores best at welfare and happiness above all other provinces in The Netherlands.

Further Reading

www.streekwurk.frl

Bestemming Wolvega / Destination Wolvega

Overview of best practice

Bestemming Wolvega is one of the projects in the Regio Deal Southeast Friesland. The Regio Deal Southeast Friesland is a cooperation of the municipalities of Weststellingwerf, Ooststellingwerf, Heerenveen, Opsterland, Smallingerland, the province of Fryslân and Wetterskip Fryslân. Part of the Regio Deal are projects exploring different ways of encouraging citizenship initiatives. Bestemming Wolvega is one of these projects.

With over 13,000 inhabitants, Wolvega is the largest village of the Municipality of Weststellingwerf and almost half of all inhabitants of the municipality of Weststellingwerf live in Wolvega. We see in Wolvega that the social cohesion is much less compared to other (smaller) villages in the area. As a result, we see, for instance, that resident initiatives are rare and there is no form of resident representation in Wolvega.

The aim of Bestemming Wolvega is to strengthen social structures in Wolvega in a way that does justice to the strength of the local community. By doing so, the choice was made to put the initiative with the inhabitants of Wolvega and the mutual social networks in which they are active.

Bestemming Wolvega works according to the Human Centred Design methodology and has three phases: listening, creating and delivering. The first phase focuses on observing, listening and researching. The central question of this phase is:

"How can we (Wolvega residents) invite, challenge and inspire each other to contribute to the liveability of our village, in which - however different we are - we all feel at home and valued?"

The description of this best practice is about phase 1 of the project 'Bestemming Wolvega'.

Implementation of the practice

To answer the central question, 2 routes were set out in the first phase of the project:

- **Route 1 Surveys:** Conducting a survey among Wolvega residents and desk research.
- **Route 2 Challenge:** Residents are challenged to give their stories, opinions and ideas about Wolvega. This has been done in various, playful ways that provided data for the survey but left the initiative with the residents.

Method of challenge:

- Talks, workshops, interviews with associations, foundations, groups of people.
- At the football pitch, at schools, at the market, at enterprise evenings, during activities of neighbourhood associations, interviewing parents during children's swimming lessons.
- During 'buurtbakkies' (meeting in community centres), taking the caravan into the street and talking with passers-by with coffee and tea.
- At Christmas and Valentine's Day, the project team went out on the streets with greeting cards: what is your Christmas wish for Wolvega, are you also in love with Wolvega?
- During debates and exhibitions
- Facilitating initiatives with small fundings

A communication plan has been written for this phase. It includes an own logo for the project Bestemming Wolvega and a website. All activities can be found on the website. A deliberate choice was made for an image/ logo that differs from the usual images of the Municipality of Weststellingwerf. This gives Bestemming Wolvega its own character and sets it somewhat free from the Municipality.

This allows residents to speak out freely. Posts have also been deployed on facebook and Instagram to motivate residents to engage in conversation with the project group. Bestemming Wolvega has its own newsletters that are sent both internally at the municipal organisation and externally to all actors within Wolvega.

The project group consists of: community work, youth work, volunteer coordinator, project leader and a communication officer.

All relevant colleagues working within the Municipality were informed and questioned about Wolvega.

Results of the Practice – outputs and outcomes

The first phase of *Bestemming Wolvega* was completed at the end of March 2023. During this phase, 1700 residents were interviewed and over 500 residents participated in the survey. This is a response rate of 17%. In April 2023, all data were analysed and converted into building blocks and personas.

- **Building blocks:** all plans of Bestemming Wolvega must meet the following building blocks: Meet, Connect, Trust and Do
- **Personas:** 6 personas were developed from the data, offering a 360-degree range of different perspectives, so we know for whom we are developing plans.
- **The two Ps:** Place and Person. A place to meet is clearly requested: centrally or in the neighbourhood. A relationship with the right (contact)person is also often mentioned. Knowing who to ask for what - whether in the neighbourhood, associations, institutions or Municipality.

Concrete plans are developed from these building blocks, the personas and the two P:

- Appointing a bridge builder, coordinator of meeting places Wolvega
- Neighbourhood connectors: Identify local residents who have a clear role in the district/neighbourhood.
- Central meeting place.
- Decentralised meeting places e.g.: football canteen, village hall, swimming pool.
- Mobile hangout for young people/ adolescents.

This outcome was tested at several meetings:

- 3 meetings with residents
- Working meeting with city council, board of Mayor and Aldermen (and management
- Lunch meeting with colleagues
- During the Wolvest festival
- Individual presentations.

The entire phase was concluded during the Wolvest, the festival in which all input during the first phase was translated in a creative way: [Wolvest terugblik | Bestemming Wolvega](#). The Wolvest was organised for and especially by residents and entrepreneurs of Wolvega.

Lessons Learnt

In Bestemming Wolvega, the first phase mainly involved listening. Yet the way of listening is important. While listening, connections were immediately made and interventions were made. This allowed some residents to immediately start new activities. Support for the plans was created and residents also want to have a role in them. This way of working thus yields a great by-product. Connecting to where there is energy.

It is important to maintain support and involvement. So translate the plans into concrete actions in which residents have a clear role. Internal decision-making within the municipality can be a delaying factor here.

With spatial plans, such as for a central meeting place, other developments can also play a role. In the case of Wolvega, for instance, this is development of the 'city centre' (shopping area, etc).

Furthermore, the Bestemming Wolvega project has incidental funds. Structural issues such as formation (bridge builder) cannot be financed.

To still keep energy in the project, it is necessary to constantly look at which plans can be implemented and where there is energy in the community.

Conclusion

Conclusion is that this first phase of Bestemmign Wolvega has already achieved a lot. Especially in the involvement of residents of Wolvega and that residents are being heard. In this phase, equality between residents and government is especially important.

Recommendations for others who want to implement this methodology: make sure it is real, authentic. Sincere curiosity about residents. So not a trick, but really wanting to know what the resident thinks about it, putting your own assumptions and prejudices aside.

Further Reading

[Home | Bestemming Wolvega](#)

[DBZ.Case-AJSPH.pdf](#)

[Bestemming Wolvega | Regiodeal Zuidoost Friesland](#)

<https://vimeo.com/908619221/54a7556c2b?share=copy>

DOM Fryslân

Overview of best practice

DOM is a collaborative method empowering villages and municipality to create *joie de vivre* on an equal, structural and effective basis. DOM enables optimal cooperation, co-creation and a fully integrated village development.

The DOM method can be used for complex problems and/or when many stakeholders are involved. This is especially true where the conversation between the village(s) and their municipality does not automatically arise. An independent connector will be able to activate, stimulate, enthuse and motivate.

Implementation of the practice

The focus is on connecting villages and municipalities to achieve concrete substantive results for a future-proof village. The independent connector is a driving force in the cooperation process between a village and the municipality. The village and municipality will work together to see where opportunities lie and where there is room within the policy frameworks. The independent connector supports this process.

The DOM method has been around for over 10 years. The process always takes place in the village(s) itself. Everyone can and may use the DOM method. The most important implementers are the people in a village itself, together with the municipality, supported by the independent connector. The role of the province is mainly supportive of the DOM method. The province will only join the discussions when substantively necessary.

The province makes a subsidy available to the municipality for the use of the DOM method, namely an amount of € 22,500 per DOM. Confinancing from the municipality is expected of at least € 17,500. This is partly intended for the village (for possible hiring of external advice) and partly to pay the independent connector.

Results of the Practice – outputs and outcomes

A continuously positive movement is created in a village where residents are actively involved in improving their own living environment. By setting up a DOM project with other residents, they learn what can be achieved, what a village is able to do itself,

when help from the municipality may be needed and how collaborations can be formed. The DOM method helps to preserve and enhance the quality of life in a village. By working together on concrete ideas and projects, a village can strengthen their future prospects.

To date, the DOM method has led to these concrete results:

- **Holwert**, Peazens-Moddergat, Mitselwier, and Ie: protected village view (various homes) renovated.
- **Jistrum**: future plan for facilities has led to one multifunctional center that will be built soon.
- **Aldeboarn**: 15-20 developments have discussed a joint vision for the future of the village. The first measures are now being implemented (village square).
- **Moarre-Ljussens**: dairy factory (heritage) has been renovated into a boutique hotel, guesthouse for recreationists, and museum.
- And **many more**.

The biggest benefits for the stakeholders are an improved relationship with the municipality, more understanding of each other's (im)possibilities and the implementation of concrete results for a liveable village.

The DOM method is continuously developing. Evaluations have been carried out at various times. Learning points are incorporated into the working method.

Lessons Learnt

What worked very well is taking the time to talk to each other and gain more understanding of each other's wishes, interests and (im)possibilities. The support of cooperation between village and municipality by an independent connector is also one of the success factors. In addition, it works well if there is a coordinator at the

municipality who streamlines the process internally with colleagues. If there is little commitment and/or effort in the village or municipality, it will not be possible to take steps. Then the process will not succeed.

Firstly, it is important that municipality councillors agree to start a DOM in their municipality. Their commitment is necessary to gear up the municipal organisation towards this and to find sufficient funds for the process. Secondly, it is important that there is urgency in the village to tackle a problem or seize an opportunity. It is therefore important to invest sufficient time in the preliminary phase: in the conversation with and between the village and municipality. The independent connector has an important role in the initial phase and when things do not run smoothly between the village and the municipality. The independent connector helps to overcome challenges.

Conclusion

The DOM provides added value, literally and figuratively, by sharing knowledge, inspiring each other, creating more clout together and, through budget availability, supporting the process in the villages. The population benefits from the concrete results achieved in collaboration between the village and the municipality. They have more influence on the future of their own village.

The DOM method contributes to the happiness of the residents of the province of Fryslân. Over the past 10 years, the DOM method has achieved great results on various themes that contribute to *joie de vivre* and a bright future in a village.

The recommendation is to be the first to start a conversation: what is going on in a village? Or an area? What opportunities are there? What urgency is there? And what (im)possibilities? If there is a commitment to work together, you can take it a step further and look for concrete solutions together. To work!

Further Reading

Flyer: DOM | the smart method

Handout of slides: DOM | the smart method

www.wijzijndom.nl

Village Coordination

The village coordinator as a connector between residents and their municipality.

Overview of best practice

Village coordinators have been appointed by the municipality to streamline contacts with both residents and associations. Village coordinators are at the heart of society and bring together groups of residents and the municipality with the aim of improving the quality of life.

In the Netherlands, municipal reclassification takes place regularly. Sometimes this is a change in the boundary between two municipalities, but more often it concerns mergers of municipalities with the aim of increasing administrative power, professionalizing the organisation and improving the service to residents. However, this administrative up-scaling as a result of municipal reclassification also means that the municipal administration is literally becoming increasingly distant from its inhabitants. With the added risk that the participation, involvement and satisfaction of residents with their local government is decreasing.

District and village liaison officers act as an important bridge between citizens and the civil service, in order to reduce the distance between residents and the municipality. They are an easily accessible first point of contact for groups of citizens in the villages and ensure that their wishes, complaints and ideas end up in the right departments. They also look at opportunities to link these initiatives to municipal challenges, tasks and policies – both spatially and socially. They also have an overview of local social issues and encourage residents, but also civil servants within their own municipality, to get started with these identified problems.

If necessary, they act as the proverbial ‘thorn in the side’ of the municipal organisation when a question or initiative threatens to get stuck in the official mill. Because of their frequent contacts with the village or district, village coordinators have a good knowledge of what is going on. They also bring this knowledge into the organisation, so that policymakers can use this information when they create or adjust policies.

Village coordinators have an extensive network within and outside of the municipality, which allows them to connect people and organisations to exchange knowledge and experiences with each other. If necessary, they support groups of residents from a village by contributing ideas, giving advice and bringing them into contact with relevant

people, associations and/or organisations. For example, by drawing attention to the possibilities of funds, schemes and/or government subsidies.

Some municipalities work with contact aldermen¹. They hold this position in addition to the other portfolios they have under them. They are an administrative point of contact for the villages or districts in general. Each alderman is linked to a village coordinator. They keep in close contact about what is happening in the villages and neighbourhoods. This completes the resident-municipal-government line.

Implementation of the practice

Main activities

- Signals (shares signals with others –specialists, aldermen etc. – and sees where connections can be made).
- Initiates and monitors the integrity of processes and compliance with commitments.
- Conducts structural consultations with village boards and district councils and attends member meetings.
- Retrieves and delivers policy information from and to the villages and neighbourhoods.
- Advises the council, both solicited and unsolicited. Provides advice on linking opportunities, on existing policy in general terms and on subsidies
- Organizes the meetings of aldermen with the villages (village interest groups).
- Facilitates work groups and committees with regard to projects concerning the (social) quality of life and housing projects.
- Is involved in the local approach to structural problems in villages and neighbourhoods.

