

SOCIAL INNOVATION

A catalyst for the European Green Deal



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INTRODUCTION



SIMRA (Social Innovation in Marginalised Rural Areas) is a four-year project (2016-2020) funded by the European Union’s Horizon 2020 programme. It aims to advance understanding of social innovation and innovative governance in agriculture, forestry and rural development, and how it can be boosted, in marginalised rural areas across Europe and around the Mediterranean, including non-EU countries.

WHAT IS SOCIAL INNOVATION?

For the SIMRA consortium, social innovation refers to “the reconfiguring of social practices, in response to societal challenges, which seeks to enhance outcomes on societal well-being and necessarily includes the engagement of civil society actors”. Social innovation aims to increase and introduce new solutions to challenges faced by rural areas, especially those considered as marginalised.



WHAT IS A MARGINALISED RURAL AREA?

Within SIMRA, rural areas are considered marginalised because:

- of their physical constraints (e.g. mountainous, arid)
- of their limited access to infrastructure (limited access to road transport networks, electricity and/or to telecommunications, including the Internet).
- or they have marginalised populations (i.e. societal marginality) being:
 - o people with (very) low incomes
 - o high proportion of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion
 - o high levels of infant mortality
 - o high proportion of early leavers from education and training



WHY A BROCHURE OF GOOD EXAMPLES?

This brochure aims at showcasing the diversity of social innovations in marginalised rural areas, and how these social innovations contribute to achieving the goals of the European Union's Green Deal.

The examples selected meet the following criteria:

- i) Evidence of reconfiguration of social practices in response to societal challenges;
- ii) Active involvement of civil society or grassroots organisations;
- iii) Novelty or reconfiguration taking place in new geographical settings or in relation to previously disengaged social groups;
- iv) Improved societal wellbeing through social, environmental or economic aims.

WHY FOCUS ON SOCIAL INNOVATION IN THE GREEN DEAL?

This collection of good practice examples pays particular attention to the role of social innovation in delivering the European Green Deal. The participation of civil society will be essential to deliver the green deal outcomes. As these examples illustrate, social innovations provide a laboratory of ideas to inform policy and practice communities of new ways of achieving green deal outcomes. Although the majority of the examples come from marginalised rural areas, social innovation is equally relevant in urban areas, particularly those like former coalfield areas facing major challenges and adjustment. They show that every element of the Green Deal can be supported by social innovation.

In the context of the implementation of the Green Deal, this sixth collection of good examples* aims at inspiring policymakers when implementing the actions and measures of the Green Deal.

*Find the first six collections of examples on SIMRA's website:
<http://www.simra-h2020.eu>

SOCIAL INNOVATION IN THE NEW EU GREEN DEAL



The European Green Deal, published in December 2019 with the approval of the European Council, is the core of the new European Commission's roadmap for making the EU's economy sustainable. Its ambition is to make the European Union the first carbon neutral continent by 2050. It sits alongside the UN's Sustainable Development Goals as a strategic set of objectives and actions for the European Union. It recognises the magnitude of the climate challenge and ten key priority areas that are needed to address it. It also recognises the need to put citizens at the heart of actions and to leave no-one behind as a multi-stranded decarbonisation process is undertaken.

Key priority areas are:

1. Climate ambition
2. Clean, affordable and secure energy
3. Industrial strategy for a clean and circular economy
4. Sustainable and smart mobility
5. Greening the Common Agricultural Policy / 'Farm to Fork' Strategy
6. Preserving and protecting biodiversity / Biodiversity 2030 Strategy
7. Towards a zero-pollution ambition for a toxic free environment
8. Mainstreaming sustainability in all EU policies / Just transition
9. The EU as a global leader
10. Working together – a European Climate Pact

Those same sentiments of inclusion and citizen empowerment are at the heart of the SIMRA project which addresses social innovation in marginalised rural areas. Social innovation helps in reaching out to disadvantaged groups, whether they are vulnerable and elderly, live in remote locations and need private transport to reach basic services, or work in sectors like coal, oil or gas that might be impacted by policy changes.

In spite of the relevance of social innovation to the European Green Deal, the term is not mentioned in the official documentation, even though its capacity to help meet the Sustainable Development Goals is widely evidenced from EU research. We consider that the innovation needed to address the grand societal challenges of the Green Deal requires technical innovation, innovation in financial instruments and policies, and social innovation which engages civil society.

