



## COLLECTION OF EXAMPLES OF SOCIAL INNOVATION



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Map of sites of examples

# 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”.



## 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 and/or to 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 DO WE NEED SOCIAL INNOVATION?



Social innovation aims to increase human well-being. It responds to societal demands that markets or existing institutions do not traditionally address. Through social innovation, different actors including civil society, entrepreneurs and policy-makers create or reconfigure social arrangements or networks, with the goal of enhancing development outcomes with respect to the economy, society and the environment. Social innovation can introduce new solutions to challenges faced by rural areas, especially those considered as marginalised.

## WHY A BROCHURE OF GOOD EXAMPLES?

This brochure aims at showcasing the diversity of social innovations in marginalised rural areas of Europe and the Mediterranean regions.

These examples are extracted from the SIMRA database, available on SIMRA's website.

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) Improves societal wellbeing through social, environmental or economic aims.

# REVITALISING PLANS FOR UNESCO VLKOLÍNEC SITE (SLOVAKIA)



## WHY NOT STOP BY VLKOLINEC DURING YOUR NEXT HOLIDAYS?

The UNESCO site of Vlkolínec, part of the city of Ruzomberok in Slovakia, is an untouched residential unit consisting of 45 typical wooden dwelling houses of Central-European type. This mountainous settlement has retained its original character of almost intact objects of folk culture and architecture, sensitively placed in hilly terrain. The city of Ruzomberok, in cooperation with local and regional partners, have worked on a solution for revitalizing the buffer zone of the Vlkolínec site to create conditions for the sustainable use of the natural and cultural potential of the area, while increasing the quality of life of local people and the local economy.

## HOW CAN CULTURAL HERITAGE BRING BACK RURAL VITALITY?

Implemented in 2016, the main objective of this project is to reconstruct the characteristic landscape features and historic structures, through the revival of traditional farming means, that were typical of Vlkolínec and its surroundings (e.g. cultivation of traditional crops: cabbage, potato, poppy, flax; renewal of plantations, planting native varieties of fruit trees, mowing of meadows, farming of sheep and cattle). The outcomes sought are to stop the abandonment of small fields, and the restoration of the unique Vlkolínske meadows for nature conservation.

To achieve the objective of this project, the problem of **ownership of the land** within the locality of Vlkolinec has to be addressed to ensure adequate and sustained financial support for traditional forms of farming, and to **motivate the local community** to return to traditional ways of operating.

## BRINGING BACK RURAL VITALITY THROUGH A GLOBAL CHANGE OF MENTALITIES

A **participatory approach** was implemented to plan and manage this project, to consider the issues faced by local inhabitants. The preparation of a new Land Use Zoning Plan for Ruzomberok-Vlkolinec was carried out in **collaboration between planners, local experts and members of local NGOs**. An example of a local issue relates to tourism: the number of visitors (approximately 80,000 a year) could contribute significantly to promoting the local economy. However, the attitude of the majority of local people towards tourists is negative as the inhabitants do not accept being part of a “permanent exhibition”. Participatory workshops of key stakeholders for identifying suitable alternatives on how to achieve an **appropriate quality of life for local people** and surveys of the community are important parts of the planning process.



Fujara from Archive of Civil Association Vlkolinec

The social challenges of this community are addressed through **governance shifts and new plans for rural development** (i.e. restoration of traditional forms of land cultivation, revival of old gardens, recovery of traditional crafts, sustainable tourism, and environmental conservation). This is remarkable in this area where there was a significant decrease in the number of residents (from 345 in 1880 to 21 now), which led to land abandonment and where only a few local people have skills for traditional forms of farming.

