

“Winging and coaching the civil society of Alibunar to approach the EU rural development”

Priorities of the Alibunar municipality Rural Development Strategy

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Making the best use of natural and cultural resources, their preservice and value adding

Selected by 34 % of local action groups of EU, ‘Making the best use of natural and cultural resources’ is the most popular of all Leader+ themes. Natural and cultural resources are important legacies which need to be safeguarded for future generations and which, under the Leader+ initiative, can be used as a key driver of sustainable development at Community level. Some of these resources, especially cultural ones, may be less tangible than others, but can be a crucial element in a region’s integrated rural development strategy.

By bringing out the diversity of the rural areas covered by LAGs, this theme emphasises the ‘territorial’ aspect of Leader concept. Natural resources such as Deliblatska pescara and its wildlife characterise the area’s physical landscape, and the cultural resources provide a sense of place that is unique to the territory.



The guidelines produced by the European Commission at the beginning of Leader+ emphasise Natura 2000 sites as part of this theme. There are 18 000 Natura sites in the old Member States (covering 17.5 % of their territory) which were designated as having European importance for nature protection and which have special management status in which local communities are encouraged to play an active part. The Natura sites are territorially based and offer specific local resources for the area’s LAG, such as beautiful scenery for tourism or job creation through sustainable exploitation. There are also many other designated and non-designated areas with a valuable natural heritage. Special reservations of Deliblatska pescara is certainly the unique one.

Culture and nature both have the means to facilitate rural development. By emphasising the wealth and diversity of their cultural heritage, rural areas of Banat are able to develop those economic activities which can also generate added value and create employment for the citizens of Alibunar municipality. Equally, by strengthening the local cultural identity and the improvement in the quality of life brought about by these activities, the pride of rural populations and their sense of regional identity are also strengthened. Consequently, regional development is promoted and, with it, long-term economic survival.

Of the many different Leader+ projects which involve culture, there are four main different kinds that can be identified: promotion of regional identity; exploitation of cultural heritage; creation of permanent cultural infrastructures (cultural centres, eco-museums, etc.); and the organisation of specific cultural activities (entertainment and festivals for example).



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The environmental and cultural themes also lend themselves to integrated rural development strategies, a key aspect of Leader+, by taking into account the territorial aspect of local development. This is shown by the overlap with other themes, especially ‘adding value to local products’, and ‘improving the quality of life in rural areas’.

An area well known for its production of a particular product is able to not only market this local product, but may also promote its use as a natural resource that characterises the area. Similarly, an enhanced natural environment or a greater sense of cultural identity of the people loiving in the area of Deliblatska pescara can improve the quality of rural life. It is linked to the concept of ‘social capital’ where local communities are encouraged to take responsibility for their future development.

Many debates exist about what exactly is the ‘best use’ of natural and cultural resources. In respect of the exploitation of natural resources, there are often conflicts between the needs of economic competitiveness and environmental protection, which is the central challenge of sustainable development.

Experience has shown that there are substantial economic and social rewards to be had from respecting natural heritage, although difficult decisions need sometimes to be taken about the use of a region’s cultural resources. There is indeed a fine balance between preserving culture as part of a region’s heritage and exploiting it to meet economic and social needs. Agrotourism is one way of meeting these needs.

The case studies of LAGs that have selected this theme show how Leader+ EU projects are focusing awareness about the potential of Europe’s rural diversity. This potential is found in both the natural resources of the territory and in the people who live there. They will hopefully inspire other communities across Europe to look at what their region has to offer.

Priority 1: Making the best use of natural and cultural resources, their conservation and value adding			
Measures	Activity 1	Activity 2	Activity 3
1.1 Improvement of the touristic offer and promotion of Deliblatska pescara	1.1.1 Supporting the measures for improvement of the touristic offer of Deliblatska pescara and especially of Devojacki bunar	1.1.2 Supporting the measures for promotion of Devojacki bunar	1.1.3 Creating preconditions for the use of natural resources (wind, gepmetrical warer, air, flora and fauna)
1.2 Conservation and improvement of values of cultural resources	1.2.1 Enhancement of the local cultural identity with the emphasis on multiethnicity	1.2.2 Supporting the organizing of specific cultural activities (events, manifestations)	1.2.3 Promotion of local and regional identity
1.3 Support for the spatial planning	1.3.1 Supporting the development of the spatial plans of settlements	1.3.2 Support the planning of agricultural land	1.3.2 Support the planning of construction land

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