

# LILLA

## EIGHTEEN GOOD PRACTICES FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

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*Project partners*

Foundation for Folkhighschoolwork in The Netherlands

Foundation Doarpswurk

Dalarnas Bildningsförbund

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## Introduction LILLA

In this brochure, the authors present eighteen inspiring good practices in adult education related to rural development. This compilation is the result of LILLA, a Grundtvig Learning Partnership about 'Land Life Learning'.

Over recent decades, many structural changes have taken place in rural areas and small villages. Between 2006 and 2008, project partners in six countries (Iceland, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain and Sweden) exchanged innovative strategies that make life more attractive in rural areas. They discussed how to organise lifelong learning as a continuous project in small villages and communities, and analyzed the possibilities of meaningful cooperation between adult education and rural development. The general aim of LILLA was to find out how adult education can contribute to activities of rural development in order to make these activities more successful and sustainable. The main project activities were international seminars, field visits and activities to involve key regional individuals and experts. In order to disseminate the main project results, the partners put together a brochure and a power point presentation on CD Rom with a selection of the good practices that were found.

The project partners want to share the most important project observations and conclusions (which certainly need more fine-tuning according to the specific circumstances in each country and region).

1. It is important to create a culture of lifelong learning in rural areas, where people are happy to educate themselves for different purposes such as: leisure, labour market, social relations, active citizenship. The conviction that everybody can learn according to his or her specific possibilities is an important signal to spread and the result will be self-empowerment and pride (examples 2, 3, 7, 8, 9).
2. Inhabitants of a rural area will leave this area if there are no educational facilities for their children or for themselves. The decision to stay in the area is easier if there are good education options near their homes. These options include secondary and further education, formal and non-formal education, including distance learning (examples 5, 10).
3. The presence of well-educated inhabitants, with a broad spectrum of educational levels and specialisations, is very attractive for companies and services who want to settle in a rural area. It makes tourism development more viable and local entrepreneurship more successful. Therefore, education is a key factor for successful rural development (examples 1, 5, 12, 15).
4. Close cooperation on regional or village level between organisations for formal and non-formal (adult) education, local authorities and companies will benefit the inhabitants. It will make education more accessible. People can start and continue their 'educational career' on the most appropriate level and with the most adequate method, according to their possibilities and necessities (examples 9, 12, 14).
5. Life in the rural area is attractive and dynamic when the inhabitants actively participate in the community. Education contributes to a vital community and to local democracy, as it gives a boost to community activities and voluntary work. People who learn (in formal, non-formal or informal settings) will obtain the necessary instruments to join the board of rural associations, to make local development plans, and to start new initiatives (examples 4, 6, 7, 9, 16, 18).
6. People are more willing to live in a rural setting when they personally have a feeling that they belong to the specific area, when they know about the cultural and historical roots of the place and the other people who live there. On the other hand, many tourists are specially keen on knowing more about culture, heritage, customs, handicraft, etc. There are many examples of learning surroundings that promote this aspect (examples 2, 11, 13, 15, 17).

7. In order to convince rural authorities, other entities and the public in general about the key contribution of adult learning to rural development processes, it is useful to show concrete examples of good practices that illustrate the role of education in development work.
8. The presence of an elaborated educational component, whether or not, in project proposals for rural development could be introduced as one of the criteria for deciding about a proposal.

During the last two meetings, the LILLA partners discussed a new and promising approach related to education and rural development, which are the so-called 'Learning Regions'. This concept (which is still in the development stage) is the creation of a permanent dialogue between all relevant organisations for learning and rural development at regional level and the realisation of shared programmes in both fields. The advantages are obvious: you can fruitfully use each others' competences (e.g. in learning, in developing courses, in creating instruments for (self) evaluation, in rural development), you can synchronise the goals on learning in the context of rural development processes, and it will be easier to define the learning aspects that must be taken into account in an adequate formulation and accomplishment of projects of rural development.

The LILLA partners welcome comments on and contributions to the project and this brochure to [info@volkshogeschool.nl](mailto:info@volkshogeschool.nl).