¹ The aldermen have different areas of responsibility. For example, education, finance, housing or sports. We call such a task area a portfolio.

- Facilitates the village boards/local interest groups and district councils with the use of established budgets and other means (including means of communication).

Time schedule of the activities

The village coordinator does not only work during office hours but is also available for activities in the evenings or on weekends.

Key implementers and collaborators

- village boards
- management of village halls
- civil servants within their own organisation
- groups of residents
- municipal administrators, especially aldermen
- residents take on projects themselves, take the initiative to improve their own living environment.

Resource implications

The village coordinators are paid for by the municipality (hbo position).

Per municipality it differs in how many districts or villages a full-time village coordinator operates. On average there is one full-time village coordinator for about ten villages/neighbourhoods.

Results of the Practice – outputs and outcomes

Results

- Residents are more involved and also participate in creating new policies.

- Integral solution of issues
- Securing the interests of residents in large projects
- Continuous attention of the municipality to the use of comprehensible language in communication to residents (B1). This method increases understanding for each other.

Benefits for the stakeholders (communities, civic organisations, governments, NGO's, etc.)

- Short lines of communication with the municipality
- Better/faster collaboration by connecting the right people/organisations
- More scope for citizens' initiatives

Villages and districts often indicate that they are very satisfied with the village coordinator. This mainly concerns: the fixed contact, the short lines of communication, easy accessibility and the actual support.

Lessons Learnt

What worked really well – what facilitated this?

A fixed point of contact. Being approachable. Informal and short lines: the village coordinator and the people know each other well. This makes it very easy to discuss a lot of things, even difficult matters. There is a relationship within which you can be very honest with each other, both with the villages, but also internally with colleagues.

Saying what you do and doing what you say, gaining trust. Periodical meetings with local councillors in the villages to consult with the village boards/local interest groups.

Visiting the villages for consultation. It is good to realise that building a relationship with a village/neighbourhood takes time. A village coordinator must first 'prove him or herself'. This is sometimes underestimated by college officials.

What did not work – why did it not work?

- The village boards and district councils are now involved in a lot of matters. That means that a lot is asked of them. Many responsibilities are placed on them.
- Municipal councils and fellow civil servants of the village coordinators do not really regard the questions from the villages as part of their regular work. They often see as an extra burden. This is despite the fact that the municipality often wants to focus heavily on the relationship with the residents. Therefore, this regularly chafes.
- The role of a village coordinator is sometimes not clear to everyone. It is therefore important to properly define what the role entails and within which framework village coordinator operates.
- Initiatives/wishes from a village are often presented as being a wish from within the community. This is not always the case. Sometimes it is a small group of empowered residents, who try to push their own interests. Attention to demonstrating support is important. Fortunately, soon a new law will come into force in the Netherlands, the Environmental Planning Act², which stipulates that you specifically indicate what been done to create support.

What did you do to overcome the challenges?

Municipalities each deal with this differently. Below are some examples of solutions that municipalities have come up with:

- Creating and maintaining a village agenda. This clarifies for each village and district which projects are desired and planned.
- The process of addressing a question from a village or district via a so-called Environmental Table. At this meeting it immediately becomes clear what the

² Environmental Planning Act: This is an ambitious reform of environmental law in the Netherlands. The aim of the law, which is expected to take effect in 2024, is to simplify and improve the regulations regarding the physical living environment. It aims to speed up the decision-making process, increase stakeholder participation and reduce regulatory burden. With the Environmental Planning Act, more responsibilities and powers are delegated to municipalities, so that they play a key role in the implementation of environmental policy.

feasibility of an initiative is and what integral advice the local government has to offer. In dialogue with the government, with civil servants and stakeholders working together to find a solution supported by all parties involved. This can involve one or more sessions, where the initiator and all parties involved come together. The initiative is then discussed with the idea of making it possible. This provides the initiator with integral advice, that he can use when submitting the permit application. This way, all questions can be streamlined.

- Some municipalities have set up a special policy and/or a fund with which villages and district councils can be (financially) supported. This allows them to carry out their work properly. Sometimes a municipality also makes budget available. Village interest groups or district councils can apply for a subsidy here to support initiatives to improve the quality of life in their village or neighbourhood. This creates a lot of goodwill for the municipality because this way you show volunteers that their work is taken seriously.
- In some municipalities, the village coordinators have described their function and role (what they do and what they do not do) and have provided insight into how many hours they spend on what. Village coordinators have no authority to enforce initiatives within the municipality. They need commitment and support from local councillors and colleagues.

Conclusion

How have the results benefited the population?

- Greater satisfaction among residents. Makes them feel heard.
- Creation of networks, shorter lines of communication between residents, civil society and authorities.
- Policies that are in line with the way of living of residents, policies are developed with a participation process: although this is happening more and more it is not self-evident everywhere yet. This will change when the Environmental Planning Act is introduced.
- More comprehensible information from the municipality to its residents.

Why may that intervention be considered a “Best Practice”?

Working with village coordinators as connectors between residents and the municipality appears to be working well. Policy officers gain more insight into the experience of residents. Residents gain a better understanding of the working methods and issues that a municipality faces. This ensures mutual understanding and reduces the distance between local government and residents.

Recommendations for those intending to adopt the documented “Best Practice” or how it can help people working on the same issue(s).

One group of village coordinators within a municipal organisation is recommended, preferably with different backgrounds. In practice, it helps if a village coordinator has had many years of experience in municipal organisation.

Further Reading

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Village Associations

The village association as representing the village at governmental level.

Overview of best practice

The practice described in this report is “Dorpsbelangen” which is roughly translated as village associations, meaning that a council of villagers is looking after the collective interest of the village they represent. A more appropriate term will be “village associations”, because it has members from the village itself whom choose the board of the association.

To represent these concerns, a village association can, if necessary, function as a voice towards authorities, such as governments.

For example, when the local authority wants to build a new road nearby the village, the village association can function as a voice of the inhabitants towards the government, by explaining their concerns. And the other way around, the village association can “translate” the information of the local authority towards the community, by clarifying the information and intentions.

Implementation of the practice

Main activities

The main task of the board of the village association is to ensure that the village continues to develop and thus to keep the village liveable for all age groups.

To do this, the following activities are carried out:

- The board is in favour of taking initiatives and activating inhabitants or third parties, to create quality of life and cohesion between initiatives in the village.
- The village association needs to be visible and stay connected with what is happening in the village, but also have to know if there are circumstances in the wider area which affect the village.
- Organising open meetings, where inhabitants are welcome and can have a say. If necessary, also stakeholders from governments or other relevant

organisations could be invited to, for example, enlighten new developments in the region and explain what the impact can be on the village.

- Organising closed meetings, only for the board of the village association, where relevant developments can be examined and discussed.
- Organisation of events/support the organisation of events, for example community meetings (cultural, sports etc.), to improve the relationships between the inhabitants. An example of such an event is the “4 mijl Goutum”, organized by the village association of the village Goutum ([4Mijl Goutum - vrijwilligerswerk bij Dorpsbelang - Cultuurvrijwilligers.nl](https://www.vrijwilligerswerk.bijDorpsbelang.nl/Cultuurvrijwilligers.nl)).
- A village association acts as a point of contact for the local authority, the province, other authorities and for companies, associations and committees in the village and other relevant stakeholders.
- Besides that, the village association acts as a point of contact for the community, to find out collective, relevant concerns.

For clarification, the picture below shows what the communication flows look like for a village association:



Time schedule of the activities

The open meetings will be held once or twice a year. If necessary, for example during urgent circumstances, the number of meetings can be increased. The open meetings can be organised in, for example, a meeting room like a community building in the village, which is suitable for high number of visitors.

The closed meetings will be held approximately 10 times a year, with only the board represented. Because the board usually consists of around 5 members, these meetings can easily be organised at one of the members' homes.

To serve as a liaison between the inhabitants and relevant stakeholders, the board needs to be present at relevant meetings organized by, for example, the local authority. The locations where these meetings are organised may vary depending on the authority but can, for example, be the town hall.

If a village association arranges an event (such as the 4-mile run in Goutum as mentioned earlier), the choice of location depends on the type of event, but the preference is for a location within or near the village itself. This makes it more convenient for local entrepreneurs to support and/or participate with their business.

Key implementers and collaborators

The key implementers and collaborators of the village association are the board, the members, and local entrepreneurs. Below their main tasks/responsibilities are scheduled.

Board of the village association:

- Finding out and understanding relevant interests
- Function as a voice in the direction of governments and other relevant stakeholders
- Decision-making
- Organisation of events to promote liveability

Members of the village association:

- Providing input
- Annual fee
- Participating in decision-making
- Electing the board

Local entrepreneurs:

- Financial support by means of funding
- Support and promotion (for example with resources, expertise, services, etc.)

Resource implications

The main resource implications can be divided into financial resources, human resources, physical resources, technological resources, and legal resources. Below, several concepts per type of resource have been listed:

1) Financial resources

Annual fee: as mentioned, the members pay an annual fee. This fee is often for an acceptable, low price to keep it accessible for all inhabitants to become member. Because of that, in most villages a high number of inhabitants are member of the village association, resulting in a sufficient amount for the board to operate.

Subsidies from the government: in the Netherlands there are some subsidies available for village associations. This subsidy can be spent on matters that benefit the functioning of the village association. For example: meeting costs, costs of the district/village newspaper, support for the village association/district panel, hosting costs for a website or even the hiring of an external expert.

Local entrepreneur funding: local entrepreneurs can be asked for funding the village association. Important is that the entrepreneurs do not become too powerful, since this could negatively influence the democratic ideology of the village association.

2) Human resources

Volunteers: of course, the whole village association relies on volunteers. The only remuneration the board receives is an expense allowance.

3) Physical resources

Space for meetings: as mentioned earlier, there is space needed for the open and closed meetings. Open meetings can be held in a community building and closed meetings can be organised at one of the member's homes.

4) Communication resources

Newsletters: with the use of, for example, newsletters in the local newspaper. The community can be kept informed about relevant developments.

5) Legal resources

Registration at authority: the village association needs to have its own legal form, for example an association or foundation. Besides that, also financial/tax reporting needs to be arranged and conducted.

Results of the Practice – outputs and outcomes

Results

- Community facilities: the realisation of a community centre, meeting places, sport complexes etc, which are beneficial for the liveability of the village.
- Cultural and social events: the organization cultural events (like festivals), to improve the liveability of the village.

- Infrastructure improvements: a village association can contribute to the improvement of the local infrastructure. For example, by arranging, in cooperation with the local authorities, the construction of cycle paths.
- Collaboration and information provision: by spreading newspapers on several kinds of communication platforms.
- Promoting the local economy: a village association can stimulate the local economy by supporting entrepreneurship and local business, which can lead to increased employment and economic growth. For example, an event organized by the village association can be organised in cooperation with (some) local entrepreneurs.

The benefits differ per type of stakeholder. Below, per stakeholder, the main benefits have been scheduled.

1) Community:

- Improved liveability for the community, in a wide range of aspects, like infrastructure, improved sense of community.
- The collective concern of the community is more likely to be known and heard.

2) For civic organizations and NGO's:

- Collaboration: village associations can form partnerships with civic society organizations and NGOs to create joint projects and initiatives that benefit the community.
- Access to community: community organisations can more easily access the local community through village associations and promote their services or programs.
- Information and feedback: village associations can provide valuable information and feedback to community organisations about community needs and priorities, which can help shape targeted programs.

3) For governments:

- Local representation: village associations act as “the voice” of the community and can provide governments input regarding the interest of the local community. The input can help governments in making optimal decisions and policies.
- Support base: when the local community feels they are being heard, the support for decisions and policies of the governments are likely to be increased.

Regarding the outcomes and output of village associations, a few assessments of the practice have been conducted. Firstly, Elerie (2010) states that *“We can therefore rightly speak of a social network that is maintained and nurtured by village association groups. In general, it can be said that the social network of village association organizations through both provinces as local authorities are recognized and used.”*

Secondly, they found that village associations can be involved in decision making regarding the building of new houses/residential areas. They state: *“the project “Landschappelijk bouwen” in Zeijen en Zwinderen has recently demonstrated that gains can be made when village associations are explicitly involved in the discussion about the appropriate design of new expansion plans.”*

Lastly, the article of Elerie (2010) ends up with an interesting observation. They noticed that the concept “leefbaarheid” (=liveability), should be split into two sub-concepts: viability and liveability. Viability concerns the material conditions in the field of facilities and the physical environments. For example: community buildings, sport facilities, playgrounds, etc. Besides that, liveability can be defined as a social opinion determined by valuation and meaningfulness from the village society itself. The article states that the classic concept “liveability” is ready for updated content, which combines liveability with viability and translates this into concrete actions at village level. Furthermore, they state that: *“such a strategy can only succeed if the government facilitates its social network.”*

To explain this, I self-produced the following example: In village X, the community attaches significant importance to a widely ranged social cohesion, where all inhabitants of the village are involved (=the liveability concept). Unfortunately, in the current situation there are little opportunities to fulfil this. Therefore, the village association aspires to realise a community building (= the viability concept), where several activities can be organised, to improve the social cohesion. With the help of

funding of the local authorities, this will be realised, and the social cohesion of village X is likely to be improved.

