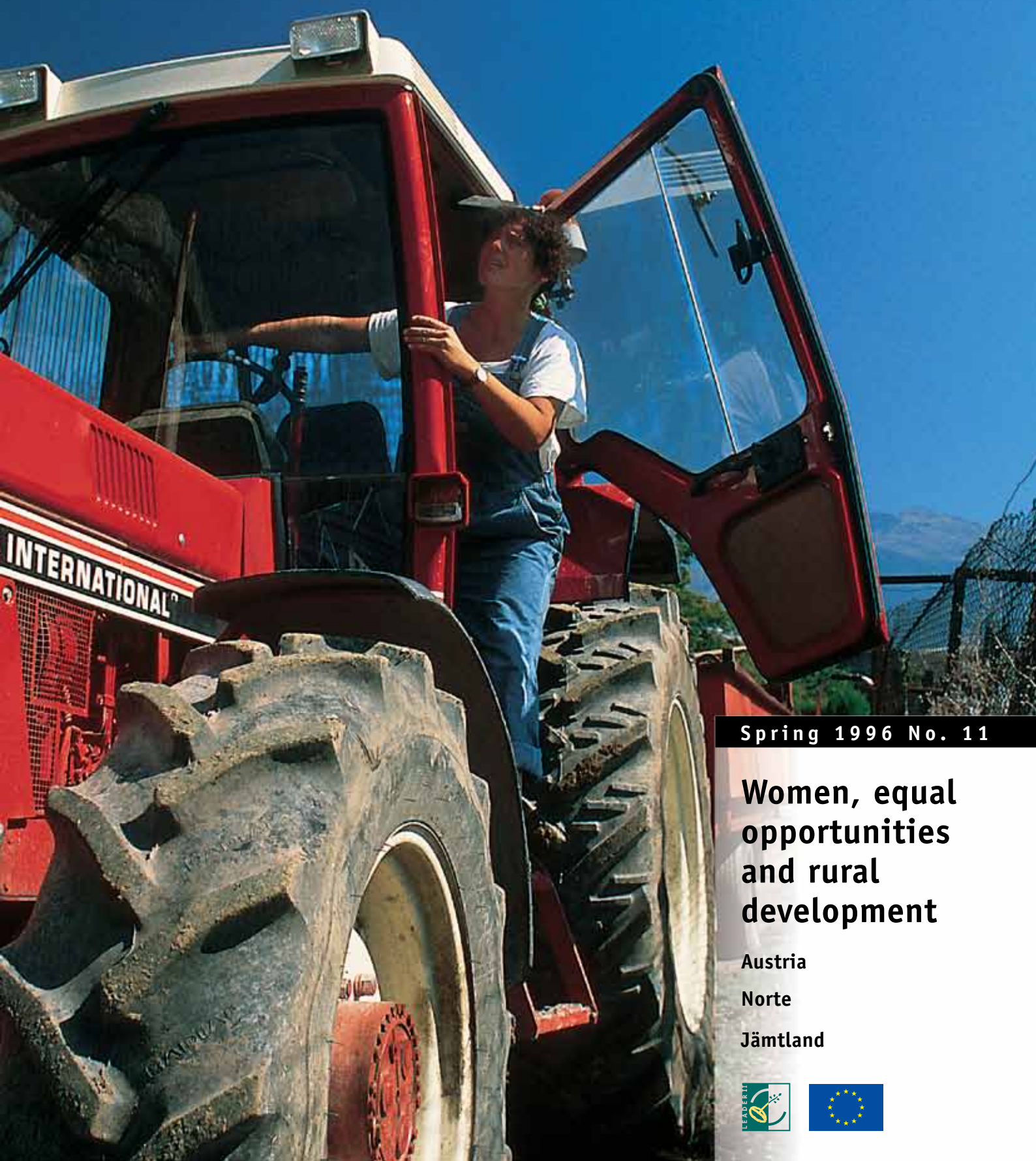


Quarterly Journal of the Community Programme LEADER II

# LEADER II

## magazine



Spring 1996 No. 11

### Women, equal opportunities and rural development

Austria

Norte

Jämtland





**Country:** Greece  
**Achievement:** setting up and running a craft cooperative  
**Cost:** ECU 113 707  
**EU:** ECU 51 168  
**Public:** ECU 17 055  
**Private:** ECU 45 484

*"In association with the municipal development agency in Arnaia, our group has helped set up a cooperative specialising in weaving. LEADER has also assisted the craft cooperative draw up a comprehensive marketing plan, set up a point of sale and promote its products (brochures, attendance at fairs in northern Greece). The craftswomen are very proud of their venture and now have a new source of income. The action has also rekindled traditional skills which were in danger of being lost forever."*

**Théodoros Sirgianidis,**  
LEADER official



**Country:** Italy  
**Achievement:** mastering the art of ceramics  
**Cost:** ECU 49 905  
**EU:** ECU 32 438  
**Private:** ECU 17 467

*"The traditional art of ceramics, which has existed in this area since time immemorial, is a highly-renowned local skill with major potential. Turning out original products of superior quality, working the clay involves a high degree of skill that must now be passed on to future generations. In this 'training-workshop' run by two local women and supported by our LAG, eight young trainee ceramicists are receiving training, which emphasises creativity and innovative design."*

**Marianna Colangelo,**  
LEADER official



**Country:** Ireland  
**Achievement:** Family Resource Group for Women  
**Cost: (per annum)** ECU 25 000  
**EU:** ECU 5 000  
**Public:** ECU 18 750  
**Private:** ECU 1 250

*"Aware of the feelings of isolation experienced by women in this rural area, the LEADER Duhallow group helped set up the 'Family Resource Group' in Kanturk, which now serves 60 women in the Kanturk area, providing health promotion, child care and adult education facilities, as well as acting as a meeting place for local women. Our LAG is now planning to set up similar groups throughout Duhallow, generating a positive outlook for women in the region."*