## 1. Innovative entrepreneurs in the rural area.

## Norway

Starting your own business in a rural area? In Norway, we saw a successful initiative to boost the number of profitable businesses and innovation projects in the county of Oppland. Entrepreneurs in this area get help to develop their ideas and make them reality. We learned that education and training is an important part of this project.

Innovation Norway offers products and services to increase innovation in industry throughout Norway, to help develop the regions and promote Norwegian industry and industrialisation, and to market Norway as a tourist destination. The institute aims to release the commercial opportunities of the region by encouraging innovation, internationalisation and profile-building. To realize this in a sustainable way, education and training is offered in the development phases or 'from concept to market'.

First, potential entrepreneurs can participate in a one-day course where they decide about their 'go – no go'. During this day, the participants receive information about the formal requirements and the personal competences that are necessary in order to be successful. In this way they find out if starting a business is an option for them or not. The course is offered free of charge and no previous knowledge is required. After this first training, potential entrepreneurs are invited to a competence course called 'Entrepreneurship', which consists of 30 hours of training and 3 hours of personal guidance. The training includes lectures, group work, discussions and an internet-based competence course. This course, which is also offered free of charge, also works as a motor to create a new and valuable network for the budding entrepreneurs. In many cases, these networks have already proved to last much longer than the course itself and they gave a great stimulus in the years following the course. Finally, during the long expected marked introduction phase Innovation Norway offers competence gatherings and mentoring. Important extras are advice for inventors, grants for start-ups and micro credit.

This method, with its combination of training, advice, grants and micro credits, has proved to be successful. According to a survey held in January 2008, some 70 % of the course participants in 2006 and spring 2007 have entered business start-ups, and as many as 70 % found the training to be of value to their start-ups. Innovation Norway contributes to the establishment of new enterprises by promoting innovation and entrepreneurship, input of knowledge, helping building network and filling financial gaps. New enterprises have started in rural areas and their presence is a good reason for residents to stay in the area, as well as attracting new residents who feel drawn to rural life.

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## 2. International Handicraft Café

## Norway

The arrival of migrants and refugees in rural areas can have a big impact in small communities. Both newcomers and 'traditional residents' need to get used to each other, find a way to live together and, hopefully, give an extra impulse to the economic and social development of the region. An active attitude from the local authorities and organisations facilitates the integration of newcomers and the openness of the locals.

In Vågå county, the local handicraft organisation, the municipality and the centre for volunteer work took this challenge and together they started the International Handicraft Café. This Café is an open meeting place for female refugees, migrants and locals. It is open every two weeks. In the Café you can learn a handicraft, learn the Norwegian language and learn from each others culture. The starting point is that it is easier to communicate when you are doing a concrete activity together. Those who can knit or weave teach others the skill. The communication is in Norwegian, which might be difficult in the beginning, but the informal setting helps the participants to practise the language. People with different backgrounds and cultures get the opportunity to interact and they learn to understand each other better.

The results of this project cannot be measured by dry statistic data. But it is clear that the Café makes the integration of female refugees and migrants in the local society a bit easier. Local people who participate become more open-minded and the newcomers become more connected with their new 'home'. Learning and socializing in the Café is also part of a process where people become empowered and achieve more self-esteem.

It is important to mention that the organisation of the Café is totally based on voluntary work. Voluntary work in general is important for the development and sustainability of small communities. When voluntary work also has an effect on integration and participation in local activities it is even better!

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### 3. The adult learning ambassadors.

Norway

Prosperous rural areas need well-educated inhabitants, people who keep their knowledge updated and are able to play their role as active citizens. Some people even stress the necessity of 'a strong culture of learning' in the province. The spirit of lifelong learning should be familiar to all adults in the region, no matter what level of education they already have. However, special attention may be given to those adults who left learning environments years ago. The Norwegian Association for Adult Learning (VOFO) coordinates a project directed at these adults: the Learning Ambassadors. In this project VOFO works together with local and regional authorities.

