

Rural communities from all over Europe are invited to learn about managing social enterprises

Material developed with four rural communities from Estonia, Finland, Romania and Scotland now available in the ViSEnet project

In the past two years, an international group of university professors, rural communities representatives, social entrepreneurs and researchers have developed three-modules of learning material about community and social enterprise, adapted to rural needs and opportunities.

One way to tackle the challenges of diminishing local services encountered in many rural communities and to maximise the potential of assets within a community is to provide services locally by community-run enterprises or social enterprises. Online, there are many learning resources about social entrepreneurship, but these resources are often focussed on the individual entrepreneur, seldom take into account community and collective leadership or are not adapted to the rural context or realities of living in a rural area.

The objective to create learning materials adapted to rural community context was the starting point for the five partners engaged in the ViSEnet project. The content has been created based on a shared understanding of the strategic key points of rural development and has been tested and reviewed in the past 24 months with rural communities that acted as local pilots.

The material consists of three main modules: **Community Involvement, Networking and Partnerships and Social Enterprise Solutions:**

- Module 1 takes a look at the local community and its needs, and formulates an essential background to the successful social enterprise.
- Module 2 concentrates on the importance of networking and partnerships: in rural areas it can be advantageous to collaborate with others to pool resources and increase impact.
- Module 3 discusses social enterprise solutions - giving rural businesses practical guidance on how to run their enterprise successfully and add value at a local community level. This module also highlights the importance of measuring social impact rural social enterprises make in their area.

The three-module material is located in the Rural Social Enterprise Hub: <https://www.ruralsehub.net/visenet-overview/>.

Rural communities, your feedback is needed!

However, this material cannot be created by us alone: we need your help to make it better with us. This is why we are looking for rural communities to give us feedback of the material: ***Is there something missing? Is it easy to use? Where and how would you consider using it?***

Professors, your feedback is needed!

In addition, this material is also aimed to be used in teaching social entrepreneurship. This is why we are interested in receiving teachers' feedback: ***What parts part of our material would you use in your course? How are you using it? How could we improve the material?***

We invite you to offer your feedback here: https://www.ruralsehub.net/feedback_and_piloting/. We are looking forward of receiving your feedback by the end of April 2021.

If you are interested in our piloting results, please check ***the Piloting Diaries*** on this same site.

The “**ViSEnet: Village Social Enterprise learning material, guidance and networking**” project to promote social entrepreneurship in rural areas is aimed to individuals who are interested in developing and sustaining their rural communities, who are willing to consider socially enterprising solutions to assist their rural areas or individuals who already have an idea for social enterprise in rural areas, as well as individuals already engaged in social enterprise activity but wish to gain new skills, knowledge and expertise to assist them in their venture.

All products and materials will be available and accessible online to all people interested in social entrepreneurship and community development.

The project is funded by EU Erasmus+ Strategic partnership for adult education. The Finnish National Agency for Education is hosting the national agency for the European Union's education and youth programmes.

More information and links to the project's materials will be available in project partner's websites:

- **Estonian University of Life Sciences (EMU), Estonia:** <https://www.emu.ee/en/about-the-university/news/uudis/2019/01/31/visenet-village-social-enterprise-learning-material-guidance-and-networking/>
Contact: Roger Evans, evanter.ou@gmail.com and Lea Sudakova, lea.sudakova@emu.ee
- **The Bucharest University of Economic Studies (ASE), Romania:** <http://fabiz.ase.ro/erasmus-visenet>
Contact: Carmen Paunescu, carmen.paunescu@ase.ro
- **Nürtingen-Geislingen University (NGU), Germany:**
https://ilias.hfwu.de/goto.php?target=cat_22160&client_id=hfwu
Contact: Roman Lenz, roman.lenz@hfwu.de
- **Inspiralba, Scotland:** <http://www.inspiralba.org.uk/visenet-learning-and-networking-for-rural-social-enterprise/>
Contact: Ailsa Clark, aclark@inspiralba.org.uk
- **University of Helsinki Ruralia Institute, Finland** (coordinator): <https://www.helsinki.fi/en/ruralia-institute/visenet-village-social-enterprise-learning-material-guidance-and-networking-0>
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Remark: The European Commission accepts no responsibility for the contents of this press release.