Lessons Learnt

What worked really well – what facilitated this?

The principle of a village association, where it acts as an intermediary between the community and the government or relevant stakeholders, works. This is based on the positive outcomes' village associations have realised. The collective interest of the community become known to the government, and they can take this into account in their decisions. In this way, the support for the decisions is likely to increase. Therefore, the village association enables an interaction between the community and the government or other relevant stakeholders, which is the main benefit of a village association.

Moreover, it is important to note that the success of a village association depends on the capabilities of its board and its members. Therefore, the quality of the outcomes of village associations in the Netherlands can differ due to the quality of the board and members. The board is responsible for the going concern of the village association. As mentioned, the members of the village association elect the board. In this way the members also share in the responsibility of the quality of the board.

Besides that, the authorities can play a role by facilitating the existing of the village association, by acknowledging the village association as a suitable partner to cooperate with, and actively “hunt” for this cooperation. Lastly, the authorities can facilitate the village association with the means of funding. This can for example be funding for general costs, like the rental of a building for a meeting, catering costs, etc. However, sometimes the board of the village association is not capable (by means of, for example, knowledge or time) to examine what is optimal for the community. A solution for this could be to hire an expert, which has the time and knowledge to conduct an inquire in the village. The authorities could facilitate this by (partly) funding the costs for the expert.

What did not work – why did it not work?

Many village associations are struggling with too few members. Besides that, the village association is often not a good reflection of the inhabitants of the village. For example, mainly retired inhabitants are member of the village associations, resulting

in an aging group of (board)members, which makes the village association probably less suitable for handling concerns which are relevant for juveniles.

What did you do to overcome these challenges?

To overcome these challenges, the following actions can be taken:

- To optimally represent the concerns of the inhabitants of the village, special workgroups can be set up, specifically aimed at working on a specific topic. In this way villages have convened a separate working group per theme to examine. These working groups often have members with specific interests or expertise which is necessary for the topic. This is likely to increase the preparedness of inhabitants to commit themselves to a certain concern in the village.

For example, in a village there are concerns regarding the shared generation of sustainable energy in the village. Villager X has relevant work experience and is willing to voluntarily commit himself to this subject. For this specific task, a working group will be set up, where inhabitants with relevant knowledge regarding the subject will be placed, including villager X. This makes becoming active member of the village association more accessible for villager X, since the other subject of the village association, like the organization of events, are not within the interests or capabilities of villager X and can be done by other working groups.

- In order to reach a younger target audience the following steps can be taken:
- spreading the advertisement via social media.
- visiting the target audience, for example, at school or in the pub.
- usage of humour in the advertisement.
- actively addressing young people from the own network of the members.

Conclusion

How have the results benefited the population?

The main benefits of a village association for the population are:

- Community facilities
- Cultural and social events
- Infrastructure improvements
- Collaboration and information provision
- Promoting the local economy

For explanation per subject see section “Results of the Practice – outputs and outcomes.”

Why may that intervention be considered a “Best Practice”?

This intervention can absolutely be considered a best practice since it is an optimal solution to combine the interests and concerns of the community in a village in one entity, to create a collective voice. Besides that, for relevant organisations (like governments), communicating with a village association is more efficient than with inhabitants of the community separately.

Recommendations for those intending to adopt the documented “Best Practice” or how it can help people working on the same issue(s)

When intending to adopt this best practice, it is recommended to firstly have a motivation. Is there a clear concern in the village which should be addressed? One individual can produce the idea of establishing a village association, but of course: better together. Or even preferably, around five people. Regarding the establishing, it is important to become an entity, like an association or foundation. Besides that, it is important to make agreements with the other members, like the governance structure. Who will fulfil which function? Furthermore, agreements must be made for issues, like the amount of meetings, places of meetings, annual fee, expenses, etc. Of course, this is a process which develops gradually, through the first months/years of existing.

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Co-creation Burgum-West

The co-creation procedure “De nieuwe route”, or in English “the new route” is a citizens participation trajectory in which all citizens are free to participate, whereas in most citizens participation processes a sample of the population is used to determine the group size and format. The aim of the co-creation in Burgum-West was the development of a well-supported vision among all inhabitants of the village of Burgum for the area of Burgum-West which has been unused for multiple years.

Overview of best practice

In the spring of 2021, the municipality commissioned the development of a widely supported vision for Burgum-West. After years of the inability to establish a vision for the area by the municipality for everyone's satisfaction the municipality decided it was time for a change. They established a framework which the vision had to adhere to and gave the responsibility back to the people to form a wide-shared vision for the area in which all local stakeholders could participate and share their beliefs.

Implementation of the practice

Throughout the timespan of several months in which the co-creation process took part several key activities took place. Although, the eventual day of the establishment for a shared vision was on the 20th of January 2024, the process of the new route already started several months before that. As a result, several important stages throughout the process can be identified:

a) Set of Conditions

The first stage of the process consists of the setting of the conditions of the final product by the client. These conditions can be very diverse and normally revolve around several topics, such as:

- Financial possibilities
- Compliance with law and regulations

Even though the client sets the conditions, there should still be enough room for the partaking citizens to provide input for the final product. Meaning that the set conditions should be written in such a way participants have enough to contribute to the vision. With regards to the co-creation in Burgum-West the set conditions were that the vision should be budget neutral, it had to comply with existing law and regulations, and there was no housing development allowed in the area. After all the conditions are set, one central question is formed. For this best practice the question was “How can the community of Burgum live together as well as possible in the area of Burgum-West?”.

Furthermore, it is of utmost importance that the client agrees to the fact if the final product fits within the set conditions it will be executed. By doing so, it will be clear for all participants what they are working towards.

b) Creating the right Circumstances for the Event Day

After the client's conditions have been clearly defined, the second step in the process can be undertaken. This second phase revolves around setting the right circumstances for everyone to participate. This part normally starts approximately three months before the event day, and consists of three important steps:

Forming the group

It starts by holding conversations with people from the community who had already approached the municipality about the question/topic at hand. With these people, named the ‘usual suspects’, you start the first round of conversation to gain an understanding of the differing views on the issue in the society. However, more importantly also the question “with whom else to hold conversation and involve in the event day?” is asked to every single person. By doing so, you are not looking for a representative group of the population, but really aiming to involve anyone who has an opinion or interest in the topic. As a result, you are also able to attract the silent middle who normally would not voice their opinion. Moreover, the group is formed by the people self by providing the names, as well as letting them reach out to the silent middle. The reaching out is better done by the locals than process facilitators, because if someone who knows you approaches you to participate that works much better than if someone approaches you as an independent/unknown. This how you expand on the participants until the same names are mentioned and you know you reached everyone you should reach.

c) Which information is needed for the right decision

Another important step to be undertaken is the provision of the right information to form a well-thought vision. To do this, topics are retrieved from the participants to identify what additional information is needed. Therefore, independent experts on these topics can be found to provide extra needed information during the event day and answer any possible questions. For the process in Burgum-West extra information was needed about the biodiversity, quality of the groundwater, and the accessibility of traffic.

However, it is crucial to only share the information on the event day itself since not everyone is proficient enough to absorb a large amount of information. Therefore, it is crucial to have experts on the spot to answer questions.

d) What else to consider

Lastly, it is important to ask what else to consider which can be a number of very diverse points, but revolves around the question what is needed to make you be able to voice your opinion. Therefore, a building could need access for wheelchairs, the need for translators for people who are less proficient in the language, or support for those who found it challenging to speak in a group setting.

The Event Day

A crucial step for the event day itself is that the people can set the agenda for the day. Normally participants are used that the process facilitators set the agenda, but by giving this responsibility to the people they can decide themselves the topics of importance on which time has to be spent and a fruitful discussion is necessary to come to an understanding.

After setting the agenda several breakout groups are formed on each topic in which each subject is discussed in smaller groups so that everyone interested is able to have the word, these topics can be biodiversity, nature and recreation, and entrepreneurship. The aim of the smaller groups is to not just touch the subjects on superficial level, but really dig deep into the topics to come to the necessary decisions. Sometimes these smaller groups are unable to form a final decision that is why there are also always plenary discussions at the end of each discussion.

During these plenary discussions people are able to voice and discuss any final concerns with each other. An important benefit of the plenary discussion is that everyone is able to touch upon all the other topics discussed even if they were not

part of the smaller breakout groups since not everyone is able to partake in each smaller discussion group. During the plenary sessions there is a feedback to each topic discussed and each participant is able to voice their concerns. The final benefit of holding plenary sessions is that stakeholders can have a final discussion with each other in which they share their thought process with each other. Therefore, participants really need to consult and convince each other.

Finally, it is important to state that the final outcome of the co-creation does not have to be an outcome that you 100 % agree with, but rather an outcome you can live with.

When and where were the activities carried out?

Before the event day took place the city council established the framework the plan had to adhere to on the 21st of September 2023.

After that between the 7th and 18th of the first meeting with involved stakeholders took place.

In the following months, meetings and discussions took place with everyone who wanted to partake in the co-creation process.

Lastly, the event day took place on the 20th of January 2024 in Burgum.

Who were the key implementers and collaborators?

There were several key implementers and collaborators during the entire process:

The Municipality

The municipality was the initiator of the process and established the framework for the vision.

The Process Facilitators

The process supervisors prepared everyone for the event day by preparing the location and everything needed for the event to be a success such as the facilities and the needed expertise. Besides that, they prepared every participant and they also aimed to having as large a group of participants as possible.

Participating Stakeholders

The participating stakeholders can be every single person who has an interest in the question at the hand and is from the area effected by the issue. In the case of Burgum-West, this means everyone from the region was able to participate in the creation of a vision of the area. All holding their own expertise and view on the area that needs development. They were able to have fruitful discussion with each other in order to hear each other's opinions, concerns and beliefs and come up together with a wide-shared acceptable vision. It is important to note that employees of the party with the final decision cannot be a participant in the process, in the case of Burgum-West these were the officials from the municipality.

Conversation Facilitators

A final important collaborator were the involved conversation facilitators. In order to have fruitful discussions during the breakout groups, it is necessary to have a great conversation facilitators who can steer the discussion and make it possible for everyone to voice their opinion and to support those who have difficulty speaking in groups. Moreover, since the process took place in the Province of Fryslân of was of great importance that the facilitators fluently spoke the Frysian language. However, this could also be a translator for those who did not master the language. Each conversation facilitator is, thus, picked process specific depending on the needs of the project.

Results of the Practice – outputs and outcomes

The concrete results were:

- The establishment of a vision for the area.
- The improvement of relations between the local authorities and the local population.
- The reestablishment of the relations between different stakeholders that held clashing views.

At the end of the co-creation process a final version of the area vision was presented to the officials of the municipality to decide the next steps to be undertaken. The municipality was very content with the established vision during the event day that they decided for the organisation of a follow-up co-creation day. In the following months a concrete plan for the implementation of the area vision will be developed

which proposes concrete actions, a timetable and a budget to execute the proposed ideas.

Lessons Learnt

The important lesson learnt during the co-creation process in Burgum-West is the involvement of local stakeholders into policy making. In recent years society has been increasingly polarised, and trust in public institutions is at all time low. By going for a new way of decision making, a boost of trust in the public institutions can be given. As a result, what worked especially well in the project is the involvement of the stakeholders and the execution of the proposed area vision by the municipality.

Conclusion

The most important benefits for the population are:

- Are a better more holistic vision since everyone is able to contribute through their own view. Also marginalised often forgotten groups are able to be heard.
- There is more understanding between the stakeholders and the municipality. Since they are really heard and involved in the process they have a better mutual understanding of the challenges and concerns of each other.
- A more invested population. Since everyone is able to participate in the co-creation a more invested population is formed. This is also visible through the follow up co-creation process that will be organised in June. People who were sceptical before are now more willing and likely to partake.
- Besides a better understanding between the local population and the municipality, the co-creation also formed a more cohesive society. People who held differing clashing views were able to come together and discuss the topic in a respectful and fruitful manner. Bringing the people back together and forming one society.