The learning ambassadors are people who have met severe learning challenges in their own personal history and managed to overcome them. The main 'task' of the ambassador is to tell other adults about their own background and experiences. With their stories they inspire and motivate other adults to start learning. They encourage other adults to learn and to make their own choices and find their own possibilities. The learning ambassadors are invited to conferences, schools and anywhere else where there is a need for people who can talk about their learning experiences. Up to now the feedback from the audience has been very good, as other adults recognize many situations that are been told about. Another effect of the project is that the ambassadors start to participate in the learning landscape. All these activities make learners much more visible than before and this contributes to a better dialogue with policy makers. In the future, learners will be asked to participate in the developing of a new and better pedagogical approach to adult learning. The challenge for the coming years will be to continue the work to make the learners visible, both in Norwegian rural and urban areas, as well as in the rest of Europe. The ambassadors themselves are the best examples of the benefits of education.

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#### 4. Study circles play a role in rural planning.

Sweden

In Scandinavian countries the study circle is a well known and intensively used educational activity. Sweden is no exception. Smaller and larger groups (the minimum is three people) can form a study circle and enjoy tailor-made courses, at a time which is convenient for them, with a teacher and with material that is not too expensive. Every study circle gets support from one of the nine study organisations in Sweden.

In the community of Falun (Dalarna), study circles played a valuable role in rural development planning. The rural developer in this community asked one of the study organisations to organise study circles in every rural part of the community. The aim was to develop ideas for the new Leader Programme (period 2008-2013). Ten groups were established in eight villages with nearly 80 participants. The members of the groups came from different kinds of local associations and activity committees. They were all very eager to contribute to the new European programme on Rural Development (Leader+ Programme), but needed a structured place to discuss the different views and possibilities, as well as technical assistance. The study organisation supported the circles with study materials and leadership.

The groups came together five to ten times. During the working process, they learned a lot about programme planning, handling different opinions and interests, etc. The participants were active and creative. They added a lot of ideas to the programme work, including ideas on local service centres, energy supply, communications, meeting places, tourism and suitable flats for elderly people. All the ideas that surged in the study circles were considered in the programme work for the next Leader period.

The study circle method has shown itself very suitable for supporting a local process of active citizenship aiming at creating a new and better local society.

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## 5. Folk High Schools support rural development.

Sweden

In the county of Dalarna local leaders have easy access to training and education that supports rural development efforts. The activities of these local leaders became more successful and sustainable due to the new competences they acquired on a folk high school course. Nowadays, several local projects have close cooperation with one of the seven folk high schools that exist in the county. These centres for non-formal learning offer very flexible and tailor-made courses. The exact content of the courses can be planned by the local organisations themselves together with the teachers of the school. Many project and process leaders have been educated through different kinds of courses. The courses are free. In order to receive financial support from the state and the county council of Dalarna, a course needs to take at least four hours a day. If necessary, a course can continue for a whole year.

Besides their support to local leaders, the folk high schools in Dalarna are also strongly engaged in courses for (new) entrepreneurs and small companies. They offer courses in the local communities about tourism, outdoor activities, handicraft, art, etc.

The work of the folk high schools has great repercussions in the region. Their presence goes far beyond the four walls of the building. With their work the schools promote movement, creativeness and local activities in the region. In other words, the Folk High School course is a flexible and useful instrument to support local and regional development.

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## 6. Good health means a better life.

Sweden

Ski lovers will know the Vasaloppet, the breath-taking long ski competition that takes place every year in the north of Dalarna. Around this attractive competition a new tradition was created: the Health Week. Of course, education is one of the key ingredients of this Week.

It all started when the project leader of the Vasaloppet took the initiative for a project named: 'Vasaloppet as a motor of regional development in early 2000'. He invited the three municipalities situated along the competition lane to make use of the good reputation of the Vasaloppet to encourage people to live a healthier life. The health coordinator liked the idea and started to invite study organisations, sport and cultural organisations, organisations for the elderly and disabled, and many others. The local school and health care office were invited to join the project. Study organisations engaged their members to participate in the Week and municipalities supported the Week, for example, by promising that their staff would be allowed to try some activities during the week. All the organisations together, with the broad spectrum they covered, succeeded in offering a wide range of activities during the Week. The preparation process mobilised the whole civil and public sector in the three municipalities and included different companies.

