

HOW TO DELIVER RURAL SERVICES?

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”. 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 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.

WHY FOCUS ON RURAL SERVICES?

With the new concept of "Smart Villages", the European Commission aims at revitalising rural services through both digital and social innovation.

This second collection of good examples* focuses on how social innovation can help provide rural services such as health, education, energy, mobility and other social services of key importance in marginalised rural areas where these services are often in decline.

*Find the first collection of examples on [SIMRA's website](#)

ELECTRIC SUSTAINABLE SOURCES TO CONNECT COMMUNITIES (UK)



Evan Robertson Photography

WHICH ENERGY ISSUES IN RURAL SCOTLAND DOES THIS INITIATIVE ADDRESS?

Nearly 60% of the land area of Scotland 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 a distribution network level, tackling the varying conditions and **limited capacity of local grids to take on 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 recently created 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 SMART matching with local heating demand), the more income there 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 homeowners 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/

MOUNTAIN THERAPY FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES (ITALY)



WHAT IS MOUNTAIN THERAPY?

The term "Mountain therapy" was developed in 1999 in Italy, following a conference presentation on a specific methodology which focused on mountains. The aim of "Mountain Therapy" is to bring the benefits of mountains to people who are disadvantaged because of physical, mental, economic and/or family conditions. The following year, a Working Group for Mountain Therapy was created, with staff from the public health service sector and members of the Italian Alpine Club. Since then, the Group has developed **interdisciplinary groups** operating in mountain areas across Italy, **on a voluntary basis**, on a range of different health and mental issues.

From 2007 an Italian Network of Mountain Therapy developed the methodological approach of *mountain therapy*, through the activities of **health promotion** as well as **prevention and rehabilitation**, with children and adults.

HOW IS MOUNTAIN THERAPY A SOLUTION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES?

The Network of Mountain Therapy carries out many different programmes and projects of a **therapeutic-rehabilitative and/or socio-educational-recreational nature**, aimed at promoting health, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of individuals with different problems, pathologies or disabilities. Activities are carried out by the association in coordination with the National Health Service, the Italian Alpine Club, and other relevant organisation dedicated to people with disabilities.

The projects and activities taking place in the mountains are designed for the development and well-being of the individuals. The initiative assumes that **the development of the person as a whole also depends on the knowledge, care and protection of their environment.**



WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THIS INITIATIVE?

The Network of Mountain Therapy's initiative has improved **access to, and benefits from, the mountains** for people with mental disorders or health issues. It has increased the awareness of health providers, that living experiences outside of hospital is of benefit to patients with disabilities.

The Association has shown that **a strong motivation to work together on a regular basis across the public-private sphere exists**, and that it facilitates inter-disciplinary exchanges and learning.

▀ Find more information from the knots of Mountain Therapy's Network on www.sollevamenti.org

ATTRACTING YOUNG PEOPLE IN DEPOPULATED VILLAGES WITH THE BABA RESIDENCE (BULGARIA)



Baba Residence (Factory for Ideas)

WHAT IS BABA?

Baba Residence (*baba* - grandmother in Bulgarian) is an initiative **bringing together urban youth and elderly people in low-density and remote villages in Bulgaria**. It provides the opportunity to have an **open exchange of knowledge and care between youth and elderly through design thinking and ethnological approaches**. The result is an improved quality of human relations between generations, documentation and creative utilisation of local folklore, and social entrepreneurial projects that will help the villages flourish.

HOW TO CONNECT YOUNG URBAN PEOPLE WITH ADULTS LIVING IN DESERTED VILLAGES IN BULGARIA?

All participants undergo training with Ideas Factory (a Bulgarian networking platform for entrepreneurs) before spending 4 to 6 weeks in one of the remote and sparsely populated villages in the initiative to develop an innovative idea for a product, service or event that will attract greater interest in the village. Together with developing their concept and skills in local crafts, the young people are supported by the household in which they live.

The participants are groups of 20 young people (up to 35-years-old) who are students or recently graduated (within the past two years) and still unemployed. The objective is to connect the potential of unemployed young people with the knowledge of the elderly from almost deserted villages, in an **innovative social business model**.

People involved in this initiative have to be motivated to work for a positive social and economic change in society. Participants receive some **private financial support for travel and living expenses**. The initiative can only be sustained as long as private support is maintained as no public funding has yet been secured.

HOW DOES IT IMPROVE THE LIFE OF YOUNG UNEMPLOYED AND REVITALISE DEPOPULATED AREAS?