Why may that intervention be considered a “Best Practice”?

The co-creation process in Burgum-West can be considered a best practice since it reinforced good relations between the municipality and citizens on the one hand, and

established a better understanding among stakeholders in society. In a polarising time it is very important to involve all stakeholders in order to establish a common understanding. This is also a great learning experience for public officials to use a wider range of possibilities in policy making rather than the set ways of top-down focus on a bottom-up approach. Opting for a co-creation can open their eyes to adopt new strategies towards policy making.

Recommendations for those intending to adopt the documented “Best Practice” or how it can help people working on the same issue(s).

The most important recommendations to give to those wanting to adapt a co-creation process themselves is:

- First of all, to invest plenty of time and effort into the preparations of the process. Since co-creation is about involving the population in a process, it is an absolute necessity to start the involvement of the stakeholders already at the start of the process. Make sure all the participants are well prepared to voice their opinion on the event day. This also includes to prepare all the necessary conditions for everyone to be able to have input on the event day.
- Furthermore, a clear establishment of the framework is necessary so that all the participants know towards what they are working. Knowing what will be done with the outcome will motivate participants even more.

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Mienskipsfonds gemeente Leeuwarden

The Mienskipsfonds is for all residents of the municipality of Leeuwarden! Every year, new resident initiatives emerge from within the community. The municipality of Leeuwarden aims to support these initiatives where necessary. The establishment of the Mienskipsfonds in 2014 marked the beginning of this effort.

Overview of best practice

The Mienskipsfonds is an accessible fund for initiatives focused on community vitality and participation. An independent panel, the "Tafel van 8," evaluates the submitted projects and initiatives. This panel consists of eight residents from the municipality of Leeuwarden with diverse backgrounds.

The rules for applying are broadly defined and easy to understand. From 2024, an annual budget of €300,000,- was available. For each project or initiative, residents or resident groups can apply for a maximum of €20,000. Residents have become familiar with the fund over time.

The neighbourhoods and villages of the municipality of Leeuwarden are buzzing with resident initiatives. These can range from activities focused on social interaction and participation to renovating and adapting community centers. These initiatives originate from the residents themselves. To bring them to fruition, residents often need a helping hand to get started or to keep going. This support can come in the form of materials, knowledge, collaboration, or financial assistance.

To be eligible for a contribution, an initiative must meet the basic requirements of the Mienskipsfonds, namely: the initiative must be by and for residents, have community support, and address a need within the local community. The Mienskipsfonds is intentionally low-threshold, with few rules. As a result, many new projects and initiatives have been encouraged in recent years, such as the photography project in Heechterp, the picking garden in Techum, and the Seablue Kids project.

The diversity among applicants is significant, both in scale and reach. Additionally, the fund has seen an increase in initiatives focused on sustainability or those with artistic or cultural objectives.

The low-threshold application process provides everyone, including those with little experience in fundraising, an opportunity to apply for support. Feedback on the procedure is generally positive. Initiators seem to appreciate the personal contact with the administrative secretary and the fact that meetings are held monthly. This allows for decisions on approvals, partial approvals, additional questions, or rejections to be made within a month.

Resident involvement

The initiatives supported by the Mienskipfonds contribute to the livability of neighborhoods and towns. This leads to active communities, and a wide variety of activities and initiatives. Most initiatives have a local impact on the neighborhood or village and directly affect those involved. This impact can foster a sense of inclusion, pride in one's village or neighborhood, and the feeling that residents can truly make a difference in their environment.

Most initiatives are carried out by local initiators in collaboration with neighborhood panels, village councils, neighborhood or village associations, or local foundations.

Resident involvement is evident in all the initiatives. They stem from enthusiasm and intrinsic motivation to contribute to the community. Moreover, these activities are public and accessible to the entire community. As a result, many residents are passively involved in these activities, for instance, as spectators. The time and energy that people invest voluntarily and without payment highlight the importance of these initiatives, as such contributions cannot be taken for granted.

This voluntary commitment demonstrates strong support for these resident-driven initiatives. The initiatives address needs that arise directly from the Mienskip (community).

Over the past few years, it has become clear that the fund enables the needs and ideas of the Mienskip to be transformed into plans supported by the community. After a hesitant start in the early years, more and more plans are now being submitted to the fund. As the municipality of Leeuwarden, we thus create one of the essential conditions for facilitating resident initiatives.

Examples of initiatives from the Mienskipfonds of the year 2024

Neighborhood Market Natuerlijk Littens

In the village of Easterlittens, the local Market Natuerlijk Littens, made possible by the Mienskipfonds, has become a vibrant activity. This initiative, which makes sustainable local products accessible to the community, has not only boosted the local economy but also strengthened the Mienskip spirit.

"It's amazing to see how this market brings people together," says one of the initiators. "Every Saturday morning, residents gather to pick up their organic groceries and enjoy a cup of coffee. It's a moment of connection and conviviality."

The Neighborhood Market NL is an association open to all residents of Easterlittens and the surrounding area. Every week, local farmers and producers supply organic products, which members can then pick up. "We want people to know where their food comes from and how it's produced," Gonneke explains. "It's a win-win situation: farmers have a fair marketplace, and residents get fresh, sustainable products."

"There are more and more people who want to eat organic and farmers who are looking for a local market,". "This initiative offers a sustainable future for both agriculture and the community."

The funding application for the market went smoothly. "We wrote a project plan and filled out the application form. It was approved right away. "I'd encourage anyone with a social initiative to go for it! It brings so many positives, like great conversations, connection, and mutual trust. It makes our village even more beautiful!"

Music in Oud Oost Leeuwarden

In Oud Oost Leeuwarden, regular activities for seniors are organized, such as coffee mornings, bingo, and other open events. A group of former musicians missed the joy of music, which inspired a person in the neighborhood to offer free music lessons at the center for seniors with limited financial means. Thanks to the Mienskipfonds, this initiative was able to expand further.

"Playing music alone just makes you feel lonelier," says one of the seniors. "Many seniors want to learn to play a musical instrument but never had the chance or time. On top of that, it's often unaffordable."

The former musicians understand the value of music. "It's a skill you can pick up again throughout your life. It helps create new connections and is a great way to relieve stress,"

The lessons are open to everyone, with a focus on children, youth, and seniors. The only requirement is motivation and commitment to the learning process. Participants don't take instruments home but can practice at the neighborhood center. The instructors provide six months of introductory lessons, and in the second half of the year, they form a band that performs at the Open Nights.

"After a year, continuing music lessons becomes much less intimidating,". Adults may then join a neighborhood orchestra or music association. "And who knows, after the first season, the Cambuursterhoek Band might decide to keep playing together,".

They encourage everyone to start initiatives that connect residents and enhance livability. "It always starts with an idea, but funding is crucial. The Mienskipfonds offers a great opportunity, and the application process is straightforward. For tougher questions, you can always get help,".

Us Doarpshus Wergea more sustainable

A community center is often the heart of a village, and that's certainly true in Wergea, where the local center is home to a vibrant community life. Three years ago, the people there began planning to make the center more sustainable—a necessary step since it was poorly insulated. "Energy costs were a huge expense. We'd much rather spend that money on fun activities," says a local. Thanks to the Mienskipfonds, the sustainability upgrades were financially possible.

Much of the work was done by a construction company, but many volunteers were also involved. Through the Havenbank (a local bulletin), volunteers were regularly called. "About sixty volunteers offered their help and expertise. It was hectic at times, but overall, the renovation went well. With these measures, our community center is now future-proof. And we had a lot of fun working toward a common goal,".

The application for the sustainability project went smoothly. "The form is simple to complete, and the requirements are clearly stated. If you're considering applying to the Mienskipfonds for a social initiative, I'd definitely recommend it,"

"Thanks to the efforts of the volunteers and the support of the Mienskipfonds, Us Doarpshus is now ready for the future. The center is not only more energy-efficient but also a place where the community can come together and create new memories."

Municipality of Syddjurs

Syddjurs, Denmark



Anholt. All year round

A strategical plan for an island made by the citizens themselves.

Overview of best practice

The inhabitants of the Island of Anholt felt a bit let behind by the municipality and they wanted a development plan. They applied for money at the municipality to make one and were granted some money to hire experts to help them in the process.

Implementation of the practice

The inhabitants got together and decided to form a working group. All unions and communities on the island should be represented in the group. The external experts carried out a plan for involvement and gathered inputs through interviews and meetings between the different stakeholders on the island.

The process itself had a beneficial side-effect that people who normally don't meet met. And people who normally are not involved in strategical work or development plans were actively involved.

Results of the Practice – outputs and outcomes

The Island now has a common vision and strategy for the future development of the island life. They have pointed out the most valuable spots and places that they want to protect and on the other hand they are dependent on tourism and visitors. How can they make profit without destroying the landscape and the atmosphere everyone agrees to keep and protect

Lessons Learnt

The vision and strategy plan are made by the inhabitants of the island themselves and they own it very much. It gives the plan high credibility and trust within the community.

On the other hand, the municipality and the city council have not been part of the process. It was presented when it was completed, but the politicians and more

important the people working for the municipality are not familiar with the content and have no immediate opinion on how the strategy should be translated into action.

Conclusion

If a community has a desire to carry out a development plan, they should be encouraged in doing so and if possible, supported financially. It gives great credibility to the process and local anchoring to the decisions.

The municipality should in front inform the community in which way the strategy plan will affect on the development plans within the municipality. Maybe it will be put into account, or maybe it will not.

Further Reading

<https://anholthavn.dk/visionen-er-anholt-hele-aaret-rundt/>

Sustainable Village and Local Energy Communities

Overview of best practice

Central Region Denmark established a pole for projects in villages about sustainable energy driven by the inhabitants of the village themselves. They managed to get money from different sectors within the region to establish a common goal.

Sustainability is one of the main targets in the regional strategy. By making a pole with a specific objective, the region can put a spotlight on possibilities that need to be explored and looked into more.

Implementation of the practice

Villages that are interested to know if they can be self-sufficient with green energy can apply for money to make a preliminary project with help from experts in energy solutions and for meetings for the whole village.

Results of the Practice – outputs and outcomes

The output is collecting and sharing information for other villages to use, to demonstrate the size of interest on the specific topic (and maybe invest more money on this strategical topic) and to complete the preliminary work into a real project about local community energy.

The outcome is also how different offices within the region itself can work together and benefit from a joint venture like this, where two or more parties get to get their strategical goals covered and subsidize actual projects that will make a huge impact on sustainability.

Lessons Learnt

The internal process in the central region Denmark took a bit of time – but based on the great success they suspect similar joint ventures will now be easier in the future.

Conclusion

The success of the special pole for local community energy is also based on the timing - the relevance of looking on alternative solutions the high energy prizes had provided. The regional office for rural development and the regional office for environment and nature both wanted to do something and together they got a better result than they could have achieved themselves.

Timing and relevance are crucial to the success of a project – in this case a special pole. The region got a lot of response, more applicants than ever and an outcome of high-quality projects.

Work fast and take risks.

Further Reading

<https://www.rm.dk/om-os/aktuelt/nyheder/nyheder-2022/oktober-22/hjalp-til-landsbyer-ramt-af-energikrise/>

ARDITI

Madeira Regional Agency for the development of
Research, Technology and Innovation

Madeira, Portugal



Digital Nomads Madeira Islands

This initiative aims to attract digital nomads to Madeira and Porto Santo.

Overview of best practice

Since November 2020, the Regional Government of Madeira, through Startup Madeira, and Gonçalo Hall, have developed the structure for a pilot project - Digital Nomads Madeira Islands. This initiative aims to attract digital nomads to Madeira and Porto Santo. This project is an opportunity for the region to be the pioneer and make a difference in a fast-growing market niche.

Ponta do Sol was the municipality chosen to test the concept from February 1st to June 30th, 2021. Knowing the needs of nomads, adapting products and services to their requirements, and involving the community and private entities (hotels, restaurants, local accommodation, consultants, lawyers, rent-a-cars, creatives, and entrepreneurs from different areas) were some of the challenges identified for this pilot phase. And so, the idea was born to present Ponta do Sol to the world as a Digital Nomad Village, a place that digital nomads can call home for a few months, usually from 1 to 3 months.

This village has the perfect conditions for nomads, who seek the sun and a peaceful lifestyle surrounded by nature. All of this, was in the first nomad village in Europe. Natural beauty, access to the sea, nature, and an excellent internet signal are the welcoming gifts of this beautiful village to attract digital nomads from all over the globe.

Implementation of the practice

Working from home is the new normal for thousands of workers, but for digital nomads, it is a reality that they embraced many years ago.