In 2004, the first Health Week became reality and from then on the Week was held every year. The Week is a success in many ways. One aspect of its success is the variety of activities and the number of participants. All these people have the opportunity to try a new activity during that week without any cost. Another result is that the Week offers good possibilities for small entrepreneurs to showcase their products and skills. The Health Week gives an impulse to other interesting developing processes in the municipalities and to all kind of educational activities before, during and after the Week. Under the umbrella of the Health Week, many new study opportunities were established such as new study circles, lectures from specialists, educational opportunities for leaders and employees, etc.

And best of all – the Health Week has spread to more municipalities.

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## 7. Travelling to learn.

## Portugal

People with a low income who live in an isolated rural area do not easily get in touch with other social and cultural realities. Living in such a 'small world' has consequences for their personal development, their views on society and on their community. It can also be a great barrier when you try to realise rural development activities.

In 2000, Entre-Serras started a special project which aims to give people in isolated rural areas the opportunity to travel together and to broaden their horizons. Every year, this organisation for non-formal learning chooses three or four destinations, taking into account their educational potential. These can be places where historical events took place or with a rich monumental and cultural heritage. All the Portuguese provinces have been visited, as well as Catalonia and Galicia in Spain. Entre-Serras takes care of all the logistics: transports, accommodation, subsistence and guided educational tours. The costs are shared between Entre-Serras and the participants. As a result of this project, people from various small villages in the municipality get to know each other. During the trip they see other realities which make them think about their own situation. They share problems and look for solutions to one of the main questions they all have: how to realise good quality of life in the rural area in which they live. After having travelled together with people from other (neighbouring) villages it is much easier to work together on the same projects. An important challenge is to expand the travel project beyond the Portuguese borders, leading people to know rural areas all over Europe, and building European awareness. In the vision of Entre-Serras, education is not a simply a question of upgrading skills which takes place in formal recognised institutions. Education is also, and maybe much more, about balancing knowledge, awareness and sensibility, meaning a change in attitudes and behaviours. The Travel Project has a hidden but highly educational component. Accompanied travelling with a group stimulates a development process amongst the participants which is irreversible. It makes people ask questions, discuss their ideas with the rest of the group and leads to changes in people's mentality. Accompanied travelling is a way for people of all ages to build more understanding for history and other cultures. This reflects on participants' identity, specific knowledge and engagement, and provokes changes that lead to development.

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## 8. Literacy learning through recreation

Portugal

Providing educational services for adults is a challenge that becomes harder when it comes to senior citizens, as schools have traditionally been regarded as something for children. However, this challenge needs to be taken, especially in rural areas. Once again, this became clear when the results of the Census 2001 in the Pampilhosa da Serra region were published: almost one out of three people in this region could read nor write. Most of them were senior citizens. Entre-Serras decided to develop a project that aimed to provide learning opportunities that were especially suitable for illiterate older people who were not so keen anymore to attend a formal school. The challenge was to make a lesson 'feel' as different as possible from the traditional classroom experience. This meant avoiding school books and traditional school work in favour of learning activities with a high recreational component.

In three small villages, and with the help of the local parish authorities, people were challenged to join a traditional handicrafts and embroidery group for two afternoons a week. The challenge was accepted by several illiterate people and before they knew it they found themselves together discussing the ancient traditions, learning with each other. No formal teacher was present. From time to time, the coordinator of Entre-Serras passed by to see what was going on. Modern magazines about embroidery replaced the traditional schoolbooks but the task was the same: to read. Basic arithmetic skills won their place when people needed to calculate the amount of materials to be bought on the very limited budget. At some point in the process, the school's children came to share the experience and the older participants became the teachers, as they explained the ancient traditions to the children. With the support of the municipality, all the participants from the three villages came together twice a month, each time in a different village, to show the others their work and share their experiences.

This non-formal way of organising the activities proved to be a very useful tool to develop the self-confidence of the participants and everybody's individual creativity, both key points in building a culture of change that leads to development.

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## **9. Answer to educational needs of rural communities.**

**Portugal**

According to the population census of 2001, the illiteracy rate in the municipality of Pampilhosa da Serra was very high. Almost one out of three people could not read or write. This deficit can at least partly be explained very simply: for adults in this region, the dream of studying beyond primary school can become a nightmare because the demographic characteristics of the region hardly permit the creation of classes according to the minimum numbers of participants defined by the Ministry of Education.