Both a growing body of theoretical work on the transformative capacity of social innovation and our practical examples attest to the power of social innovation in making a positive difference. Public sector support for social innovation through LEADER, Smart Villages policies and more widely offers a means of piloting novel solutions and empowering citizens. When these social innovations have shown their worth, there is a case for additional policies to increase uptake and deepen their positive impact.

Social innovation enables citizen-led groups to get purposefully engaged in the big environmental challenges of biodiversity loss, climate change and pollution. New practices, new networks and new governance arrangements are emerging to address these challenges.

Social innovation is about co-designing solutions (involving private and public sector actors) and giving civil society actors the operating space to apply novel solutions to problems. There are numerous examples of what empowered citizens can do to address the challenges that are associated with delivering the European Green Deal. In this briefing, we illustrate only a few of the case studies we have uncovered which demonstrate how effective citizen-led actions can be in meeting these challenges.

CARBON-SMART FORESTRY DUE TO A SELF-ORGANIZED FOREST COMMONS REGIME IN SLOVAKIA



WHAT TRIGGERED FORESTRY COMMUNITIES IN HYBE TO TURN TO CARBON-SMART FORESTRY?

Strong winds during a storm, followed by bark beetle infestation, destroyed a significant part of the forest in the Slovakian Nizke Tatry National Park in 2007. Since then, a self-organized local community has proven its adaptive capacity to manage disturbances. It has started applying innovative carbon forestry management practices (e.g. higher tree species diversity, forest natural regeneration, selective cutting, etc.) with the aim of increasing the resilience of the forest to future natural disturbances, and for management practices to be more cost-effective and sustainable. Although the only State financial support was compensation for the forest damage, the change from traditional forest management practices to carbon smart forestry was possible due to self-organisation, strong relationships and a combination of voluntarily engaged members and experienced foresters.

HOW DID THE FORESTRY COMMUNITY BECOME SELF-ORGANISED?

Changes in forest management have been challenging due to the heterogeneity of the profiles of commoners. Forest commons have a high number of members, usually living

in cities outside the municipality, who are interested in maximizing wood income and undervalue the significance of their share in heritage through the forests. Members living in the municipality usually have traditional knowledge about forest management, value their shares in the forest and aim to manage the forest with longer-term goals. The initial aim of the group of commoners would have resulted in vulnerable and lower quality forests. However, there has been a change in attitudes, helped by communications with forest experts, which results in a new forest management plan and new contracts with the loggers.

WHAT WERE THE IMPACTS OF THIS SOCIAL INNOVATION?

The carbon-smart forestry techniques have increased the forest's resilience through increased forest biodiversity, higher density of natural regeneration and a reduction in pests. This has had positive economic impacts as the costs of tree seedlings consequently decreased. This Slovak forest community is also innovative because they own their own a warehouse and sawmill that enables it to sell wood for a better price in markets compared to those forest communities which sell wood directly from the forests where it is sourced.

The community received a Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification for sustainable forestry, one of the first for forest communities in Slovakia. However, the natural disturbances have impacted upon the ability of the community to produce certified wood. Over the next few years, they will have to sell wood left from the forest damage which will be at lower prices.

Other outcomes are the contribution of the community to climate change mitigation by carbon sequestration, and increased well-being of the local community and other users of forest ecosystem services through a decrease in conflicts within the community and increased opportunities for recreation.

ELECTRIC SUSTAINABLE SOURCES TO CONNECT COMMUNITIES (UK)



© Evan Robertson Photography

WHICH ENERGY ISSUES IN RURAL SCOTLAND, UK, DOES THIS INITIATIVE ADDRESS?

Nearly 60% of the land area of Scotland, UK, is currently transmission-constrained, meaning that only connections below 50 kW or 100 kW are able to proceed rapidly. According to the Scottish House Conditions Survey of 2012, overall fuel poverty in Scotland sits at 34%, rising to 40% to 50% for households heated by traditional electric systems, oil or Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG), and over 70% in some areas of the Highlands and Islands. The ambition of this initiative is to lay the foundations for a cost-effective platform enabling the real time matching of local electricity generation and local electricity demand at the level of the distribution network, tackling the varying conditions and limited capacity of local grids to accommodate renewable electricity generation during periods of high generation and/or low demand.

HOW DOES THE INITIATIVE TACKLE THESE PROBLEMS?