Digital nomads are remote workers who take advantage of the flexibility to travel the world while they work. The dream of many people was to get a remote job so they could travel and work from beautiful destinations, escape winter and meet interesting people. Due to the pandemic, it just became a reality when several companies like Facebook, Coinbase, and many others are allowing their workers to work from anywhere.

With the freedom that they have, digital nomads tend to travel to the most beautiful places in the world, with good weather, great food, safety, activities in nature, and above all, good internet.

Madeira has the perfect conditions to attract digital nomads with its natural beauty, activities in nature, culture, and fantastic climatic conditions throughout the year. This project aims to prepare, promote, and create a unique community with digital nomads worldwide.

This initiative gathered the conditions to create a Digital Nomad Village at Ponta do Sol. A unique pilot project that aims to blend digital nomads with the local businesses and Ponta do Sol inhabitants, turning it into a community of people that will positively impact the village, both socially and economically.

The project developed by the Regional Secretary of Economy, through the Startup Madeira, is attracting digital nomads around the world to work from Madeira. Professionals from major companies and digital entrepreneurs will make the island their home for periods of between 1 and 3 months, living like locals in the communities around the island.

Promoters:

- Regional Secretary of the Economy [SREM]
- Startup Madeira

Partners and entities involved:

- Community of digital nomads
- Local companies [hotels and local accommodation owners/landlords, tourist entertainment companies, restaurants, rent-a-car, healthcare, consulting firms, lawyers, etc.]
- John dos Passos Cultural Center [SRTC]
- NOS Madeira [Internet]
- International platforms [Nomadx | Flatio.com]

Results of the Practice – outputs and outcomes

It is expected a very positive impact on the economy. The attraction of these professionals, with high salaries, can raise the consumption in local businesses by compensating for some reduction of tourists and the seasonality of the market tourist. It's estimated a local economic impact of 1.5M€/ month (on average, a digital nomad spends 1.800€/month).

Our digital nomads are aged between 18 and 80, representing various professions, from entrepreneurs, developers, graphic designers, project managers, lawyers, writers, and journalists. Incorporated in the “Nomad Village” project, the John dos Passos Cultural Center in Ponta do Sol is the working space for many of these professionals. Since February 2021, this space has been visited by over 5000 international digital nomads. An opportunity to work, network, partake in small workshops and talks and get to know better the local culture.

It is estimated that more than 9800 Digital Nomads have already been in Madeira and Porto Santo since the beginning of the project (February 2021).

The Digital Nomad Village is a unique concept in Europe and caught the attention of the international press. After the opening of registrations, the project was mentioned in more than +100 media outlets. From CNN, EuroNews, Forbes, Financial Times, 150sec, Lonely Planet, Der Spiegel, Huffington Post, The Japan Times, Times of India, to Mirror. These are some examples of the international press that gave notoriety to this project

Here are some numbers.

Overview	
Total registrations	+ 17.000 registrations
Total countries	139 countries

Registration/ Country

USA (+2300)
United Kingdom (+1700)
Germany (+1600)
Brazil (+1330)
Poland (+950)
Italy (+600)
Netherlands (+710)
Czech Republic (+450)
France (+477)
Canada (+370)
Spain (+340)
Ukraine (+330)
Slovakia (+220)

Other countries:

Australia, Belgium, Colombia, Denmark, Estonia, Greece,
Holland, Hungary, India, Ireland, Sweden, Switzerland

We estimate that over 9800 digital nomads were in Madeira Islands, since February 2021.

Nomads in Madeira, Monthly Prevision:

2021	
February: ~600	July - August: ~500
March: ~990	September - October: ~500
April: ~1100	November: ~800
May: ~1000	December: ~700
June: ~700	

2022	
January: ~800	May - June: ~800
February: ~900	July - August: ~700
March: ~900	September - October: ~700
April: ~800	November - December: ~70

Lessons Learnt

Considering the strong positive impact of the pilot-project, during those 5 months we had the opportunity to understand the needs of digital nomads, enhance connections between this niche of the market and local companies, contact investors and then make decisions. The most important thing still is to listen to the needs of our customers (digital nomads) and promote businesses, companies, and entrepreneurs from Madeira, who already provide services throughout the island (local accommodation, hotels, rent-a-cars, restaurants, accounting, and financial support companies, lawyers, etc.). We emphasise that this project, which due to its natural dynamics, is extend in Madeira and Porto Santo.

The location in Ponta do Sol is still active. Simultaneously, other locations are being included in this project, mainly hosted by private entrepreneurs, such as Machico (Remote East Coasters), Funchal (Madeira Friends International Community Association), Jardim do Mar (Nomadico) e Porto Santo.

Conclusion

See: section c and d

Further Reading

www.digitalnomads.startupmadeira.eu

CIM-RC

Coimbra Region Intermunicipal Community

Coimbra, Portugal



Clime Act / ClimAgir

The ClimAgir Project aims to raise awareness among the general public of the consequences of climate change in Coimbra Region and, at the same time, to foster autochthonous forestry.

Overview of best practice

The ClimAgir Project aims to raise awareness among the general public on the consequences of climate change in Coimbra Region and, at the same time, to foster autochthonous forestry.

The main goal is to develop information and knowledge actions to raise awareness and educate the population on climate change issues, through the dissemination of the scenarios predicted for the territory of the Coimbra Region CIM, as well as good practices to be adopted to minimize the risks for different thematic areas.

The “ClimAgir” project was born following the elaboration of the Intermunicipal Plan for Adaptation to Climate Change (PIAAC), prepared by CIM-RC and the University of Coimbra, which aims to assess the impacts caused by these changes.

The PIAAC is an innovative document that includes knowledge of the sectoral specificities of the CIM-RC territory, the assessment of its current and future vulnerability to climate change and the identification, definition and prioritization of specific adaptation measures for the CIM-RC territory.

The document addresses possible impacts on various sectors, such as: Agriculture, Food, Forests, Biodiversity, Water Resources, Estuaries and Coastal Areas, Infrastructure and Energy, Tourism and Human Health.

Thus, the “ClimAgir” project emerges as one of the specific measures provided for in the PIAAC.

Implementation of the practice

School Actions aimed at the school community with awareness-raising sessions for students at different levels of education, from 1st basic education cycle to secondary/professional.

The actions consist of educational lectures on climate change, complemented by viewing videos, suitable for each level of education, participation in didactic games, planting actions and interaction with the project's mascot.

In addition, teachers were encouraged to promote classes on the subject, with basic material being distributed to enable the continuity of actions.

The actions took place during the 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 school years in all the Municipalities that CIM-RC aggregate

The Municipality Actions were centred on a traveling tent that travelled through the 19 Municipalities of CIM-RC with a didactic exhibition on Climate Change and its impacts on the various sectors, in the Region of Coimbra, provided for in the Intermunicipal Plan for Adaptation to Climate Change.

This action was aimed at the general public, which, in addition to the exhibition, also included videos, educational games and interaction with the project's mascot.

The population received information about the project in the form of an information leaflet, in order to contribute to the continued study of these matters and promote family debate on climate change.

Beaches Actions took place during the summer, for the general public. The population received information about the project in the form of an information leaflet, in order to contribute to the continuous study of these matters and promote family debate on climate change. They were also made aware of various factors typical of the time, such as heat waves, extreme temperatures, fires, among others.

These actions were carried out in Beaches and River Beaches of the 19 Municipalities of the CIM-RC.

The Public Health Actions consisted of carrying out training aimed at those responsible for public and private institutions that maintain proximity care with risk groups, namely children, the elderly, pregnant women, people with disabilities, among others.

These actions, were developed in collaboration with the Central Regional Health Administration and the National Institute of Medical Emergency, with the aim to communicate and make those responsible aware of the good practices to be adopted in view of the consequences of climate change on human health, more specifically, for these specific groups of the population, ensuring equal opportunities in access to information.

Finances

Funded by PO SEUR - Operational Program for Sustainability and Efficiency in the Use of Resources, Portugal 2020 and the Cohesion Fund.

Results of the Practice – outputs and outcomes

Type of Actions	N. ° of Actions	N. ° of people reached
Municipalities	21 actions	90.000 people
Schools	619 classes	12.780 students
Beaches	13 municipalities	3000 people
Public Health	3 sessions	92 trainees

Type of Actions	Means involved in the implemented actions	Adherent Population
ClimAgir App	Downloads of the mobile application created	762
Documentary Film/Video	N/A	N/A
Radio Program	Audience for radio spots	36 000
Communication/ Dissemination	Reach out to Social Networks and Websites	2.850
Students	Students in contact with the project	17.272

Support material	Copies of awareness and information material	10.0487
Exhibitions	Exhibition visitors	34.572
ClimAgir Mascot	<p>"Bolotas" is the mascot for this project. It travelled 50,000 km in an electric vehicle through the 19 municipalities of CIM-RC, with the aim of disseminating the impacts of climate change and promoting the planting of native species, more specifically the cork oak.</p>	

Lessons Learnt

Strengths:

- Practical activities
- The topics addressed were very interesting and topical.
- Raising awareness of the issue of climate change and its consequences.
- The playful dynamics of the actions.
- The themes addressed and the choice of methods.
- The approach to the theme, materials and methodology used.
- Construction of the trap and the Quizz Game
- Overall, the actions were very enriching, very well presented, having used a very simple and clear language that allowed for a good interaction between the class and the trainers, promoting a climate of involvement and participation by all.
- The documentary film/video was very interesting and appropriate to the theme presented.

- The handling of the didactic games allowed a better awareness and consolidation of the theme and finally the interaction with the project mascot was a moment of joy and some curiosity on the part of the children.
- Relevance of the topics covered and clarity in their presentation bearing in mind the age group they were aimed at.
- The contents addressed, the importance of raising awareness among students to preserve the environment; the suitability of the monitors' language for the target audience, the ease with which they motivated the students and the activities proposed.

Aspects to be improved

- Development of further actions with the same students during the year to better consolidate the contents presented
- More time for the activities
- More interactive contents/ practical components

Conclusion

The “ClimAgir” project is considered a “Best Practice” because it produced good outcomes that can be replicated and disseminated to other regions, namely:

- **Changing children's behaviour** about the problems caused by climate change consequently influencing parents' behaviour through the use of simple language;
- **A strong densification** of the promotion of the actions carried out through social networks; and
- **Facilitator in attracting young audiences** through social media and app resources

Further Reading

[CLIMAGIR | CIMRC \(cim-regiaodecoimbra.pt\)](http://cim-regiaodecoimbra.pt)

[ClimAgir | Documentário "Alterações Climáticas" \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

Fulfil yourself / Realiza.te

Realiza.te is a territorial action program, which aims to promote school success, social equity, employment and equal opportunities for its young people.

Overview of best practice

Realiza.te is a territorial action program, which aims to promote school success, social equity, employment and equal opportunities for its young people.

The project is aimed at all public schools in the 19 municipalities of the Region of Coimbra, from students, teachers, parents, non-teaching staff, among others, and aims to reduce failure and early school leaving by 10% in the territory of the Intermunicipal Community of Coimbra Region.

With the aim of acting at the level of prevention, adequacy of the response and recovery of young people who are already at risk of school failure, its lines of intervention seek to involve the various contexts in which the child/young person is inserted - school, family and Community.

Implementation of the practice

Support for schools

We support schools through multidisciplinary municipal teams (Psychologists, Speech Therapists, among other professionals), with the aim of ensuring multilevel responses for students from pre-school to secondary education, which contribute to the fight against school failure.

We promote their social, emotional and cognitive development, also seeking to adjust their teaching-learning path through psychological support and individualised psychopedagogical support.

We seek to develop skills that contribute to the inclusion of students with learning difficulties and that promote an inclusive school. We carry out a systematic evaluation of the students' progress in the various areas of intervention and propose measures to overcome the difficulties encountered.

Learn from your Region

We support study visits to Coimbra Region through the tool “Discover your Region! – Catalogue of Points of Interest of the Intermunicipal Community of the Region of Coimbra”, which aims to support teachers in the planning of study visits, in the territory of the Region of Coimbra.

In addition to identifying points of interest, it has useful information such as location, GPS coordinates, contacts, ticketing, intervention areas and accessibility conditions.

This tool also allows the interconnection of each of the points of interest in the Region of Coimbra with the relevant pedagogical areas for Basic and Secondary Education.

Parent Education Program

Being a father or mother is one of the most challenging roles in a person's life, it transcends the possibility of feeding and caring for others in the simple sense of the survival of the species.

The way of “being a parent” is naturally different from person to person. Parenting behaviours are affected by a variety of factors: the level of knowledge and skills that vary with one's childhood experiences, one's system of values and principles, the level of education and other life experiences.