This is why the local authority for adult education and the municipality united their creativity in order to find an appropriate answer to the basic educational needs of the rural communities in this municipality. The result was a new strategy where 'it was the school who searched for the students', visiting the small villages where the people lived. All the administrative parish level authorities and local associations were contacted. Some of them became partners in the project, they gave publicity to the educational activities and provided facilities, such as rooms or computers. People's participation was mainly achieved by intensive door-to-door contact and through the local press. Most of the participants were women over 45 years old who decided to take a new step in their lives. The subjects they could learn were chosen by the individuals themselves, according to their personal needs and/or interests. Topics included how to use a telephone, how to use a personal computer, learn to read, learn to write, or just learn how to write your own name. These are some examples of a wide range of educational needs and interests that emerged during the project. Between 1998 and 2004, twenty eight learning groups started in nine different villages. At the moment the challenge is to keep these people interested in the educational process and organise activities and situations where they can use their new skills. After having finished the project period, four of the nine villages continued offering educational activities even without financial support.

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## 10. A meeting place for learning.

Iceland

For decades, young people in the Snaefellsnes Region (West Iceland) left their homes and region at the age of sixteen in order to attend upper secondary school. Many of them never returned to become an active adult member of the community. For families, it could be rather difficult to support a child to attend a school in another region because of the financial costs and that is why, in many cases, whole families relocated to the other region, or young people dropped out of school. Therefore, the provision of quality educational opportunities in Snaefellsnes was seen as one of the most important priorities to strengthen the region. Education near your home is a basic element to meet the demands of the 21st century.

In 2004 (part of) the answer to this problematic situation was found: the Snaefellsnes Open Upper Secondary School opened its doors. This school was an initiative of all the municipalities of the peninsula. The vision behind this school was to create a meeting place for learning in the rural community. The school was founded with contributions from the government and the municipalities in the region. The learning concept of this school is very special: the school building has very few classrooms, almost all the teaching goes on in an open space. The school relies on internet/computer technology and the methodology is learning by doing – which makes the students more independent. The teaching method is suitable to respond to individual learning needs. Human resources are at hand and the students can choose between the different learning opportunities. The Snaefellsnes Open School offers a diverse choice of studies in a small rural school environment with the potential of national and global learning resources.

The final result is that the school system empowers the adult learners. The school turned out to be a big stimulus for the rural development as its existence means both social and financial profit for the region and the future sustainability. The Open Upper School brings a change of values, brings more opportunities and improves the quality of life.

The realisation of the Snaefellsnes school is an example of a decision-making process based on the clear demand of the parents ('bottom up').

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## 11. Learning about cultural roots.

## Iceland

In many aspects, West Iceland has a very modern face, but there is something else.... West Iceland is also the mythic ground of fascinating sagas. In this part of the country, what now is called one of Iceland's most important cultural treasure, Egils Saga, took place. This saga and many other old sagas really need to be told in all their colourful details so that Icelandic people of all ages learn about their cultural roots. And so that tourists can understand more of the country they are visiting.

In 2006 the Settlement Centre was opened. The main objective of this multifunctional centre in Borgarnes is to bring alive the sagas by recreating them in a direct and dramatic way. The Settlement Centre houses two permanent exhibitions, the Settlement Exhibition and Egils Saga. With the help of an audio guide, the visitor makes a voyage of discovery through history that triggers all senses. This is not a museum: this is an experience-centre where multi-media and theatrical techniques are employed to give the visitor the sensation of how it must have been to cross the open ocean in search of an unknown land. Both exhibitions take about 30 minutes and there are audio guides in seven languages.

The Centre is also a centre-point for all kind of cultural events in Borgarnes. There are housing exhibitions, concerts, lectures and other cultural events. The Centre has conference facilities, a large restaurant with wholesome food and an 80-seat theatre. Two theatre productions saw the light in this centre, drawing visitors from far away to Borgarnes. Since its opening, the Centre has been visited by thousands of people from many countries, but also by many Icelandic scholars and students. The Centre is both a touristic attraction which gives a boost to local economy and an excellent learning place for Icelandic and foreign people.