The results of the interaction of participants are specific products, services and initiatives based on local knowledge and **responding to the specific needs of the people in the villages**.

Each participant in "Baba Residence" has an opportunity to realise their specific objective, together with the people from the village where they live. This concept is thought to have **long-term benefits for rural areas and the potential to attract interest in the respective village and/or to contribute to their economic and social development**.



Baba residence

Residences will enable participants to start learning some of the crafts practiced in the village. **Interaction with old people gives invaluable knowledge of Bulgarian history and traditions, which may soon be lost irrevocably**. Participants also receive a different experience, as a "slower" village lifestyle than is impossible in large cities. Contact with traditions and nature enriches young people and encourages them to think about new ways to gain social empathy. At the same time, elderly or lonely people receive attention and feel useful and needed. They also receive real help with their everyday work in the house from their young friends.

- Find more information on Idea's Factory www.ideasfactorybg.org/baba-residence

ECO-SOCIAL FARM IN KORENIKA (SLOVENIA)



HOW IS 'KORENIKA' AN ECO-SOCIAL FARM?

The eco-social farm 'Korenika' is located in Šalovci, in the heart of the Goričko Landscape Park in Slovenia. In 2006, thanks to the Mozaik Foundation, a leading social enterprise in the Balkans region, **the concept matured of a centre dedicated to work training and employment of disabled people and other vulnerable groups such as gypsies**. The Mozaik Foundation and the Korenika Institute, established in 2008, started the restoration of an abandoned farm where they initiated the first educational and work activities.

WHICH ACTIVITIES ARE CARRIED OUT ON THE FARM?

The eco-social farm Korenika owns approximately 20 ha of agricultural land. Disabled and marginalised employees work on the farm, producing and processing organic food. Fifty to 60 people work on the farm every day, who are involved in various programmes of work training. Some people work as part of a public works programme and some are employed full-time. One of the first items of equipment purchased for the farm was a press for cold pressing of quality vegetable oils. Under their own brand, Korenika produces and sells herbal teas, cold pressed oils, dried fruits and vegetables, juices and syrups.

All food products produced and processed on the farm are certificated as organic and are sold on the farm through the online store, in the local marketplace and in special shops. Korenika's organic products are available in approximately 17 selling outlets in east, north-east and central Slovenia. . Approximately 30% of the raw materials for processing of food are bought from other organic farms in the region. **Korenika helps promote local and high-quality food supply chains.**

HOW DID KORENIKA BENEFIT THE LOCAL COMMUNITY?

The unemployment rate in eastern Slovenia is the highest in the country, especially for marginalised groups and handicapped people. The Korenika initiative offers the only possibility for their employment in agriculture. **Korenika also offers training that provides improved potential for social inclusion.**

The number of visitors is constantly increasing, as is the number of activities and training courses (pottery, permaculture, etc.) hosted by Korenika. With the arrival of so many visitors, the eco-social farm has increasingly been developing tourism and catering activities. Numerous schools and kindergartens have expressed their desire for guided tours and organized science days.



Find more information on Korenika's website www.korenika.si

INTEGRA TODOS AN INITIATIVE TO INTEGRATE UNEMPLOYED WOMEN AT RISK OF EXCLUSION (SPAIN)



A LOCAL ASSOCIATION TO DEVELOP SOCIAL AND LABOUR SKILLS

Integra Todos is an insertion company in Sierra del Segura, in Spain, promoting local development. The company sets up production activities, while training people at risk of social exclusion, to develop general social and labour skills. **Costurizate** is one of these activities. The initiative aims at tackling unemployment by training women, who are mainly unemployed or at risk of social exclusion, in dressmaking skills (sewing and design). In 2017, they started 'Cultivate' to create employment opportunities for people at risk of social exclusion. It manages a forest nursery, ecological farms, and provides agricultural and forestry services.

The project was designed and set up by a local association, **Entre Todos**, with consultancy and collaboration from other actors of the area (associations, enterprises, NGOs, LAG group).

HOW CAN AN ASSOCIATION EMPOWER WOMEN WHO ARE UNEMPLOYED OR AT RISK OF EXCLUSION?