The concept was devised and trialled by Community Energy Scotland and their community member, Mull and Iona Community Trust. It utilises the local, community-owned “Garmony Hydro Scheme”. The 400 kW Garmony turbine is estimated to generate more than 1,136 MWh of green electricity each year. This could provide sufficient electricity to power more than 280 homes a year and reduce the carbon

footprint of the Island of Mull by over 450 tonnes, according to Local Energy Scotland. Ownership of the scheme has been transferred to a community organisation, Green Energy Mull (GEM). A community share offer was issued by GEM which successfully raised over £481,000 (approximately €545,000) towards the capital costs of the hydro scheme.

The trial was implemented under the title of “the ACCESS Project”. ACCESS stands for “Assisting Communities to Connect to Electric Sustainable Sources” and received funding from the Scottish Government’s *Local Energy Challenge Fund*, Ofgem’s Network Innovation Allowance, and input from the project’s delivery partners.

WHAT ARE THE OUTCOMES OF THE ACCESS PROJECT?

It is estimated that over the first 20 years of the life of the Garmony Hydro Scheme, it will generate a turnover of £5.04m (€5.07m), with net proceeds of up to £2.4m (€2.7m) going into the Waterfall Fund. The Waterfall Fund is an independent charity which receives the net profits from the Garmony Hydro Scheme and distributes them as grants to community projects on the islands of Mull, Iona and the surrounding small islands, in a fair, open and transparent manner. In summary, the more the Garmony Hydro scheme is able to generate (through matching with local heating demand), the more income will be available to spend locally.

One of the main aims of the project was to establish a ‘business as usual’ grid connection offer that can be utilised by other communities with similar network conditions. In terms of other outcomes, this project addresses fuel poverty by investigation of local energy tariffs to socialise network savings across homeowner’s energy bills. ACCESS also supports local economies, by creating new markets for locally generated electricity in grid constrained areas which results in local jobs for installers and technical support service providers.

Overall, the ACCESS Project aims to enable additional low-carbon generation to come on-line, and for home owners to obtain better control over the energy needs and costs.



Find more information on www.communityenergyscotland.org.uk/access.asp or www.accessproject.org.uk/

NATURE BASED OFFICES: WEEDS AS FEEDSTOCK FOR CIRCULAR AND BIOBASED FURNITURE (BELGIUM)



© Frederik Van Allemeersch

HOW CAN GREEN WASTE BE RECYCLED INTO FURNITURE?

Pro Natura is a Belgian social employment company and a pioneer in natural landscape design and maintenance. The company reinforces natural ecosystems in urbanised areas and by doing so, they train and employ people that have difficulties finding a “normal” job. Pro Natura’s green work generates green waste (verge clippings, invasive species, ivy, nettle, ...), which they convert into feedstock for biobased materials. The company is aiming to look beyond composting, which is already common practice in Belgium but does not generate a high value product. Pro Natura teamed up with innovation lab [GLIMPS](#) which connected them with several start-up companies that produce circular and biobased materials. These companies started to experiment with the natural fibres and juices delivered by Pro Natura.

Some examples of bio-based materials and the production companies:

- [Q'bo](#), high quality & 100% plant-based material
- [Touch of Nature](#) biomaterials for seamless floors, panel coating and furniture finish
- [Fungalagic](#) mycelium materials for insulation and design furniture (mycelium is the dense root network of fungi, which functions as a natural glue between the fibres)

- Natural interior plaster of [BC Materials](#).

WHAT ARE THE FUTURE PROSPECTS FOR THIS CONCEPT?

As well as these bio-materials, Pro Natura is testing other applications such as natural herbicides, paper, insulation material, (phyto)pharmaceutical products, natural pigment, biochar and activated carbon and, ultimately, biogas. The current focus is on the fibres and sap of verge clippings and Japanese Knotweed (an invasive plant species).

The market of natural products, based on local and circular feedstock, is currently still small, but growing steadily. This provides Pro Natura the opportunity to test and develop their business on a small scale, in cooperation with these start-ups. The main challenge is to organise the logistics to collect, separate and store the high value streams in an appropriate and economically feasible way. These requirements are taken care of within Pro Natura's training and employment schemes.

WHAT ARE THE IMPACTS OF THIS INITIATIVE?

With this new activity Pro Natura speeds up the transfer to a local and circular biobased economy. This new business model also stimulates the maintenance of natural ecosystems. Turning, for example, the invasive species Japanese Knotweed (the disposal of which is currently a cost to the company) into a revenue, Pro Natura enables a more affordable means of managing invasive alien species and thus more resilient ecosystems. A further motivation for Pro Natura to start this new business is to offer suitable work to older employees who have difficulty doing forestry work. New jobs will be created in the operations needed to prepare the feedstock, and ultimately in the manufacturing of new biobased materials.