► Find more information on [www.vlkolinec.sk/](http://www.vlkolinec.sk/)

# A COMMUNITY-SUPPORTED FARM HAWARUHOF (AUSTRIA)



Community-Supported Agriculture UK

## WHAT KIND OF FARM IS HAWARUHOF?

On the farm Hawaruhof, 1.8 hectares of land are farmed in a bio-dynamic way. The farmer and his wife cultivate 40 different types of vegetables and more than 100 varieties. Hawaruhof is organized as a partnership between farmers and consumers quantifying as community-supported agriculture. The farmers provide food for 30 consumers. The farm is located in the North-Eastern rural plains of Austria, a favourable agricultural production zone. The municipal population density is relatively low (60 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>), with regional domestic production below the Austrian average.

## WHAT QUALIFIES HAWARUHOF AS SOCIAL INNOVATION?

By following the community-supported agriculture model, **farmers and consumers share the risks, responsibilities and rewards of farming**. The consumers of Hawaruhof products are called harvest-sharers. The price for one harvest-share is fixed (with different prices for singles, families, etc.) which ensures the viability of



the farm holding. The consumers can select the type and quantity of vegetables and collect their vegetables once a week from two distribution points.

Bio-dynamic agriculture is a form of alternative agriculture similar to organic farming, which treats soil fertility, plant growth, and livestock care as ecologically interrelated tasks. The owner of the farm uses an innovative planting method to optimise irrigation and resilience to extreme weather events which requires smaller machines and thus lower investment costs.

### WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THIS TYPE OF FARMING?

Community-supported agriculture may provide **fair wages and income security for farmers**, enhance the provision of **more local, seasonal and healthy food**; and for consumers, it is **a step towards reclaiming sovereignty over the way their food is grown, processed and traded**. The farmer offers workshops on his farm so that other farmers can learn about his way of planting, and his wife holds seminars and workshops about the principles of fermentation, nutrition etc. Through such training programmes, **Hawaruhof provides local employment and boosts local skills**.



Hawaruhof, Austria

Hawaruhof provides **local**

- Find more information on [www.hawaruhof.at](http://www.hawaruhof.at)

# A COMMUNITY TRUST IN HUNTLY FOR A RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECT (UK)



## WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE?

Huntly is a small town in West Aberdeenshire (Scotland), historically dominated by woollen mills and agricultural activity. It is too far from Aberdeen to have benefited from the boost in jobs which came with its development as a centre for the oil and gas industry. Its woollen mills have closed and retail activity in the town centre declined, with many businesses shutting down. The town has the highest scores in Aberdeenshire on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, with significant areas in the third worst decile in Scotland.

A municipally led initiative to promote local development ended in 2009. Local people decided to form a **community development trust (CDT)** to build on the previous project. **CDTs are third sector bodies which seek to promote place-based development.** Attracting funding to support the work of the Trust has always been a challenge and short-term support from the EU LEADER Programme and other funders was contingent on the CDT obtaining a source of core funding.

## HOW WAS A COMMUNITY-LED RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECT DEVELOPED?

During 2010, the Huntly and District Development Trust (HDDT) decided that the best way to **achieve financial self-sufficiency** was to develop its own renewable energy project, which was achieved on land acquired through **community asset transfer** in 2017. The journey to financial self-sufficiency has been challenging, but the 20-year funding horizon through guaranteed income for energy production made it the preferred option. The income from this source, and shares in two private renewable energy schemes, provides the trust with substantial resources to develop its portfolio of work, which includes supporting renewal of the town centre, electric car and bike hire initiatives, and recreational developments.

## HOW HAS THE SOCIAL INNOVATION BEEN DECISIVE?

Many place-based projects have a short lifespan. They receive funding for a few years, with an initial burst of activity which then recedes. HDDT has created a secure financial platform on which to build a portfolio of projects. Instead of the benefits of renewable energy developments passing to distant shareholders of multinational energy



Huntly Development Trust

companies, it will almost all be **retained in the community** providing core funding for the group. This provides resources for projects and co-financing opportunities, and releases staff from the task of spending time seeking funds. The social innovation of **securing financial viability by means of renewable energy investments** has been a decisive step in the Trust's development and creates new opportunities. Visitors from as far away as Japan have visited the Trust to explore this model of funding community development.