For two months, women students from various municipalities in the Sierra del Segura region (Elche de la Sierra, Nerpio, Molinicos, Socovos and Yeste) are trained in the

textile sector. The course, which takes 140s hours, is given by a fashion designer and a dressmaking teacher. **Once the students have completed the course they are able to train other women.** The activities have the objective of **promoting social and labour integration.** By gaining skills in the textile profession, these women, who were at risk of exclusion, have the opportunity to become qualified for a job and to **increase their potential access to employment** in this region. Women who complete the course can then be employed in the integration company Integra Todos.

THE VALORISATION OF A REGIONAL SAVOIR-FAIRE

The textile sector in the region of Sierra del Segura has been affected by the economic crisis. So the course focuses on the reuse of waste materials (bags, clothes, bags, etc.) and the design of new items adapted to market demand. With this initiative it is intended **to benefit from the experience that exists in the region in the textile sector, integrating it with the latest trends** and consumer preferences, such as creating materials which are sustainable, artisanal and unique.



Credits : Sierradelsegura.com

The women who are qualified can apply for a job more easily in the textile sector. Since 2015, there have been 3 editions of the Costurizate course with the participation of 55 women. To date, 14 of the 55 women found a job afterwards. The company has **created 6 jobs for people at risk of social exclusion**, and two groups of 3 and 5 women respectively have founded cooperatives, and another woman is working as self-employed.

▀ Find more information on www.asociacionentretodos.org and www.sierradelsegura.com/costurizate or [watch this video](#)

A COMMUNITY RECYCLING SCHEME LED BY WOMEN (LEBANON)



WHAT IS “CALL OF THE EARTH”?

“Call of the Earth” is a **community recycling scheme** carried out by an **all-woman rubbish collection team** set up in the mid-1990s in Arabsalim in Lebanon, when **waste collection was neglected by the authorities**. The innovator, Mrs Zeinab Mokalled, 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, they used Mrs Mokalled's back garden as storage area for recyclable waste, and a lorry bought by one of her 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 the 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 Mrs Mokalled garden.

A MIND CHANGE FOR THE LOCAL POPULATION

According to the NGO, **almost 70% of Arabsalim's population 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. After that, the waste is sent to nearby recycling facilities, approximately twice a month. The sale of recyclables only covers a small percentage of costs, with the treatment plants buying the waste for between €40 and €170 per tonne, depending on the material.

There have been significant challenges to reach this point. **The project's success has relied on constant interaction 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 a hive of activity which is frequently visited by schoolchildren, students and activists who come to learn about the project.

Nearby villages are adopting similar schemes, such as 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 now also decided to create an equivalent initiative.



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

VOLUNTARY COMMUNITY CHARITY TO PROVIDE SERVICES ON THE ISLANDS OF UIST (UK)



Photo credits: Tagasa Uibhist

WHAT IS THE ADDED VALUE OF A CHARITY ORGANISED LIKE TAGSA UIBHIST?

Tagasa Uibhist is a voluntary organisation in the Southern Isles of the Outer Hebrides, in Scotland (UK). Since being founded in December 1999, Tagasa Uibhist has been providing social care services throughout the islands of Uist **for the benefit of the elderly, for vulnerable people living on their own, for those developing acute illnesses and for people with dementia**. Throughout their time in operation, the organisation has expanded and now provides a range of services to the local community, such as relieving stress on carers and their families by enabling them to take regular breaks from their responsibilities, maintain their social role within the community, providing local transport or domestic services, and improving public policies and services for the benefit of people with dementia and their carers.

WHAT KIND OF SERVICES ARE PROVIDED BY TAGSA UIBHIST?

Some examples of the wide range of services provided by Tagasa Uibhist include, for example, a limited number of free care hours per month to adults at risk who live in the Uists and who require a flexible home support service, to support both the carers and the service users. Tagasa Uibhist owns a 16-seater wheelchair-accessible minibus

providing door-to-door transport for people requiring support to access shops, banks, post office and medical appointments. Furthermore, Tagsa Uibhist coordinates a LEADER funded horticulture Project, which provides opportunities for local people to grow fruit and vegetables, which is targeted at vulnerable adults to afford them therapeutic, healthy eating and well-being opportunities. Informal horticultural training supported this community to work towards becoming more self-sufficient. A final example is the Cuimhne (*memory*) project, which is working to reduce the stigma of dementia and build the island of Benbecula as a dementia-friendly community.

Tagsa Uibhist is funded **through a combination of statutory funding, grant funding from charitable trusts and organisations, local fundraising efforts, and individual donations**. This allows the voluntary organisation to provide services for free. Taking part in the services provided by Tagsa Uibhist is a social gathering and **a way of looking after each other and fostering community spirit**.