For the story of Pro Natura's innovation pathway in three minutes see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-4QSHxm1ZZ8>.

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ENERTERRE: REDUCING THE COSTS OF RENOVATION TO FIGHT AGAINST ENERGY POVERTY (FRANCE)



© MancheMAG

WHAT IS ENERTERRE?

Enerterre is a French association promoting the voluntary renovation of houses, mainly traditional, for the benefit of rural people facing precarious situations due to fuel poverty, lacking resources to finance thermal improvement work or improvements in housing conditions. This scheme offers the inhabitants a solution based on mutual aid and support for the rehabilitation of their homes within the framework of professionally supervised practice. The inhabitants participate in their workcamps and are trained by volunteers. An emphasis is placed on the use of natural and local techniques and materials (such as earth and plant fibres) with the aim of preserving the region's heritage, the health of residents and professionals, and to reduce the carbon footprint of the work being done. A Local Exchange System is built into this scheme to balance the volunteer's time which the resident received with the time that they will devote to another workcamp.

WHAT WERE THE RESULTS OF THE INITIATIVE?

In 2016 and 2017, 14 households underwent renovation through the work of supervised volunteers, and an additional 18 households received advice and information about financial support. The participatory renovation work enabled the beneficiary

households to save an average of 65.5% of the costs of the renovation work, compared to the cost of the work if it had been carried out by normal craftsmen. These savings have been made possible due to the use of volunteers who provided more than 6,000 hours of work. The use of Rural Development Programme funds created employment at the Enerterre association and work for the local craftsmen. Without the support from Enerterre, the households could not have afforded the renovation work. Enerterre generated a turnover of 60,412 EUR for local people.

Renovation work has been mainly for internal and external insulation, slab insulation, loft insulation, thermal correctors, etc. The materials used were natural, low- or unprocessed materials, locally sourced where possible (i.e. straw bales, hemp, flax, lime, earth). These improvements reduced household energy consumption and cut greenhouse gas emissions, directly contributing to the fight against climate change.

WHAT ARE THE FUTURE PROSPECTS FOR ENERTERRE?

Since November 2017, Enerterre has been involved in the Erasmus Plus project “HELPS” which aims to support local actors in the four participating countries (Greece, Italy, Spain and France) to establish and share the Enerterre method. It is a flexible model, the effectiveness of which will be measured through the transfer of knowledge and skills, and the number of people involved.

This project responds to a general European issue that there is insufficient comfortable housing available at an affordable price in most European countries. It aims to address challenges for approximately 118 million people across the European Union who are at risk of poverty or social exclusion (according to Eurostat), representing 17.7% of the population of France, 28.7% in Spain and Italy, and 35.7% in Greece.

FARMERS COLLABORATE TO CLEAN UP LAKE PRESPA (REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA)



WHY WAS LAKE PRESPA UNDER THREAT?

Lake Prespa is one of the oldest freshwater lakes in the world. It is home to a diverse range of more than 2,000 species plants and animals, including many endangered species and some that are unique to the lake. The lake was under threat from a series of unsustainable farming practices. Most significantly, the overuse of pesticides amongst orchard farmers was causing pollution and eutrophication of the lake. Illegal dumping of farm waste in the lake and wasteful irrigation practices were also contributing to its degradation.

WHAT COULD BE DONE TO SAVE THE LAKE?

The Restoration of Lake Prespa Project was established to reduce pollution and restore the water quality of Lake Prespa. Funded by the Swiss Development Cooperation and the Global Environment Facility, and instigated by the United Nations Development Programme, the Prespa Project sought to raise awareness, change attitudes and be open to inspiration by farmers in the area.

The project's participatory approach supported the creation of a Farmer's Association which connects farmers with each other and the relevant authorities through a

network. The innovative solutions developed were enabled by the direct participation of the farmers who put them to use.

Working with farmers to adopt environmentally friendly practices has led to major successes in environmental improvements, including the use of organic compost and a reduction in excessive fertilizer use and wasteful irrigation. As a result, the water quality of the lake has improved. This is of benefit to the environment as well ensuring better water quality for the citizens in the municipality.

DIGITAL INNOVATION KEEPS POLLUTION LOW

Farmers, concerned about threats to their livelihood, were spraying pesticides at inappropriate times and in excessive quantities. In 2005, a system was set up to monitor pests and diseases, but the information was not communicated to farmers sufficiently quickly to be of use to them.