▀ Find more information on [www.huntlydevelopmenttrust.org](http://www.huntlydevelopmenttrust.org)

## SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES DELIVER A BOX OF SEA (GREECE)



### HOW TO HAVE FRESH FISH DELIVERED TO YOUR DOORSTEP?

Two fishing communities on the islands of Lesvos and Leros had the opportunity to participate in the creation of an innovative model for distributing seafood. Through systems created in collaboration with Greenpeace, the low impact fishers participating in the project could send a box of fresh sea products to consumers in Attica. Within 24 hours from the time of fishing, “A Box of Sea” reached their doorstep. Those who receive the boxes help test tools and logistical details to establish a distribution system to be operated by the fishers in the future. This project brings together low-impact fishers and citizens who want to take action against overfishing.

### HOW IS “A BOX OF SEA” A SOLUTION FOR LOCAL FISHERS?

Fishers who use environmentally safe methods of fishing constitute 95% of the fishing fleet of Greece with approximately 14,000 vessels. However, they have little access and control over the market. These fishers find it hard to access the market as only 16.6% of consumers buy fish from coastal fishers who use milder, non-intrusive, ecological fishing methods, and strong competition from larger industrial

vessels. Fish depletion in the oceans will increase such difficulties. One of the most challenging parts of the project was the problem of how to transport the fish from islands in the far east of the Aegean Sea to Athens in a maximum of 24 hours. The solution was to use transportation services - ferries and lorries - and **using the Greek volunteers and staff who delivered the boxes to the doorsteps of the supporters.**

## HOW DID “A BOX OF SEA” IMPROVE THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF THE FISHERS?

The aims of this coalition are to **create a fairer market which protects the marine environment, rewards those who fish in more moderate ways, supports small fishing communities** and **provides better information to consumers** regarding the seafood that ends up on their plates. The "Box of Sea" project is the first hands-on attempt to pave the way for an alternative and fairer model of fishing. The project services the environment and the work of small local producers. Since its launch in July 2016, the project has received significant support from citizens who are enthusiastic for directly participating in the creation of an alternative fish market.



- Find more information on [Greenpeace website](#)

# **SOCIAL INNOVATION REDUCES THE IMPACTS OF FOREST FIRES IN RURAL CATALONIA (SPAIN)**



## **HOW DID GROUPS OF VOLUNTEERS COME TOGETHER TO PREVENT AND FIGHT FOREST FIRES?**

Forestry defence groups (ADFs) are associations of forest landowners, local volunteers and representatives of municipal councils formed with the aim of preventing and fighting forest fires. The first social networks for fire fighting and help in rural areas emerged in Catalonia (Spain) in the early 1960s. In 1986, these networks were formalized and now they participate in the development and implementation of fire prevention programmes, disseminate information about fire prevention and fighting amongst forest owners, and run public awareness campaigns.

## **HOW DID THE “ADFs” BECOME A SUSTAINABLE SOLUTION TO WILDFIRE PREVENTION?**

To protect the natural resources of forests, the ADFs make contributions to municipal plans for tackling forest fires, carrying out campaigns with farmers and in schools, safeguarding water points and mountain access tracks, and receiving specialist training from the fire-fighters. When fire breaks out in the municipality,

the emergency services alert the ADF which often arrives at the fire before the fire-fighters. So, the first steps they take directly affects the evolution of the fire until the fire-fighters arrive, at which time the ADF work alongside them to tackle the fire.

The ADF is a social initiative which has enabled neighbours to come together to prevent and put out fires, thereby protecting their common goods: the town, landscape and forestry resources. The association has formalized a **formal collaboration amongst rural citizens**, many of them **local fire volunteers**.

## HOW DOES THE INITIATIVE SUPPORT THE LOCAL RURAL ECONOMY IN BAGES COUNTY?

In 1998, a **Federation of ADFs in the Bages County was created** to bring together forest owners who understand that proper forest management is important to restrict the impact of wildfires. Bages is a rural Catalan county with a very low population density.