That's why we know that the task of raising awareness, training and supporting parents and guardians in their daily lives, as educators, is not that simple. Families have very specific life dynamics: routines, habits, ways of thinking and acting, different priorities, beliefs, values, etc. In addition, families can also have different compositions: two-parent families, single-parent families, families with children from previous marriages, families with adopted children and foster families.

This Parental Education Program does not have all the exact answers regarding what should be said or done in each of the cases, but rather, it will lead you to explore a set of cross-cutting themes in the day-to-day life of most parents, knowing that this will help them in part to recognize or solve some of the problems that arise in raising a child, throughout his childhood and early adolescence.

Participation in this program is intended to allow you to discover, share and recreate new ways of seeing parenting these days, enhancing its main values and principles!

The Parental Education Program Realiza.te has 3 sub-programs:

- 1. Technicians from schools and municipalities**
- 2. School operational assistants**
- 3. Parent/guardian(s) program**

Imagine. Create. Succeed Program

Aimed at students from the 1st Cycle to Secondary/Professional Education, it reinforces the entrepreneurial potential of young people in the Region of Coimbra, through networked initiatives, with a high amplitude and sectoral transversality (aligned with the characteristics of the economic, social and associative fabric of the region), which guarantee the necessary support to promote and support local entrepreneurship.

The project is divided into 4 educational subprograms, adapted to each level of education:

- Pre-school program, an adventure in the city of the future
- Program 1st cycle of basic education, the adventure of Inês and Tomás
- Program 2nd cycle of basic education, arts and crafts
- Program 3rd cycle of basic education, school

Companies

- Secondary/professional education program, create your future
- Ambassadors' program
- Training for teachers

Support to study

We promote study support through specialised professionals in the municipalities, to children/young people at risk of school failure.

It is intended to contribute to the ultimate goal of school education, to provide values and skills that allow them to intervene in the lives and history of individuals and societies, to make free and well-founded decisions on natural, social and ethical issues, and have a capacity for civic, active, conscious and responsible participation.

Learning Labs in Schools a Science Workshops in the Community

This program encompasses the action “Doing to know: a transdisciplinary vision of knowledge” which focuses on a set of proposals for 10 activities aimed at Basic Education classes, making the necessary cross-reference with the study plan for each school cycle.

- Knowing the ground we walk on
- If you breathe, you are alive!
- What did Pythagoras teach us?
- Travel... your position in the world!
- The diversity around us
- Robotics
- Each animal in its costume
- Movement structures
- Have you ever seen unicellular ones?
- Water

Implementation of innovative education environments

Innovative environments emerge with the aim of promoting change in styles, dynamics and learning rhythms and have as their main objective the reduction of school failure/promotion of success.

In the Region of Coimbra you can find two types of approaches:

Classrooms with integrated technological systems of hardware, software and teaching platforms, which should form the core of the school ecosystem focused on

the teaching and learning component, easy to use, attractive and mobilizing for all teaching actors.

Workrooms seen as learning laboratories, spaces for innovation, for teachers and students, conducive to the use of new methodologies. Each space is composed of certain equipment and technologies, which allow teachers to experiment with a new organization of teaching and learning.

Mobilization workshops for the promotion of education

We promote awareness/information actions for the educational community, related to digital skills and innovative educational environments.

Municipal projects to promote education

We support the development of municipal pilot projects, aimed at specific intervention niches in each of the partner entities, and which aim to achieve one of two objectives: Reduce the early school leaving rate to 10% in the “Coimbra Region”; Decrease the retention/dropout rate in basic education to 6.3%.

Finances

This program is co-financed by Centro 2020, Portugal 2020 and the European Social Fund, and is an integral part of the Pact for Development and Territorial Cohesion of the CIM-RC.

The second phase of the Realiza.te program is running until the end of the 2023 school year.

Results of the Practice – outputs and outcomes

The first phase of the project, which involved a total approved investment of €4,521,375.20, had a financial execution rate of 94.5%. In addition, it reached 100% of the performance indicators, both in terms of the number of measures implemented and in terms of School Groupings and non-grouped Schools involved.

With regard to results, the degree of achievement of the indicators was 147.50%, surpassing the expected results: the reduction in the percentage of students in the 1st, 2nd, 3rd Cycles and Secondary with negative levels (at least one subject) of curricular years is 225.89% and the reduction in the retention and dropout rate in the curricular years is 158.27%, which demonstrates the overcoming of the proposed target.

Results achieved regarding each activity

Support for schools

2018/ 2019 Academic Year Results in Numbers	
75	4058
Professionals	Intervention children
Main areas of intervention: Psychology, Speech Therapy, Languages, Socio-Cultural Entertainment, Music, Social, Educational Psychology, Psychomotricity, Mindfulness, Occupational Therapy, Educational Sciences, Nutrition	

Learn from your Region

5043	12	400
Students covered	Points of interest areas	Points of interest

Parent Education Program

46	59	155
Technicians covered	Operational assistants covered	Parents/Guardians covered

Imagine. Create. Succeed Program

69	175	99	3238
Schools	Teachers	Classes	Students

Support to study

16	450
Elements that make up the team	Students covered

Learning Labs in Schools and Science Workshops in the Community

38	333	6000
Workshops held	Actions – Do to Know	Students – Do to Know
<p>Workshop areas: Water, Day-to-day science, Experimental Science Teaching, Articulated-legged animals, Healthy eating, Pediatric Basic Life Support (BLS), Astronomy - Our neighbourhood in the cosmos, Invasive Species, Agriculture/endogenous products/ Valuing the land, Gender Equality, Exploring the world around me, Non-formal educational spaces and resources, The Telescope – Window to the Universe, Optics and Sound, Weights and Measures, Climate change and forests, Human body and healthy habits.</p>		

Implementation of innovative education environments

24
Innovative environments created

Mobilization workshops for the promotion of education

With the **CCTIC Softsciences Center**, we carried out Digital Citizenship awareness actions for 2nd Cycle students and Parents and Guardians, working on the following themes:

No to hate speech; Bullying and Cyberbullying; Online Predators/grooming; Sexting; Online Addiction; Gaming; Digital Influencers; Copyright/Plagiarism/Disinformation (fake news); Online trading - risks and precautions to be taken; and Security on public WiFi networks.

With the **Training Centers of Associations of Schools** in the area covered by the Region of Coimbra, we provide the following training areas:

Flipped Learning in learning; Mobile Learning in learning; Game Based Learning in learning; Gamification in learning; Digital

Storytelling in learning; Block programming didactics; Didactics and technology of the Internet of Things, among others.

Municipal projects to promote education

In this context, Snoezelen rooms were funded:

Center for Educational Intervention and Multisensory Stimulation - Mealhada

The project is about two multisensory rooms (snoezelen), located in basic schools N° 2 of Mealhada and Pampilhosa. They are multisensory environments that allow you to stimulate the primary senses, such as touch, taste, sight, sound and smell, without resorting to the intellectual capacities but to the sensorial capacities of each student.

These two spaces will play a fundamental role in the project to Combat School Failure in the Municipality of Mealhada, insofar as they promote the social, emotional and cognitive development of the referenced students, adjusting their teaching/learning process and thus increasing, consequently, the levels of school success.

The project (C)ASA – Capacitar: Learning to Be Autonomous was carried out in Lousã:

The project is a Support and Resource Center for Learning, based on a structure that aggregates human and material resources, knowledge and skills of the school, in collaboration with other agents and services.

It is, therefore, a space and time for learning skills, which is intended to support children and young people in the transition to independent and adult life.

Here we intend to: improve conditions for promoting the quality of active participation of students in class activities and in other learning contexts; support teachers; create structured environments, rich in communication and interaction, which promote learning; implement measures that build an inclusive school; contribute to the organisation of the process of transition to post-school life, preparing students to enter the job market.

The Personal Development Workshop was held in Tábua– I can do it

Pilot project aimed at students between the 7th and 9th years of schooling enrolled in the Grupo de Escolas de Tábua, proposing intervention at the level of the development of bio-psycho-social skills, restructuring the education of and through affections as protection factors, in prevention of risky behaviour.

The main objective of the workshop is to help students to establish adequate relationships with others, to have a satisfactory and healthy relational life, through the acquisition and development of basic individual and social skills.

One of the local projects was chosen for its implementation on an inter-municipal scale during the period 2020-2023, in the case of the project “MindSerena: Presente do Presente” developed by the Municipality of Penacova.

Lessons Learnt

Strengths:

One of the strengths of the project was undoubtedly the “Parent Education Program” which allowed the involvement of the family and the school community in favour of education through training activities. On the other hand, it is important to mention the “rooms of the future”, rooms in innovative environments where practice and theory are combined.

Challenges encountered:

One of the challenges faced in the project was the problem of bureaucracy with regard to financial reporting due to the need and difficulty in collecting necessary information from the 19 municipalities of the CIM-RC.

Conclusion

The results achieved with this project benefited greatly the population and it's for sure considered a "best practice". According to the statistics, Coimbra Region currently has an early school leaving rate lower than the national average, and it can be seen that, among the students who attend the CIM-RC school network, *"it shows improvements over the years and at all levels of schooling, with the retention and dropout rate of students having been decreasing more and more"*.

These indicators just show us how this project impacted student's lives as well as the overall school network of Coimbra Region. Meanwhile, CIM-RC will continue to focus on promoting literacy, *"in a collaborative work with the existing networks and agents in the territory"* and intends to continue with actions aimed at promoting scientific knowledge in schools, as well as an innovative and integrated intervention, based on the concept of mindfulness, which develops skills of self-regulation of attention and emotions, seeking, in this way, to support the educational community in mitigating some of the consequences of the pandemic.

Regarding recommendations for those wanting to adopt this best practice, we consider the following activities of most importance:

- Direct training with parents
- Use of innovative classroom environments
- Support for children with special needs
- Practical and not so theoretical teaching

Further Reading

[Realiza.te \(realiza-te.pt\)](https://realiza.te)

Trentino Federation of Cooperation

Trento, Italy



The Social and Solidarity economy Districts (SSD) in Trentino

The SSD are laboratories for civic and socio-economic experimentation, enhancing local resources, equity, environmental and socio-economic sustainability.

Overview of best practice

The Autonomous Province of Trento is an Alpine Italian region, mainly rural, with 166 small municipalities (500-1.000 inhabitants). The presence of about 500 cooperatives and 255.000 members (out of 542.166 inhabitants) makes Trentino a cooperative district. In terms of GDP per capita it ranks among the top in Italy however, peripheral areas suffer from weak services and economic dynamism (affecting communities, welfare system and the elderly population and exacerbating the phenomenon of depopulation).

In the 2000s, the global economic crisis had strong repercussions on the economic and social fabric of the Autonomous Province of Trento. In a complex scenario of profound questioning of social relations at different levels, it became necessary to design and adopt new measures for the provision of social services to the population. It was therefore needed to overcome the commonplace of the 'welfarism' through the engagement of all the components of the society meant as bonds to promote social cohesion and thus as a lever for territorial development, operating in synergy with other provincial policies (economic, labour, cultural, etc.).

In 2010 the PAT issued a Provincial Law (13/2010) aimed at supporting initiatives carried out by actors engaged in the solidarity economy and addressing the priority of civil, social and economic development. The Law provides for the establishment of the SSD as laboratories for civic, economic and social experimentation. SSD are realised through circuit capable of enhancing territorial resources according to the criteria of equity, environmental and socio-economic sustainability. They can be activated for the creation of chains of consumption of goods and services, financing production, distribution and work integration of people in vulnerable situation. So beneficiaries and stakeholders are producers of goods/services – social enterprises; consumers – individuals or groups/associations; financing institutions; SSD workers; and public entities.

Implementation of the practice

SSD are a holistic economic model that integrates financing, production, distribution, and consumption, deeply rooted in local communities. They are characterised by robust Public-Private Partnerships, formed by at least three entities of different legal forms, which contribute to their viability. A notable aspect of the SSD model is its focus on empowering individuals with special needs by providing them with employment opportunities, thereby making a significant social impact. SSD are unique in their requirement to involve a minimum of three entities, each with different legal forms. This criterion roots them deeply in local communities and fosters robust partnerships that promote social sustainability. SSD are required to have a minimum duration of three years, ensuring sustained efforts and impact over time.

The SSD can operate in the following 13 sectors: sustainable development, sustainable construction industry, fair trade, re-use and re-cycling, sustainable mobility, barter, critical and responsible consumption, community welfare, free software, short supply chain, ethical finance, energy saving, organic products.