An alert system informs farmers when spraying is needed. This was developed by the Faculty of Computer Science at the Saints Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje as part of the Prespa Project. SMS messages are sent to every farmer in the area who is registered with the Association of Farmers, and an update is posted on Facebook to disseminate the information as widely as possible. As a result of this innovation, the farmers know when to spray their fruit to kill pests. Knowledge of when not to spray because there are no pests to kill has resulted in a 30% reduction in the amount of pesticide used. The low cost and simplicity of implementing the system makes it simple to replicate in other locations.

ECONOMOUNTAIN (PORTUGAL)



© European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism

WHAT WAS THE MOTIVATION FOR THE ECONOMOUNTAIN INITIATIVE?

Vila Pouca de Aguiar is a county located north of the Douro Valley, in the north of Portugal. In this region, as in many other mountainous areas, land abandonment has led to an increased risk of forest fires. Generally, land abandonment results in landscapes that are more homogeneous, and an accumulation of dry matter in forests and rangelands. This increases the risk of fire, especially under the Mediterranean climate with a prolonged dry and hot summer season which is naturally favourable to wildfires. Forest fires are problematic from the point of view of safety, loss of value of forest products and loss of ecosystem services. The EconoMountain initiative aims to create new economic activities and use resources in ways that reduce forest fuel and control forest fires.

WHAT IS THE INITIATIVE ABOUT?

The innovation is a new technique of targeted grazing using goats for clearing mountain pastures, which acts as fuel control in the case of a fire. The intensity, period and timing

of grazing are carefully controlled. Goats are well adapted to targeted grazing due to their agility and flexible behaviour. They can access most places, adapt to most weather conditions, and be led to graze in small plots. Moreover, they contribute to revitalising abandoned land through pastoral activities, provide environmental benefits and reduce costs by 50% compared to the use of mechanical techniques of clearing wood. The usual pattern is that the farmers intensively graze their livestock in the areas of the fire breaks, as defined by the forest services, thereby reducing vegetation fuel loads. In exchange for this service, they receive monetary or in-kind remuneration.

The social innovation lies in the type of management of the initiative which includes forest owners, managers of communal land, shepherds, local authorities and a private biodiversity fund. The project's "kitchen workshops" provide it with an information and communication component. This aims to change the habits of consumption towards one of greater responsibility, valuing the most sustainable mountain forest products (mushrooms, honey, etc.) and exploring niche markets.

WHAT ARE THE IMPACTS OF THE INITIATIVE?

The initiative has achieved efficient and cost-effective management of forest fuel, protecting the ecosystem against fire. This has increased the value of forest resources and the competitiveness of the territory, reducing investment risks, and bringing in new investors and new products (e.g. resin, mushrooms). The provision of ecosystem services has also increased, which is beneficial for tourism and the generation of local wealth.

The initiative has implemented a new system of land management, redefining the use of animals in the landscape and increasing the area and purpose of targeted grazing. This has led to the creation of more jobs for shepherds and raising the awareness of the community about the benefits of resource and landscape management. Achieving social recognition of the value of ecosystem services was a very important outcome for this initiative.

Finally, the kitchen workshops increase the proximity between the consumer and markets / producers while raising awareness about sustainable consumption and the evolution of eating habits.

▀ Find more information on Economountain: <http://aguiarfloresta.org>

A COMMUNITY-SUPPORTED FARM FERMENTARIUM (AUSTRIA)



© Community-Supported Agriculture UK

WHAT KIND OF FARM IS THE FERMENTARIUM?

On the biodynamic farm of the Fermentarium (formerly Hawaruhof farm), 40 different types of vegetables and more than 100 varieties are grown on an area less than 2 hectares. The farm of the Fermentarium is organized as a partnership between farmers and consumers known as community-supported agriculture (CSA). The farm provides vegetables and fermented products (after which the Fermentarium is named), for approximately 30 consumers. Biodynamic agriculture is a form of agriculture, which treats soil fertility, plant growth, and livestock care as ecologically interrelated tasks. The farmer attaches considerable importance to low-input agricultural practices. For example, they use innovative cultivation methods to avoid irrigation and enhance resilience to extreme weather events, with versatile use of farm machinery. In addition to the production of agricultural products and fermented food, the owners of the Fermentarium offer workshops and seminars on topics ranging from alternative planting methods to food fermentation. The farm is located in the north-eastern rural plains of Austria, a favourable but dry agricultural production zone. The municipal

population density is relatively low (60 inhabitants per km²), with regional domestic production below the Austrian average.