The Federation sells energy wood to municipalities which have biomass heating systems. Over the last decade, the use of forestry biomass to create energy has provided a way to cover the costs of forest interventions, **improving**

**the economic sustainability of preventing fires**, and **supports the economy of this rural area**. The impact is a reduction of the risk of forest fires and a production of clean energy, and the **creation of employment that encourages people to stay in the area**. Such improvements support forests as an important asset for local residents, providing a space in which to carry out activities such as walking or mushroom picking.



▣ Find more information on [www.federacioadfbages.org](http://www.federacioadfbages.org)

# A WATCHMAKERS' NETWORK TO SUPPORT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT (SWITZERLAND)



## A PUBLIC-PRIVATE AGREEMENT TO SUPPORT WATCHMAKERS AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE VAL DE TRAVERS REGION

The *Réseau des Fleurons* network is a Swiss public-private partnership based on a regional contract established in 2007. This network groups the 11 municipalities of the Val-de-Travers region, the regional development agency of Neuchâtel and 11 internationally renowned companies permanently established in the Val-

de-Travers region which are active in watchmaking, precision mechanics or microtechnology. The Val de Travers region is sparsely populated and remote from an economic centre. In this region, the development strategy is to strengthen the local working environment and the historically important industries (including their know-how), especially in the micro mechanics sector.





## WHAT KIND OF ACTIONS DOES THIS NETWORK CARRY OUT?

The regional agreement **strengthens cooperation between actors as well as defines mutual support**. The supporting measures are explicitly defined and concentrate on the requirements of the enterprises, especially in the sector of **promotion, education, research and development**. The municipalities are obligated to create a working place which helps members of *Réseau des Fleurons* with administrative problems, particularly with new branch offices and expansion plans. Specific actions of this association are the promotion of training in research and development sectors (polymechanics, watchmaking, electronics, logistics), training companies at information days, open days or the organization of internships in companies. **The training proposed is adapted to the local skills required to boost local employment and foster entrepreneurship.**

## WHAT IS THE ADDED VALUE OF THIS KIND OF NETWORK?

The constellation of actors, including the different associations (especially the watch industries association), is **an innovative approach to collective action for integrated development**. The *Réseau des Fleurons* network aims to promote the attractiveness of existing industrial zones and watchmaking identity, as well as the creation of framework conditions favouring the development of existing industries and setting up of new ones. The **interdisciplinarity of this partnership has enabled cooperation and competing sectoral interests to be overcome.**

- Find more information on [www.fleurons-vdt.ch/](http://www.fleurons-vdt.ch/)

# SUPPORTING DAIRY PRODUCERS' ORGANIZATIONS THROUGH A PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME (TUNISIA)



[www.givlait.com.tn](http://www.givlait.com.tn)

## HOW CAN A PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME IMPROVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE SMALL-SCALE DAIRY SECTOR?

More than 80% of Tunisian dairy farmers are small-scale farmers. National programmes and the livestock law of 2005 have highlighted the importance of developing social innovation to promote this sector and improve the quality of life of these farmers, who are often marginalised in comparison to the industrial dairy sector.

A pilot project was implemented by FAO at the request of the Tunisian Government to promote the small-scale dairy sector (also included in the Tunisian livestock strategy), and improve the livelihoods of farmers suffering from low performance and productivity. The public-private partnership between the government and farmers provides an enabling environment to strengthen capacities of producers' organizations.

## HOW WAS THE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME EXPANDED AND IMPLEMENTED?

The idea was to **transfer best practices** in the management of dairy farms and milk control activities from national institutions to producers' organizations. Producers' organizations are paid for the services provided. The agreement for this programme between producer organizations and national institutions was based on a participatory approach, implemented and adapted following recommendations of farmer and producer organizations. The partnership agreement considers the economic impact of the activities and the relationship between producers' organizations and farmers.