HOW DOES TAGSA UIBHIST IMPROVE LOCAL LIVELIHOODS?

The charity believes that to provide a professional service, **it is paramount to put service users at the heart of everything they do**. It is a primary and continuing policy of Tagsa Uibhist that, in the conduct of all its activities, it will strive to maintain a high standard of care consistent with needs, fitness for purpose and cost-effective use of resources. By employing and retaining highly skilled staff, training and developing them to ensure their motivation; by utilising appropriate standards; and by monitoring compliance **Tagsa Uibhist will endeavour to maximise the benefits and the quality of care to people who use the service and meet the carer's needs** appropriate to the situation.

Tagsa Uibhist supports its staff in completing official qualifications in Social Services and Healthcare. Therefore, Tagsa Uibhist is **training local employees to strengthen poor public services** in the remote islands of Uist. This has led to Tagsa Uibhist becoming a major provider of care services throughout Uist.

- Find more information on www.tagsa-uibhist.com

A TELEWORK HOUSE IN NAGYKOROS (HUNGARY)



Interreg IV C MICROPOL Project

WHAT IS THE NAGYKOROS TELEWORK HOUSE?

The Nagykőrös Telework House opened in December 2011. It offers 4 office spaces, 2 community spaces, 15 fully-equipped work stations with high-speed internet connection, phones, and modern computer infrastructure. It is the **first large-scale public-private partnership investment project** in Hungary, supported by Microsoft Hungary's Unlimited Potential Community Technology Skills Program, the City of Örkény, the Hungarian Telework Association and the Bács-Kiskun County Association of Job-seekers.

Thanks to a European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) grant, local actors have transformed an old building into a modern telework house, making use of resources contributed by Microsoft in the form of Windows 7, Office2010, Windows Server, Internet Explorer 9, as well as the cloud-based Skydrive and the Office365 suite for computers purchased from project funds, and IT training for the employers. There has been **no formal written agreement** signed between public and private actors. **The partnership is based on long-term co-operation history and mutual trust.** To strengthen the commitment and long-term interest of all parties, partners have jointly developed **a written long-term strategy.**

FOR WHOM WAS THE TELEWORK HOUSE SET UP?

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, most Eastern European economies including that of Hungary suffered a significant loss of export markets and an economic crisis ensued. Unemployment accelerated as almost one-third of jobs were lost during the period between 1990 and 95. Between 1990 and 1992, GDP dropped by approximately 20% and inflation exceeded 160%.

Nagykőrös is a rural town situated in the Central Hungary Region, approximately 80 km South-East of Budapest. Nagykőrös, like many rural towns, has been heavily hit by youth unemployment and bankruptcy of local SMEs due to the economic crisis. **The primary objective of establishing the telework house was the re-integration of the labour market and the extension of the number of tax-payers.** Therefore, the town has committed itself to support employers in hiring a local labour force. To do so, **the partnership's strategy focuses on supporting 'disadvantaged' social groups and commuters** who are permanent residents in the area surrounding the telework house.

HOW HAS THE TELEWORK HOUSE IMPROVED LOCAL LIVELIHOODS?

The telework house is responsible for a **30-40% cut in costs for enterprises** and **contributes to social and entrepreneurial renewal** in the area. It has **strengthened existing co-operation between the industrial sector, local government and local inhabitants.** It has supported the rehabilitation of the rural area, providing it with a **competitive advantage** that enables the employment of a skilled workforce at a reduced cost.

One visible impact of the telework house is that local inhabitants remained in the area and did not contribute to the depopulation trend of rural areas. Local inhabitants had the opportunity **to improve their skills to match the needs of local companies** offering open positions in the city of Nagykőrös. A further benefit is that the local municipality has had the opportunity **to spend resources (previously paid to inhabitants in the form of social contribution) on training and community programmes.**

► Find more information on the website of the INTERREG IV C Micropol project: www.micropol-interreg.eu

ZEITBANK 55+ TIME BANK (AUSTRIA)



Photo credits: Zeitbank 55+

WHAT IS A TIME BANK?

A time bank is a system that facilitates an exchange of services. If a member of the time bank association Zeitbank55+ uses a service, **the currency used for the calculation of services is the time taken or expects to spend**, irrespective of the content or the result of the service. If a member uses a service, the payment does not necessarily return directly to the service provider but can benefit other members of the time bank. Based upon the needs of its members, the association provides services and assistance across all areas of life, such as support in homes or gardens, pet care, assistance in correspondence and dealing with authorities, shopping trips, or joint leisure activities.