WHAT QUALIFIES THE COMMUNITY-SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE FERMENTARIUM AS A SOCIAL INNOVATION?

To date community-supported agriculture in Austria is practiced by only a few farms. In the community-supported agriculture model, farmers and consumers enter a direct relationship by sharing the risks, responsibilities and rewards of farming. The consumers of the products of Fermentarium are called harvest-sharers. They become members of the farm and pay a fixed price upfront for their harvest share (with different prices for, e.g., singles, families). This helps to ensure the viability of the farm. In turn, the harvest-sharers receive regional, seasonal, organic food which they collect once a week from designated distribution points in their vicinity. Harvest-sharers also engage in voluntary activities related to the farm. The Fermentarium owners highly value sharing their knowledge on sustainable farming practices and offer courses and seminars.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THIS TYPE OF FARMING?

The community-supported agriculture model helps the owners of the Fermentarium to achieve income security. It provides regional, seasonal, organic food to its members and facilitates a mutual understanding between producers and consumers in terms of their respective needs, expectations and concerns. With knowledge transfer and community building, sustainable agricultural production and food consumption will receive more attention by civil society. For consumers, it is a step towards reclaiming sovereignty over the way their food is grown, processed and traded.

- ▀ Find more information on www.fermentarium.at

REZO POUCE: HITCH-HIKING TO IMPROVE RURAL MOBILITY (FRANCE)



WHAT IS REZO POUCE?

Rezo Pouce is a flexible carpooling network focusing on daily trips in rural areas, with social values at its core. Rezo Pouce makes it possible to find either a ride or passengers through an app or at any of the thousand meeting points where a member of the network can turn up spontaneously and pick up another member. Rezo Pouce combined carpooling and hitchhiking to create a social and flexible scheme that empowers people living in rural areas to share their daily journeys, meet neighbours and preserve the environment.

What makes Rezo Pouce stand out from other carpooling platforms is that it focuses on rural areas that often lack public transport, and it is free. The goal of Rezo Pouce is to structure relationships between neighbours such that anyone with a car can share journeys with people who do not have a car or who want to reduce the use of their car. Members can be registered as passengers, drivers or both. The concept was to stop the common situation of “one car – one person” at a time when individuals face challenges of mobility and, at the same time, address the societal challenge of climate change.

The expenditure of the system (mainly staff costs and web development) is covered by the registered municipalities, supported by LEADER in some areas, paying an annual membership fee to access the Rezo Pouce services. This fee includes full support for

local implementation of Rezo Pouce to identify and install Rezo Pouce meeting points, access to tools to help local authorities promote the network and enabling inhabitants to access the smartphone application.

The key element to successful replicability was a high level of involvement of local authorities to promote the scheme to their inhabitants, and to communicate with other mobility providers and develop multimodality. There is no competition with other service providers as they do not target the same audience.

HOW TO USE REZO POUCE?

Anyone over 14 years old can become a member of the Rezo Pouce network by subscription on the website, via the app, or with the municipality engaged in the scheme. To do so, it is necessary to sign the Rezo Pouce Charter to signify their agreement with the community's values (trust, conviviality, efficiency, eco-responsibility) and to provide a copy of their identity card.

Once registered, drivers and passengers can meet and share their daily journeys in two ways. i) Through the app in which users enter the details of their journey (departure, destination, time of departure, driver/passenger, etc.) and receive notification when another member's journey match theirs. ii) At designated meeting points where there is spontaneous matching of passengers and drivers.

INDICATIONS OF SUCCESS OF REZO POUCE

Rezo Pouce is working hard to demonstrate it is possible to reduce the number of cars on the roads. The average waiting time at a meeting point is 6 minutes, with waiting times of less than 10 minutes for 90% of pick-ups. As a result of this social innovation many young adults living in rural areas without a driving license have improved mobility and new opportunities.

Rezo Pouce is constantly improving services and offering new ones such as Rezo Seniors, a carpooling platform for older citizens who cannot drive. Over the last two years, activity has grown by 300% across rural France. To date, over 2,000 municipalities have enrolled, and a hundred users register with the service every week.

▀ Find more information see www.rezopouce.fr/ (in French)

FROM COAL MINE TO UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE (GERMANY)



© Jochen Tack / Zollverein

HOW DID THE ZOLLVEREIN COAL MINE TRANSITION AFTER ITS CLOSURE?