Timescale: 2010 – ongoing

Geographical scope: the whole territory of the Autonomous Province of Trento

Resources: Financially, SSD are self-sustaining, with a model that generates internal incentives through interconnected production, distribution, and job placement networks, as well as a variety of products and services. This self-sustaining economy, bolstered by Public-Private Partnerships, underpins the financial sustainability of SSD.

Operationally the promotion of the social economy is realised through the provision of a permanent coordination working table with the provincial government, a dedicated organisational secretariat, some economic resources for awareness-raising and promotion activities and development of the culture underlying the solidarity and social economy, other types of incentives.

Results of the Practice – outputs and outcomes

Currently there are 10 thematic regional SSD: green economy, social work for prisoners, services and lean solutions for industry and manufacturing; and 3 territorial SSD.

Since 2021 the Centre for the Solidarity Economy has been created with the aim of informing, raising awareness and stimulating the knowledge, interest and involvement of the Trentino economic fabric in the Social and Solidarity Economy, guiding and accompanying in a concrete manner the entities interested in the creation of SSD.

The initiatives carried out are many and range from participation in conferences with the aim of promoting and raising community awareness on the topic, to the production of communication material, training, and to the concrete accompaniment of existing or start-up SSD in defining strategies and reporting tools useful for governance.

Lessons Learnt

1. **Immediate and short term:** SSD stakeholders believe it is necessary to strengthen above all the "bottom up" dynamics connected to the creation and development of SSD through awareness-raising, training, communication and marketing activities towards and by citizens and stakeholders.
2. **Medium-long term:**
 - increased awareness and support for participation, also through training activities and the creation of an ad hoc communication plan
 - greater resources to support SSD, in particular (but not only) for coordination functions, but also for reward systems
 - increased interaction and sharing of resources within SSDs and between SSD, also through the creation of a formalized network at territorial level (e.g. «Solidarity Economy Forum»)
 - increased presence of SSD in the territory both in numerical terms and through the activation of new types of SSD, and greater inclusiveness of the system both in terms of organizations involved and in terms of vulnerable segments of the population
 - Innovation in the methods of relationship between public and private entities with the overcoming of the logic of tenders
 - Review of the Provincial Law (13/2010) as a tool for framing and promoting the solidarity economy, considering a detailed analysis of the impact and strengths and weaknesses of the current system.

Coping strategy:

1. **Joint initiatives:** projects, promotion and marketing, investments, making the social economy greener
2. **Capacity building,** knowledge and resource sharing
3. **Maximize social** impact
4. **Increase visibility** and impact
5. **Increase bargaining** power and advocacy influence
6. **Promote economic** efficiency
7. **Diversification** and risk sharing

Actions to be implemented:

Activate a bottom-up approach that guarantees better interaction between citizens, SSD and public administration. Awareness-raising actions have to be promoted in the territory with meetings and initiatives even in the valleys and in the most marginal territories, the inclusion of the theme of SSD in already existing training in awareness and training courses to be continued and strengthened

Dedicated mapping of solidarity/social initiatives (constantly updated) and updating of the current SSD system also aimed at the creation of new SSD and new pilot projects in the area

Promotion of a complementary currency system.

Conclusion

The SSD model can be considered a best practice for several reasons, among others the following can be mentioned:

- **Economic resilience:** SSD prioritize local production, consumption, and employment, which can enhance the resilience of local economies to external shocks. By fostering a diverse range of businesses and economic activities, SSD can better withstand economic downturns.

- **Inclusive and sustainable growth:** SSD prioritize inclusivity and equitable development, ensuring that marginalized communities and people in a vulnerable situation have access to economic opportunities. This focus on social inclusion can help reduce inequality and promote sustainable development.
- **Community empowerment:** SSD empower local communities by involving them in decision-making processes and promoting participatory governance structures. This can strengthen social cohesion and foster a sense of ownership and pride among residents.
- **Environmental sustainability:** SSD must prioritize environmental sustainability by promoting eco-friendly practices, such as sustainable production methods, “farm-to-fork” strategies, waste reduction, and renewable energy use. This commitment to environmental stewardship aligns with broader goals of sustainable development.
- **Cultural preservation:** SSD celebrate local cultures, traditions, and heritage, helping to preserve and promote unique aspects of community identity. This can attract tourists, support local artisans and cultural producers, and contribute to the overall vitality of the district.
- **Innovation:** SSD serve as hubs for innovation and creativity, fostering the development of new business models, products, and services that address social and environmental challenges.
- **Cross-sector collaborations:** SSD are meant to facilitate collaboration between different stakeholders, including government agencies, businesses, civil society organizations, and academic institutions. This cross-sectoral cooperation can lead to innovative solutions to complex problems and maximize the impact of limited resources.

Overall, SSD offer a holistic approach to economic development that prioritizes social, environmental, and cultural values alongside economic prosperity, making them a best practice for promoting sustainable and inclusive growth.

SSD holds significant potential for application in other countries, contingent upon a strong collaborative intent between the public and private sectors and agreements with municipalities to pilot the SSDs in their respective areas. Critical to this transferability

is the belief in the importance of creating production chains (e.g., clusters) and aligning all stakeholders in public-private partnerships towards a common cause.

When adopting SSD, it's essential to follow a methodological approach that considers the unique context and needs of the community. Replicating this model in other countries can be challenging due to differences in legal frameworks and related funding mechanisms. Nevertheless, here are some methodological **recommendations** for the adoption of SSD:

- **Community Needs Assessment.** Conduct a thorough assessment of the social, economic, and environmental needs of the community to identify areas where SSD initiatives can have the most significant impact. Engage with local residents, businesses, and organizations to gather insights and prioritize key issues. This brings out the complexity of the community's needs and the wide diversity of resources available.
- **Public-Private-Partnerships.** For successful implementation elsewhere, collaboration between public, private, and the 'third' sector is crucial. This includes creating production chains and aligning stakeholders towards shared social objectives, such as the inclusion of people with disabilities.
- **Stakeholder Engagement.** It is of paramount importance to involve a diverse range of stakeholders in the planning and implementation process, including government agencies, businesses, civil society organizations, academia, and residents. Foster collaboration and consensus-building to ensure that SSD initiatives reflect the interests and aspirations of the community.
- **Policy Support.** Develop supportive policy frameworks at the local and regional levels to create an enabling environment for SSD initiatives. This may include providing financial incentives, regulatory support, and technical assistance to promote the growth of SSD enterprises and networks. The absence of a supportive legal framework and initial funding for SSD creation can be a significant barrier. To overcome this, countries with existing territorial public-private partnerships, like Local Action Groups (LAGs), could use these structures to establish regional collaborations within the SSD. This could lay the groundwork for adapting the SSD model in various contexts. National and local legislators could also play a vital role in creating conducive legal frameworks for SSDs establishment, simplifying bureaucratic processes, and ensuring initial funding and long-term sustainability.

Further Reading

<https://www.economiasolidaletrentina.it/>

<https://www.facebook.com/EconomiaSolidaleTrentina/timeline/>

Sources:

“Il Distretto dell’economia solidale (DES). Definizione, esperienze e opportunità di sviluppo nel contesto trentino – position paper / bozza per la discussione -” a cura di Elisa Poletti e Flaviano Zandonai

“Studio sui Distretti di Economia Solidale per l’implementazione di un sistema virtuoso Trentino” – Euricse 2021 – a cura di Jacopo Sforzi e Caterina De Benedictis

“La strategia delle reti ed i distretti di economia solidale” – Saroldi 2015
[www.economiasolidaletrentina.it/content/strategia-delle-reti-ed-i-distretti-di-economia-solidale]

SSDs’ webpage: <https://www.economiasolidaletrentina.it/des-2/> 2023 reporting,
<https://www.economiasolidaletrentina.it/centro-per-leconomia-solidale-trentina-a-che-punto-siamo-3/>

Saaremaa Municipality Government

Saaremaa, Estonia



Village associations in Saaremaa

Overview of best practice

A village association is a legally established form for local communities to take any action on behalf of the people in a village area

The area of 2,718 km² makes Saaremaa Municipality the biggest in territory among the 79 local governments of Estonia. The municipality is located on the island of Saaremaa (2,673 km²) and three more little islands near Saaremaa. The population of the municipality is 32,130 as of January 2024. There are 427 villages, 9 small-towns and 1 town in the municipality. Some of the villages are very small, some have no permanent residents. 39% of the population lives in Kuressaare town and another 16% live around Kuressaare.

Village associations is a form of action of civil society, based on cooperation initiated by local people to follow their interests, participate in discussing and making decisions on public matters. Village societies are a link between local people and local authorities. As formally established legal persons (non-profit and non-governmental organisations), they are entitled to represent villages and apply for funding at a variety of sources. As the name suggests, communities based on a common geographic area form a village association, still the association addresses a wide range of questions and issues of interest and need. A simpler version for collective activity is the partnerships based on a partnership agreement, still these partnerships are not legal persons and have thus limitations in their activity in a number of cases.

Implementation of the practice

Village associations are permanent organisations that carry out their activities on yearly basis.

The main activities include organising cultural and hobby activities to bring local people together, organising meetings to address developmental or other issues, tackling locally needed services, initiating the development of public spaces for common good.

Results of the Practice – outputs and outcomes

At municipality level:

The main outcome is a regular two-ways communication in a constructive manner between the municipality government and the population which:

- a) enables conveying the opinions of the communities all over Saaremaa Municipality for official decision making in a variety of topics;
- b) enables the communities all over Saaremaa Municipality to convey to the municipality government the issues to be addressed and/or initiatives to be taken.

At a village level:

The main outcome is identifying and addressing the village level issues in the most appropriate ways, which may include voluntary work, contribution by the municipality, project-based activity funded by the EU, national or private sources.

Lessons Learnt

The key actor for establishing a village association and keeping it active, is a leader in the community who is able to create a team. The leaders of village societies are in general volunteers providing their time and skills for a common good. In a number of cases, current leaders have been performing the roles and duties of the leaders for a number of years and would like to pass the role to a younger generation. A major challenge is to find young people with required qualities and the willingness to act for a common good.

Saaremaa Municipality was established in 2017 as a result of the amalgamation of 11 rural municipalities and Kuressaare town. While in rural areas the locally initiated cooperation in a form of associations has worked quite well, the urban area, Kuressaare town does not have any broad-based organisations addressing the comprehensive issues of development of Kuressaare. The organisations active in Kuressaare are mainly topic-based with quite a limited spectrum of interest.

In the course of GOCORE project, appropriate and suitable solutions are sought for to be applied in the urban area (Kuressaare town, 12 630 inhabitants) so that the community members could truly benefit from the identified solutions and accept them as useful ways of contributing to the development and governance of the municipality.

Conclusion

The formally organised activity of the population has been of benefit from the dialogue with the municipality government as well as the capacity of addressing and tackling the issues that have improved the quality of life in the area and increased the level of satisfaction with the living environment locally.

Further Reading

Hajdú-Bihar County Government

Debrecen, Hungary



Toolbox for the promotion of social entrepreneurship

More than 40 social enterprises and changemakers

Overview of best practice

To compile a comprehensive knowledge base, a toolbox has been created offering possibilities of existing tools and newly developed/adapted tools for the special needs of social entrepreneurship.

Implementation of the practice

The partners of the DelFin project (Interreg Central Europe, 2019-2022) jointly developed tools for the promotion of social entrepreneurship with focus on business support structures (e.g. accelerators or incubators) and financing/funding of social enterprises and entrepreneurs.

European rural regions are facing several societal challenges, especially an ageing population, brain drain and unemployment. Social innovation becomes more important for developing solutions that are sustainable. There is a clear need to adapt business support infrastructures and measures offered by regional or local authorities to the special needs of social enterprises.

The DelFin project promoted social entrepreneurship in rural regions which face special transformation challenges related to advancing economic and social innovation.

The participating rural regions in Germany, Hungary, Croatia and Italy worked together to improve funding schemes for supporting social entrepreneurship. The project facilitated cooperation of quadruple helix actors and developed a toolbox for the promotion of social entrepreneurship in rural regions, as well as a transnational strategy for promotion of social entrepreneurship in rural regions. All was tested in four pilot actions in each partner country. In addition, eight capacity building seminars with a focus on municipalities and finance institutions were organised to further spread the knowledge. Moreover, the participating regions are now equipped with action plans to ensure sustainability and mainstreaming of project results. Please take a look at the project results and outputs below.

The Toolbox contains financing and funding instruments targeting social enterprises and business support structures respecting the special needs of social entrepreneurs. It helps local and regional public authorities, business support organisations, development agencies and financial institutions to better support social entrepreneurship in their regions.

The toolbox includes dedicated chapters to:

- **Business support structures** - Establish motivating conditions for social enterprises
- **Financing schemes** - Finance business support structures and social enterprises
- **Evaluation** - Measure and monitor social impact

It has been an online compendium of financing and funding instruments while respecting the special needs of social entrepreneurs.