HOW DOES ZEITBANK55+ WORK?

ZeitBank55+ is a local association was created in 2006 in Molln, Upper Austria, as an EU-funded project. Now, the association covers its administrative costs with a small membership fee and a contribution for insurance for its members. Upon joining, a member can share their skills and knowledge. Having started as an association for older people, it has expanded its remit to younger people and families. The ZeitBank family covers a wide range of products and services that **used to be provided by the**



(extended) family. For example, elderly people support young couples in childcare, cooking or in the garden. In return, younger people can for example, help out with repair and maintenance housework, carry out errands (i.e. shopping, mailing, carrying laundry, walking the dog, etc.) or offer driving services.

HOW DOES THIS INITIATIVE FOSTER INTER-GENERATIONAL SOLIDARITY?

Younger and older generations in the region help each other. It has the advantage of providing services that are needed and of people getting help in return, later in time. It is a **new form of interaction within and between generations and fosters inter-generational solidarity**. The elderly population is no longer solely dependent on their families. They can also help others, which makes them feel needed. This initiative has been successfully transferred to approximately 60 ZEITBANK 55+ associations with a total of more than 1,000 members in Germany, the Czech Republic and Austria.

The long-term vision of ZeitBank 55+ is its role as a fourth pillar of old-age provision (income from work) across the whole of Europe (through the EUROPEAN TIME BANK UMBRELLA ASSOCIATION), alongside the three pillars of public pensions, company and privately-funded pension and savings schemes. **As a civic initiative, ZeitBank 55+ puts into practice the bottom-up principle of “helping people to help themselves”** and thus responds to the **looming challenge facing social budgets**.

▀ Find more information on www.zeitbank.at



A COMMUNITY OF YOUNG PROFESSIONALS TO RELAUNCH THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR (ITALY)



Photos credits : Vazapp

WHAT IS VAZAPP AND HOW DOES IT WORK?

Vazapp is a community of young farmers, professionals, researchers, communicators and creative people, who intend to relaunch the agricultural sector. The community aims at encouraging relationships in agriculture for the development of ideas and entrepreneurial activities, aimed at creating opportunities. It is a rural hub, originating in Puglia, in southern Italy, designed to accommodate young people sharing knowledge, ideas, projects, and passions about agriculture and tourism.

WHAT KIND OF ACTIVITIES ARE CARRIED OUT BY VAZAPP?

The community organises meetings of people who love their land and who want to stay to make it prosper. A typical Vazapp's modus operandi is the promotion of events called "conta-dinner" (a term derived from the Italian word for 'farmer' and 'dinner', "contadino") for creating relationships. The difficulty that Vazapp is overcoming is "the fear of change". It is necessary to break down a culture formed through habits and open up the dialogue to seize opportunities. This is the aim of the "Conta-dinners": dinners organized in the homes of the farmers who, in a place where they are at ease,

are open to dialogue and talking about themselves, and then the creation of new to collaborations and exchanges of services.

The key word is to optimize the work. This visionary project of Vazapp aims to stimulate a culture of knowledge and optimism in a sector of vital importance and often underestimated. If previously, working the land was considered a chore now it is a source of pride and hope for the future. Future projects focus on sharing resources, knowledge platforms, and ethical purchasing groups.

HOW IS VAZAPP SOCIAL INNOVATION?

Job opportunities and an agricultural society have already been created by the Contaddiner. Widening the circle of engagement is in preparation to raise awareness of the usefulness of the collaboration to other provinces across Italy.

To date, Vazapp has organised 11 information dinners, most recently in Rome at Luiss University with the Minister of Agriculture, general managers, innovators and farmers. Shepherds and farmers also attended the event, providing very positive feedback about their experiences and outcomes. With the involvement of LUISS University, the range of collaborations has widened to the University of Foggia, contributing to the aim of spreading the culture of Vazapp in the agricultural sector.

The initiative brings positive social, economic and cultural impacts. The creation of events leads to new relationships, the building of a trusting environment, knowledge exchange, collaboration between young farmers, professionals and researchers, and the creation of a processing cooperative. Ultimately, the initiative increases the level of trust amongst farmers and between farmers and stakeholders.

▣ Find more information on www.vazapp.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

If validated, find it on our SIMRA database
www.simra-h2020.eu/index.php/simradatabase/



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