Between 1851 and 1986, coal was mined at Zollverein in the Ruhr coalfield. A related, adjacent coking plant was closed in 1993. The preservation of the buildings and their repurposing as a cultural centre that built on the past but looked to the future led to it being designated World Heritage status by UNESCO in 2001. The Ruhr Museum at the Zollverein Coal Mine is not an industrial museum, but a new type of regional museum. An integrative concept combines natural and cultural history, showcasing the entire history of the Ruhrgebiet, from the formation of coal 300 million years ago to the current structural change towards the Ruhr Metropolis.

The Zollverein Foundation is now the managing agency for this development. It took responsibility for a 100-hectare site on which there is classic industrial Bauhaus architecture, preserving their distinct architectural style while repurposing the buildings into a multi-faceted museum and cultural centre, and providing offices for local businesses and start-ups.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THE UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE STATUS?

By the early 1990s, some buildings had been taken over by a number of public and private organisations. In 1998 the Zollverein Foundation (Stiftung Zollverein) was formed and since then it has taken responsibility for the whole site.

A museum with thousands of exhibits from the coal mining era provides a centrepiece exhibit for the area's industrial heritage. The main buildings on the site reflect the story of the coal industry and the coking plant. The repurposing of buildings has created opportunities for the cultural industries with galleries, music venues and artists in residence.

A press release in 2019¹ affirms the area's importance as a springboard for the creative industries and new entrepreneurial opportunities and a cultural heritage centre: "The Zollverein World Heritage Site has already developed into a location which, in addition to its tourist and cultural appeal, has also gained increasing economic importance over the last ten years. A total of around 1,500 new jobs had already been created at Zollverein by 2018."

HOW IS ZOLLVEREIN AN EXAMPLE OF BOTH A CLEAN AND A JUST TRANSITION?

The Ruhr area has been able to build on its non-renewable energy roots to effect a transformation that makes the region a major producer of renewable energy. This gives people formerly connected with the business of coal a future in renewable energy.

What is distinctive about the Ruhr's transformation and Zollverein's role is the focus on renewable electricity production, contributing to a higher density of renewable energy production than the German average, rather than celebrating coal and the former coal-based industrial complex.

¹ Zollverein: Future location for culture and economy, Press release Spring 2019

A NEW WAY OF COLLABORATING BETWEEN RESEARCH AND PRACTICE: SOCIAL INNOVATION ACTIONS



WHAT IS THE AIM?

The Social Innovation Actions developed by the Horizon 2020 SIMRA project aimed at creating collaborative learning and networking opportunities at different or multiple scales, with continuous interactions between researchers, ‘knowledge brokers’ and stakeholders to foster and mainstream social innovation.

The process enabled rural stakeholders to test and exploit their potential for social innovation, with the aim of realizing impacts in the territory and the market, in businesses, investments opportunities and in building capacity within local governments. Similar types of actions are Living Labs and Action Research.

WHO ARE THE STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED?

Two main groups of actors are involved in the Innovation Action process:

- **Innovation Action Implementers** are SIMRA project partners that accompanied the Innovation Action process, guided its design by providing a basic methodology, observed the implementation of the activities, and contributed to the assessment of the social innovation. Innovation Action Implementers engaged in coaching local actors on the feasibility of the Innovation Actions, supervised implementation and engagement of local-level stakeholders (Local Actors) in the implementation, and reported lessons learned to the SIMRA consortium and wider audiences.

- **Local Actors** are the stakeholders in the Innovation Action implementation areas who undertook and conducted the social innovation-related activities. In SIMRA, stakeholders have come from Local Action Groups, Non-Governmental Organisations, local authorities, civic society networks and individuals.

WHAT IS THE METHODOLOGY?

The Innovation Action process is in four stages:

1. **Design phase** (i.e. conception and formulation): which aimed at defining the scope of action of each initiative, the objectives stakeholders wished to pursue, and at operationalising the Innovation Action activities. A feasibility study was carried out during this phase, in consultation with the local actors.
2. **Implementation phase**: in which the planned social innovation activities were carried out, including dissemination of the activities, processes and outcomes to the wider public.
3. **Consolidation phase**: during which the initiative crystallised.
4. **Evaluation phase**: in which the achievement of the targets (performance) was evaluated in relation to the objectives identified during the design phase.