In order to implement this programme, FAO established a technical, managerial and awareness capacity-building programme that reinforced capacities of producers' organizations to implement their extension programme and undertake activities related to the milk control. **Civil society members were a key partner in capacity-building programmes and awareness sessions.**

## WHAT IMPACTS DID THE PARTNERSHIP HAVE ON ALL PARTIES INVOLVED?

Preliminary evaluation concluded that the transfer of management and milk control activities from national institutions to producers' organizations worked well. The process was beneficial to national institutions, producer organizations and farmers. The socio-economic situation of producer organizations and farmers was affected positively: **milk productivity was improved, new opportunities of employment were created, and farmers livelihood improved.** With the new public private partnership created, the country implemented its dairy strategy and improved monitoring of the small-scale dairy sector.



Credits : Dennis Jarvis

## THE ADDED VALUE OF SOCIAL FARMING FOR RURAL FAMILIES (ITALY)



### HOW CAN A SOCIAL COOPERATIVE OFFER CHILDCARE ON FARMS?

The “Learning-growing-living with women farmers” social cooperative for educational services was founded in 2006 in South Tyrol, Italy, to provide on-farm care services to local families living in rural, sometimes poorly accessible, mountain villages. More than 90% of the territory is covered by mountains and many scattered settlements and villages are located 1,000 meters above sea level. The cooperative offers on-farm childcare with the objective of providing childcare by women farmers or other family members and encouraging interactions with nature. The area can be considered marginalised due to both its physical geography and its infrastructural features.

### HOW CAN A FARM BECOME A PLACE OF LEARNING?

The farm is not just a place to take care of the children, it has been expanded to a **place of learning**, offering a complementary and alternative setting for environmental education. It offers a direct integration of agricultural resources and the environment as teaching elements. The farm aims at stimulating the curiosity of children in learning, as well as developing their awareness for environmental,

sustainable and rural resources. The service is provided by a team that comprises 106 qualified carers. The cooperative includes individually adapted care for up to six children from 0 to 4 years old, flexible care hours, teaching of traditional and cultural values, environmental education and is **highly responsive to demand**, which is particularly important in peripheral areas. In 2014, the social cooperative expanded its childcare farming services to offer elderly care as a pilot project.

## HOW SOCIAL FARMING ADDS VALUE TO PERIPHERAL RURAL AREAS?

Social farming activities are a practical and innovative response to societies' needs that many institutionalized social services are not able to provide adequately. Hence, social farming contributes to social and economic wellbeing as it **stimulates vulnerable people's independence and their personal development** based on active



Kinderbetreuung.it

collaboration and help on the farm. In particular, it **promotes women farmer's empowerment and independence** by providing additional income in peripheral rural areas as women can practice their pedagogical, health, care or therapeutic professions on the farm.

Social farming activities represent an opportunity for farmers to broaden and diversify their agriculture, to open up new markets and offer alternative services that go beyond food production. Moreover, it **stimulates the economic sustainable development of peripheral areas** by **guaranteeing services** to people that contribute **to preventing further depopulation**.

The practice has, therefore, beneficial social, cultural and environmental impacts on peripheral mountain areas.

- Find more information on [www.kinderbetreuung.it](http://www.kinderbetreuung.it)

# DO YOU HAVE AN EXAMPLE OF SOCIAL INNOVATION TO SHARE WITH US?

**Do you have examples of social innovation in a marginalised rural area in Europe or Mediterranean countries?**

**Click [here](https://uhi.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/simra_en) to submit your example!**  
 (also available in French)  
[https://uhi.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/simra\\_en](https://uhi.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/simra_en)

**If validated, find it on our SIMRA [database](http://www.simra-h2020.eu/index.php/simradatabase/)**  
[www.simra-h2020.eu/index.php/simradatabase/](http://www.simra-h2020.eu/index.php/simradatabase/)

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