The Settlement Centre has been the subject of many published articles both in Iceland and abroad and it has been nominated for a many prizes: the tourist industry innovation award 2006, the Icelandic woman entrepreneur award 2007, and the international innovation award 2007 given by FCEM International Businesswoman Association.

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## 12. Lifelong Learning Centres

## Iceland

Iceland has an interesting infrastructure for lifelong learning: there are nine regional Centres for Lifelong Learning spread over the country; and West Iceland, for example, has eight local lifelong learning centres. The main aim of these Centres is the promotion of lifelong learning, in order to elevate the educational standard in rural areas and thus contribute to the regional development of the area. The Centres facilitate access to lifelong learning and start learning initiatives with diverse goals and approaches. In West Iceland, the lifelong learning centre was set up and is managed jointly by the municipalities and the educational and employment sector in the region: the College of West Iceland, Bifröst School of Business (a university), Hvanneyri Agricultural University, the Centre for Rural Development in West Iceland, local communities, trade unions and companies. The Centre is responsible for identifying the need in each part of the region and offers programmes in accordance with that need. Many of the courses are work-related, but there are also recreational courses, such as handicrafts and study circles about the ancient sagas in the region. The Centre offers ICT courses, language courses, hobby courses and tailor-made courses for companies.

One of the 'new' fields in Iceland in general, and for the lifelong learning centres in particular, is career counselling. Nowadays, there is great demand for employees with good knowledge in various fields. Therefore, it is important that each individual realises how and where to improve his or her skills. In 2006, the Centres for Lifelong Learning signed a contract with the Education and Training Centre (established by the Icelandic Confederation of Labour) and the Confederation of Icelandic Employers. The centres for lifelong learning target people who have not completed their upper secondary level of education. This target group forms 38% of the people in the labour market, although the ratio varies from year to year and between regions.

Career counsellors visit workplaces in their district and provide individual counselling interviews related to training and employment. The emphasis is on encouraging people to participate actively in learning processes. The counsellors hope to plant the seeds of desire for education and educate the nation as a whole. These counselling services are funded for three years. This initiative has made Iceland an international leader in the field of career counselling services related to the labour market.

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### 13. Rural tourism.

### Spain

The settlement of Cinclaus, which means five keys, consists of five houses. These buildings were in danger of abandonment, but thanks to rural tourism, they have all been saved. They have been restored and today one of the houses is for accommodation, another is a restaurant with local specialities and a third one is a farm. Visitors come to stay here for a few days or a few hours. They can do a walking or cycling trail, or go sailing or fishing. The owner tells them about the celebrities who lived once in Cinclaus, such as a famous writer, a poet and some musicians. He can also tell you about the Romanesque art in the surroundings, the old traditions and so on. You can feel it: he is really proud of Cinclaus, its history and culture.

People tend to leave the rural villages where they were born and reared, in search of the city. There they can find education, jobs, health care and cultural life. This is how the rural areas have become more and more abandoned. Fortunately, there is also a positive tendency which is that many people who live in the city are longing to escape from the stress, noise and pollution. They wish to enjoy the atmosphere of the countryside, the cultural and agricultural traditions. In Catalonia this tendency has led to the development of small scale rural tourism activities. Old farms houses and stores are renovated in a traditional way, but with the all the mod-cons necessary for comfortable modern living. Municipalities, heritage and environmental organisations and landowners are working together to offer lodging, typical food, educational excursions, leisure activities, etc. Visitors from the city and abroad get acquainted with livestock farming, agriculture and fishing. They learn all kind of interesting facts about the region in that personal way that is only possible when it is done by hosts who have their roots in the region. In Catalonia, this kind of tourism is becoming more and more important. It stimulates the economic, social and cultural development of the area, brings employment opportunities and helps the conservation of the heritage. Municipalities and entrepreneurs play a key role in this process. Education is also an important factor, because rural tourism often requires new competences from the 'hosts' who receive the tourists.

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## 14. A Golden Learning Square: intermunicipal initiatives.