Depending upon the context and specific actions, Innovation Actions included the organization of periodic networking events to encourage interested actors to present, learn about, discuss and initiate innovative cross-sectorial actions for rural development.

WHAT LESSONS HAVE WE LEARNED?

Several characteristics have emerged as crucial for Social Innovation initiatives to thrive. The most significant of these are:

- Equipping local actors with leadership and networking skills
- The promotion and management of relationships and building trust (social capital)
- Complementing local know-how with mentoring and specific training
- Access to finance (including funders willing to take risks) and the design of smart business models
- Tailored policies allowing cross-sectorial initiatives.

➔ For more information: See our [Report on Lessons Learned from Social Innovation Actions in Marginalised Rural Areas \(D7.3\)](#)

A COMMUNITY RECYCLING SCHEME LED BY WOMEN (LEBANON)



WHAT IS “CALL OF THE EARTH”?

“Call of the Earth” is a community recycling scheme for collecting rubbish carried out by an all-woman team. The scheme was set up in the mid-1990s in Arabsalim in Lebanon, when waste collection was neglected by the authorities. The innovator, called on the women of the village to help by going around houses, door-to-door. Volunteers pay for the service themselves with each of the 46 members donating approximately US\$40 each year (€32). At the outset, the volunteers used the innovator’s back garden as a storage area for recyclable waste, and a lorry bought by one of their friends.

In 1998, the women formalised their efforts by establishing an NGO: *Nidaa Al Ard* (‘Call of the Earth’). During the first few years, the organisation received approximately €17,000 in financial aid from the United Nations Development Programme. The Italian Embassy built a sorting station for the town and the German Embassy provided an electricity generator for that station. The local municipality offered a modest amount of support, including the land on which the sorting facility was built, which replaced the use of the innovator’s garden.

A CHANGE IN MINDSET FOR THE LOCAL POPULATION

According to the NGO, almost 70% of the population of Arabsalim now sorts and recycles, separating their rubbish between plastics, metal, glass and organic materials. Nidaa Al Ard collects the waste from the sorting bins distributed to each household by the organisation, and transports it to the sorting station, where it is further sorted and processed. Then the waste is sent to nearby recycling facilities, approximately twice a month. The treatment plants buy the waste for between €40 and €170 per tonne, depending on the material, so the sale of recycled materials only covers a small percentage of costs.

There have been significant challenges to reach this point. The project's success has relied on constant interactions between Nidaa Al Ard and the people of Arabsalim, despite an initial lack of enthusiasm amongst some of the population about sorting waste.

POSITIVE CHANGE: A MODEL TAKEN UP BY THE OTHERS

Initially, *Nidaa Al Ard* recycled only glass, paper and plastic. Recently they started collecting electronic waste and have employed a researcher to identify the best ways of making compost.

The organisation is thriving, and the facility is now bustling and frequently visited by schoolchildren, students and activists who come to learn about the project.

Nearby villages are adopting similar schemes. The women of Kaffaremen recently setting up their own initiative, similar to that of Arabsalim except that it is funded by the villagers rather than the volunteers. The town of Jaarjoua has also decided to create an equivalent initiative.



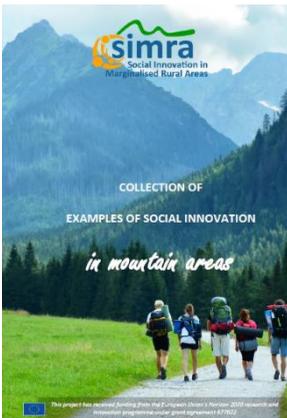
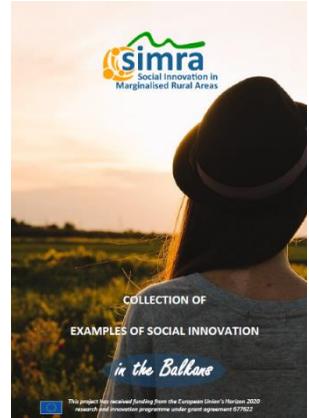
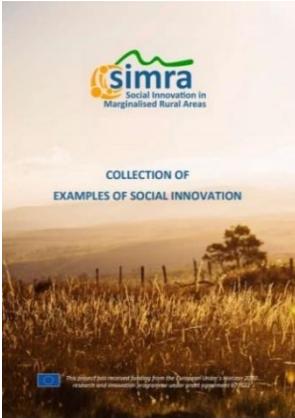
Find more information from this BBC article www.bbc.com/news/magazine-40191270

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