It especially supports local/regional public authorities, business support organizations, development agencies, financial institutions in

- developing/providing adequate economic and financial support possibilities,
- promoting cooperation/networking,
- improving business skills of Social Entrepreneurs,
- and meeting the needs of evaluation and monitoring.

Resources needed

The Toolbox has been created within the frames of the DelFin project financed by Interreg Central Europe Programme, in the cooperation of 8 project partners.

Timescale

2018 - 2020

Results of the Practice – outputs and outcomes

Evidence of success

If any interested party needs a tool for improving a business support for social enterprises, or requires guidance on how to establish support structures in rural areas, how can consulting formats and coaching be set up specifically for social enterprises, or if anyone wants to promote social entrepreneurship, can find useful tools here.

DelFin project partners shared the toolbox in a wider public, so more dozens of actors in social innovation and social entrepreneurship used the tool so far.

Challenges encountered

The project implementation took place during the COVID, so originally planned personal events, including onsite discussions with local and interregional actors had to face obstacles.

Potential for learning or transfer

A well-designed toolbox for social entrepreneurship has the potential to catalyse learning transfer by equipping users with practical skills, fostering collaboration, promoting innovation, and driving systemic change toward more inclusive and sustainable business practices. The impact extends beyond individual learners to influence organizations, communities, and societies striving for positive social transformation.

Further Reading

Website: <https://programme2014-20.interregcentral.eu/Content.Node/DelFin.html>

Project video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hRIppP4a_io

Toolbox video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PXQsA52-IFA>

German-speaking Community of Belgium

Ostbelgien, Belgium



Permanent citizens' dialogue / Bürgerdialog in Ostbelgien

The Ostbelgien region

Overview of best practice

The German-speaking Community of Belgium, known as Ostbelgien, has pioneered a unique approach to citizen engagement. The journey began in autumn 2017 when the Parliament of the German-speaking Community initiated a pilot Citizen Dialogue focused on childcare. The success and positive feedback from this pilot project prompted the idea of establishing a permanent mechanism for citizen involvement.

To bring this vision to fruition, the Parliament consulted with "G1000," a group of experts experienced in facilitating citizen participation. By summer 2018, "G1000" and the "Foundation of Future Generations" assembled Belgian and international experts to develop a comprehensive model for ongoing citizen involvement, which became known as the "Ostbelgien model."

In February 2019, the Parliament formally enacted the law titled "Dekret zur Einführung eines permanenten Bürgerdialogs in der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft," thereby establishing a legal framework for permanent citizen participation. Implementation began in September 2019 with the appointment of the first Citizen Council.

This model features a permanent council of 25 to 50 randomly selected citizens who set the agenda for deliberative assemblies. Politicians provide essential information but do not influence the topics under discussion. Ostbelgien's approach is notable for its formal integration of citizen input into the legislative process, marking a significant advancement in democratic engagement.

Implementation of the practice

The Citizen Dialogue operates through the following bodies:

- **The Citizen Assembly:** This assembly consists of 25 to 50 randomly selected citizens who discuss topics and formulate policy recommendations. The assembly provides a platform for broad-based citizen input on key issues.

- **The Citizen Council:** Comprising 24 members, the Citizen Council is responsible for preparing, organizing, and following up on the Citizen Assembly's work. This council also monitors the implementation of the assembly's policy recommendations. Ideally, members of the Citizen Council have previously participated in a Citizen Assembly, bringing continuity and experience to the process.
- **The Permanent Secretary:** The Permanent Secretary, part of the parliamentary administration staff, manages the daily operations of the Citizen Dialogue. This role ensures the smooth functioning of the dialogue process and coordination among the different bodies.
- **The Parliament and Government of the German-speaking Community:** The Parliament and government are responsible for considering the recommendations from the Citizen Assembly and implementing them as appropriate. They play a crucial role in integrating citizen input into legislative and policy decisions.

Results of the Practice – outputs and outcomes

The Ostbelgien Citizen Dialogue model has achieved notable results and impacts, demonstrating its effectiveness in enhancing democratic governance:

- **Enhanced Policy Relevance and Responsiveness:** The involvement of a diverse group of citizens in deliberative assemblies ensures that policy recommendations reflect a broad range of perspectives. This inclusivity leads to more relevant and community-focused policies. Additionally, the permanent council's oversight ensures that these recommendations are acted upon, with the parliament required to provide written explanations if recommendations are not adopted, thereby increasing legislative responsiveness and accountability.
- **Increased Citizen Trust and Engagement:** The model has successfully built greater trust in local government. Citizens value the transparency of the process and the consideration given to their input, which has encouraged ongoing participation and strengthened their confidence in the political system.
- **Operational Efficiency and Sustainability:** The structure of the permanent council combined with rotating Citizen Assemblies streamlines the process, reducing the need for constantly forming new councils and allowing for more consistent and timely issue resolution. The legal and institutional framework

ensures the model's long-term sustainability and impact, providing stability for ongoing citizen engagement.

- **Broader and More Inclusive Participation:** By rotating council members annually and including diverse voices in the Citizen Assembly, the model promotes comprehensive discussions that capture a wide array of viewpoints. This approach helps address the needs of various community segments, including marginalized and underrepresented groups.
- **Positive Public Perception and Learning:** Feedback from participants has been generally positive, highlighting their appreciation for the respectful treatment and the opportunity to influence governance. The model has also demonstrated adaptability, with improvements made in response to initial challenges related to recruitment and expert involvement.

In summary, the Ostbelgien Citizen Dialogue model has effectively enhanced policy relevance, increased citizen trust, and streamlined operations while ensuring broad and inclusive participation. Its robust framework and positive outcomes underscore its value in fostering democratic engagement and improving governance.

Lessons Learnt

- **Diversity in Recruitment:** Ensuring diversity in the formation of the council is crucial. Including a broad range of perspectives, such as younger individuals, people with disabilities, and other underrepresented groups, provides a more comprehensive understanding of community issues. This approach helps address the needs of all segments of the population and prevents the exclusion of any group from the decision-making process.
- **Effective Role of Experts:** Clear communication about the role of experts prevents confusion and enhances their contribution to discussions. This lesson underscores the importance of integrating expert input effectively, which helps in making informed and balanced recommendations.
- **Building Long-Term Relationships:** Fostering long-term relationships between citizens and policymakers can enhance the effectiveness of the dialogue. Building trust and mutual respect over time encourages ongoing participation and collaboration, which can lead to more sustainable and impactful outcomes.

- **Importance of Clear Objectives and Scope:** For a citizen dialogue to be effective, it's crucial to define clear objectives and scope from the outset. This clarity helps ensure that discussions remain focused and relevant, and that participants understand the purpose and potential impact of their contributions.
- **Regular Review and Adaptation:** The citizen dialogue process should include regular reviews and adaptations based on feedback and evolving community needs. Flexibility allows the model to remain responsive and effective over time, addressing any issues that arise and incorporating new best practices.

Conclusion

The Ostbelgien Citizen Dialogue model represents a significant innovation in participatory democracy, demonstrating how structured citizen engagement can enhance governance and public trust. This model, with its legally mandated permanent council, addresses key issues through a systematic approach that ensures both efficiency and inclusivity. Here are the main conclusions drawn from the Ostbelgien experience:

- **Strengthening Democratic Processes:** The Ostbelgien model exemplifies how a well-designed citizen dialogue can deepen democratic engagement. By providing a formal and continuous role for citizens in setting agendas and shaping recommendations, it bridges the gap between elected officials and the community. This structured involvement fosters a sense of ownership and accountability among residents, reinforcing the legitimacy of local governance.
- **Importance of Inclusivity:** One of the critical lessons learned is the necessity of inclusivity in citizen engagement. Ensuring that diverse perspectives are represented in the council—such as those of younger people, individuals with disabilities, and other underrepresented groups—is essential for addressing the full spectrum of community needs. This diversity not only enriches discussions but also ensures that the solutions developed are more comprehensive and equitable.
- **Effective Use of Experts:** The integration of experts into the dialogue process is valuable, but their roles must be clearly defined and communicated. This avoids confusion and maximizes their contributions to the deliberative process. A clear understanding of expert roles helps facilitate productive discussions and ensures that their input effectively informs decision-making.

- **Building Trust and Legitimacy:** The success of the Ostbelgien model in fostering trust and legitimacy highlights the importance of transparency and follow-through in citizen engagement initiatives. When citizens see their recommendations being seriously considered and implemented—or when reasons are provided for why recommendations are not adopted—they are more likely to trust the system and remain engaged.
- **Long-Term Impact and Adaptability:** The establishment of a permanent council provides stability and continuity in citizen involvement, allowing for long-term planning and consistent engagement. This approach not only enhances the efficiency of the process but also ensures that citizen input can have a sustained impact on policy and decision-making.

In summary, the Ostbelgien Citizen Dialogue model offers a robust framework for integrating citizen input into governance. Its emphasis on legal foundations, inclusivity, and effective communication of expert roles provides valuable insights for other regions seeking to enhance participatory democracy. The model's success in building trust and ensuring accountability demonstrates the potential for citizen dialogues to significantly contribute to more effective and democratic governance.

Further Reading

[Citizen Dialogue Website](#) (Available in French, German, and Dutch)

Conclusion

At the time of writing this report (March 2024), we can already distinguish a common thread regarding what does and does not work with the various good practices collected thus far. It is important to note that the partners in the GOCORE project have explicitly expressed their desire to also hear about things that have not worked well since precisely this can be instructive. Therefore, with each description of a good practice, there is also attention given to the 'lessons learnt'. The intention is to develop this aspect in the coming period.

Students from the Thorbecke Academy in Leeuwarden (Anusha Chonzi, Tim Hoekstra, and Natasja Schipper) conducted research on civil initiatives. Based on this, they made several recommendations for both the civil initiatives as well as the involved government.

For the Civil initiatives:

1. Create and maintain a clear channel of communication with the government.
2. Make and keep records of every meeting.
3. Recognise the interdependence between governments and grassroots initiatives.
4. Motivate members of communities to take action.
5. Create a clear definition of the roles of each of the parties involved and make sure that each party should adhere to their roles and responsibilities. At first, make your own decisions. When expertise from the government is needed, you should collaborate on those topics.
6. Openly acknowledge your limitations and challenges to the government during the planning process.
7. Provide feedback to the government during all phases of the initiatives' life-cycle.
8. Conduct careful and realistic financial planning, ensuring that your initiative aligns with the available resources.
9. Learn by doing, just start, 'sometimes you win sometimes you learn.'

For the involved government:

1. Openly acknowledge your limitations and challenges as government to the organisers of civil initiatives.
2. Clarify your own role within a project involving citizens, as well as the roles of each stakeholder involved.
3. Create one platform for starting civil initiatives to find all sorts of information:
4. Funding
5. Contact information of departments
6. Guidelines of processes
7. Simplify the application processes for funding.
8. Create and maintain a clear channel of communication with the organisers of civil initiatives.
9. Always provide feedback to citizens when you involve them.
10. Make and keep records of every meeting with citizens.
11. Encourage collaborative governance models that involve partnerships between governments, private sectors, and civil society.
12. Stimulate a community-driven approach to help citizens feel more open to give back to their communities.

These recommendations especially show the importance of clear communication, aligning mutual interests, opportunities and expertise, understanding when you need one another and mutual transparency. And above all, something that emerges with every good practice: **Listen to each other.**



Annex

Attachment one

Format describing your good practice

Inspiration for describing your “best practice”

a) Title of the best practice

- This should be concise and reflect the practice being documented.

b) Overview of best practice

- Summary: (briefly describe the best practice in two or three sentences, including the purpose of the best practice)
- Context: (provide background information on the context in which the best practice is applied)

c) Implementation of the practice

- what are the main activities carried out?
- when and where were the activities carried out?
- who were the key implementers and collaborators?
- what were the resource implications?

d) Results of the Practice – outputs and outcomes

- what were the concrete results achieved in terms of outputs and outcomes?
- What benefits were there for the stakeholders (communities, civic organisations, governments, NGO's, etc.)
- was an assessment of the practice carried out? If yes, what were the results?

e) Lessons Learnt

- what worked really well – what facilitated this?

- what did not work – why did it not work?
- What did you do to overcome the challenges?

f) Conclusion

- How have the results benefited the population?
- why may that intervention be considered a “Best Practice”?
- recommendations for those intending to adopt the documented “Best Practice” or how it can help people working on the same issue(s).

g) Further Reading

- Provide useful links or literature for further reading

GOCORE Governing Community Resilience

www.interregeurope.eu/gocore