Spain

Torroella de Montgrí is the capital of a sub-region in Catalonia. Together with l'Estartit, Torroella de Montgrí has a population of 10.000 inhabitants. The town offers services to various municipalities. All the basic services are delivered: the market, primary assistance, culture and education, etc. The municipality claims to facilitate, optimise and coordinate education in its broadest sense, including basic education, formal and non-formal education. Therefore, the town offers some very interesting socio-cultural places that bring non-formal education and cultural activities alive.

One of these initiatives is the Golden Square. It refers to a group of institutions that work closely together: the interactive Mediterranean museum, the library, the music school, the centre for cultural activities and the centre for formal adult education. This cooperation has already brought many advantages for the population. It offers an excellent possibility for the immigrants in the municipality to learn about their new countries' culture and language, which enables them to have easier access to jobs. It gives young adults a second opportunity to continue in the formal education system, vocational training or university. The cooperation also gives the opportunity to accede to language learning, including e-learning, that permits the person to find a job related to tourism. And finally, it gives the inhabitants the opportunity to extend new acknowledgements for personal satisfaction and self-esteem.

This project, which is complementary to the more traditional education on offer, helps to cover the basic necessities of the population, although there are still more needs that can be met, most notably Catalan courses for immigrants.

For this project, the municipality had to adapt the internal organisation and communication structure, because in order to work effectively and to achieve good results, the different departments (culture, education, social services, publicity and information) need to work together and optimise their resources.

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## 15. Tourist hosts.

Spain

One of the experiences that drew the attention of the LILLA partners, and that was appraised very positively, was the course for 'tourist hosts' that was developed in the village of L'Escala in 2006. This experience consisted of offering a course about the architectural and cultural patrimony of the village to the senior citizens who were interested in participating in it. But the course was not only for them: it was also aimed at shopkeepers, policemen, etc. so that they can give all relevant information that tourists might wish to have.

The aim of course was to supply these senior citizens (retired people with the desire to participate in village life and to help in its development) and other participants with the necessary knowledge in order to be able to guide and help tourists who are visiting the village.

The experience was positive. In first place for the visiting tourists; the work of the hosts provides a good climate for the tourist and the feeling of really being welcome. The tourist is not only received with kindness by the locals, he or she also receives interesting information about the architectural patrimony (with its cultural highlights such as the Ruins of Empúries, the mediaeval settlement of Sant Martí d'Empúries, other typical hamlets and the village of L'Escala itself), about the natural surroundings (the Massif of Montgrí, walking and cycling routes, and the beaches) and about the cultural events that are on at that moment.

In the second place, the course for the hosts was a very positive experience for the senior citizens who participated in it. The course not only allowed them to learn and appreciate all the cultural and touristic aspects of the village (aspects that in many cases were hidden somewhere in the back of their minds and came alive again because of the course), but it also made it possible for them to interact with people from other countries and to exchange enriching experiences. The 12 course participants received a certificate at the end of it. This project shows us how lifelong learning can have a positive contribution to the economy of a village.

The first experience with the course was a test-run, but, based on its success, the Town Council is planning to offer this course regularly to the residents of the village.

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## 16. Villages on the internet

## The Netherlands

Throughout history, village people have found ways to inform each other about village news. Local media are still being used widely for this purpose, but the internet has become more and more important. However, not all inhabitants are familiar with the use of internet. Therefore, the Province of Fryslân, the regional agricultural college, an ICT professional and Doarpswurk (the provincial organisation for community centres) joined forces and organised a low-profile course on the possibilities of the internet for the inhabitants of villages. The project was called 'Op Paad' meaning 'On Route'. First, questions such as 'what is a website and what can I do with it?' were answered. Then the inhabitants discussed the possible impact of a website on their community. The participants learned how to present their village on a website, and how to give information about local associations, services and enterprises, mentioning their contact persons, etc.

The participants could use one of the fourteen computers the teachers brought to the villages. The group received a questionnaire which they could use to help them to get enough up-to-date information for the website. Finally all the villages started to make a website by themselves. People of different ages, backgrounds and levels of experience were mixed in one group. The result of the project was the birth of approximately 170 village websites!

The (making of these) websites had many positive effects for the villages. The inhabitants know more about their own village since making the website. Associations have found a quick digital way to get information to their members. Some villages digitalised the archives, which increased the historical awareness considerably. People can enjoy the pictures of village events only a few hours after the activity takes place. During the process people got to know each other better. The websites are used for presentation and promotion of the village. The sites contain a lot of useful information for the tourist and for policy-makers. Of course, maintaining the site is a challenge. All the village websites are brought together in one data-bank: [www.dorpen.nl](http://www.dorpen.nl). This umbrella site gives access to all the village websites in Fryslân. There are now plans to realise one data-bank for the whole of the Netherlands.

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## 17. A Green Nest

## The Netherlands

It Griene Nêst (the Green Nest) is a knowledge centre for rare or original Frisian animal, plant and fruit varieties. At the same time, it is also a 'care farm' for clients with psycho-social problems. These clients need to reintegrate into society after having been out of the work process for a long time. In It Griene Nêst they learn 'how to work': take responsibility, cooperate with others, find structure in life. On this farm, the clients can also learn for a future job in agriculture. The knowledge centre has three objectives. The first is to register the Frisian breeds and varieties and show them to the public. The second is to promote the knowledge and the application of the Frisian varieties by delivering information materials, courses and educational programs. And the third is to stimulate the consumption of Frisian regional products. For this reason, the centre develops recipes, cookery courses and educational material. In all its activities, the centre takes into account the conservation of agro-biodiversity, the significance of the varieties for cultural history, economy and recreation (e.g. the function the races have for farmers and hobbyists). The animals, plants and fruit trees in It Griene Nêst are tended by the clients of the care farm, under professional supervision of course. The clients also work in the shop, in the demonstration gardens and in the wooden fence-landscape. During the evenings and at weekends, the inhabitants of the farm are responsible for these tasks. Many volunteers are available too to manage the centre. Different entrepreneurs work on the farm. There is an organic vegetable-breeder, and there are breeders of traditional fruit trees and berries. Regional products are sold on the farm and there is a tearoom, especially for the tourists. The farm has thirty hectares of grassland separated by the wooden fences which are of great importance in terms of cultural history. It Griene Nêst plays an important role in the promotion of culture and history of the Frisian countryside. At the same time it is a great example of adult education for clients, students and visitors.

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## 18. A Future Plan for the village.

## The Netherlands

The province of Fryslân is located in the North of the Netherlands, where people speak Frisian, which is the second national language. Fryslân is made up of more than 225 villages with fewer than 500 inhabitants each. This small scale reality can be difficult for the provincial government when it comes to policy making (e.g. plans for employment, education, accommodation and community facilities). Therefore, the relationship with the 'village-boards', the associations of residents to be found in all the villages, is quite important.

Over the last decade, many village-boards have developed their own Village Future Plan in order to be able to work in a more structured way towards the desired future and to have a clear document in the discussion with the local government and others. At the start of this process, many villages made these Future Plans without cooperation with the government and without taking their priorities into account. Nowadays however, village-boards are stimulated by the government to make a Village Future Plan because it suits the new way of working: bottom-up instead of top-down.

A Village Future Plan is often written for a period of 10-15 years. It shows how people feel about facilities and quality of life. The plan can give direction to new government plans. In order to put together a good document, inhabitants need to learn how to discuss the future of the village on the basis of mutual respect and arguments. The process of making a Village Future Plan can be seen as a kind of practical Master Class in democracy and citizens' rights.

Doarpswurk supports the villages in making the Plans. The organisation applies a special method to collect wishes and opinions, to make choices and to formulate the vision on the future. Good interaction between residents, entrepreneurs, associations and other organisations is of great importance in realising a representative document.

In a first stage, many Future Plans were nothing more than a wishlists, but nowadays the villages go beyond that. They come up with ideas on employment developments, demographics and formulate a vision on the village identity and on the way they want to live together in the village.

On many occasions they pay more attention to the development of the countryside and how to fit modern architecture into a traditional landscape.

By making a Future Plan, villagers learn a lot about their village, plan-processes and government policy. During the work process, relations between the people in the village are strengthened and a stronger 'village-self-consciousness' is created.

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