**Maura Walsh,**  
LEADER coordinator



**Country:** Portugal  
**Achievement:** setting up a small restaurant-museum  
**Cost:** ECU 72 654  
**EU:** ECU 32 991  
**Private:** ECU 39 663

*"Managing to enlist the support of her family for the project, a local woman has renovated an old water mill and set up a little restaurant beside it. The 'Ti Casinhas Mill' has since become a lively and unlikely venue for celebrations and banquets, gourmet meals, where visitors can also discover the machinery and traditional methods used to work the mill. Walking itineraries in the heart of the Algarve are a further option. In addition to having set up her own business and providing regular work for two other women, the owner has seen her dream come true: to move back to her native village and at the same time, make a contribution to promoting the local area's culture."*

**Priscila Soares,**  
LEADER coordinator



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*Rural policy in the “Alpine Republic”.  
An interview with Helga Konrad, Federal Minister for Women’s Affairs.*

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*Mary Braithwaite looks at the situation of women living in rural areas and the various ways of promoting equal opportunities in rural development projects.*

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*Many women have been direct beneficiaries under LEADER I.*

**Women living in rural Norte (Portugal):  
lagging behind, assistance needed ..... 16**



*In northern Portugal, alongside tourism, employment in the traditionally female areas seems to be the only way for women to take part in the formal economy. We meet women in three different LEADER areas in Norte: Alto Cávado, Alto Tâmega and Basto.*

**Jämtland (Sweden):  
where women take the initiative ..... 19**



*In this sparsely populated region, women are often the driving force behind development initiatives.*

# In a word...



**Franz Fischler,**  
*Member of the Commission of the European Communities,  
with responsibility for Agriculture and Rural Development*

While the number of women actively contributing to rural development and initiating new projects is significant, in general, women living in rural areas encounter several disadvantages: their employment opportunities are limited, child-minding facilities are inadequate, communal transport in rural areas rarely meets demand, training centres are scarce. These disadvantages underpin the need to provide resources, which can ensure equal opportunities for women living in rural areas.

Even if Community assistance in the framework of the Structural Funds does not discriminate between the sexes, it has emerged that in reality, this tends to benefit men more than women and that measures specifically catering for women are all too infrequent.

Among the financial measures implemented by the European Union in favour of equal opportunities for rural women, the LEADER Initiative deserves a special mention: in the period 1991-1993, LEADER I has already provided women with the opportunity to set up rural development projects. Several examples of successful projects can be found, notably in the areas of rural tourism, the commercial exploitation of farm specialities, setting up small and medium-sized companies and craft enterprises. It is my hope that women will keep up their good work and that they will be even more active and innovative during the second phase of the Initiative (1994-1999), leading to the optimisation of opportunities for rural areas under LEADER.

Nevertheless, the choice of measures to promote equal opportunities ultimately remains the responsibility of the Member States and those in charge of implementing the programme on the ground.

The European Commission has plans to implement several new measures to promote equality of opportunities during 1996: one example of this is the proposed study on the role currently played by women in farming, coupled with a comparative analysis of the various national regulations dealing with legislation protecting women in this sector. These analyses should serve as the basis for proposals leading to further improvements.

We are also planning to launch pilot projects aiming to encourage a greater degree of female participation in rural development. The first call for proposals will be published during the autumn of 1996 - this will receive funding of ECU 20 million for the 1997-1999 period and will focus on a different theme each year. This will also enable us to define concrete needs in terms of projects and to prepare future measures.

Thanks to the support of the European Parliament, ECU 400 000 has been provided for under a separate budget heading of the agricultural strand of the budget. This is intended to cater for the information needs of women in rural areas, as part of agricultural policy in general or in the form of funding for specific projects.

The information network set up in the framework of the LEADER Initiative and coordinated by the European Observatory, also provides an essential facility supplying women living in rural areas with information on examples of successful concrete actions.

Finally, the major conference planned for November next on rural development will bring to light the strategies and measures, intended to further an approach to development, which is genuinely integrated, and which promotes a better appreciation of the role of women in our policy. <



**Austria’s geopolitical location as well as its topography largely explains the distinctive characteristics of this new European Union Member State.**

**The Alps cover 74%** of the Austrian territory and the “Alpine Republic” has common borders with four former Eastern bloc countries. Both these factors have resulted in major regional disparities, heightened by the fact that the greater Vienna area accounts for almost 40% of Austrian GDP.

In the rural areas of the northern Alps, which rely mainly on tourism, the GDP per capita matches that of the national average. These regions are, however, faced with high unemployment during the off-season months and a lull in the tourist trade - their main activity. Here, the environment is also increasingly threatened. In other rural areas in Austria, GDP is 20%-50% below the national average.

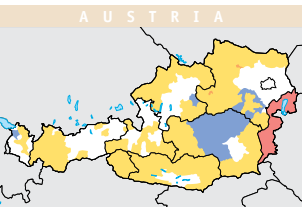
In the outlying areas of the south-east and northern Austria as well as in the various inland alpine regions, 30% of the working population are engaged in farming, although this is often on a part-time basis. The secondary sector is usually made up of businesses providing low-paid jobs. It is dominated by the textile and clothing sectors, as well as by the leather and wood industries.

Rural Austria does, however, have some important assets: a wide range of small and medium-enterprises, many farms focusing on organic production and local products, arrangements for basic training and high-level advanced training, a relatively low unemployment rate, a well-preserved environment and a very high quality of life.

### Development measures emphasising innovation

“Transfer of expertise”, “optimising local potential”, “innovation” are some of the expressions that could be used to describe the development policy that has been implemented in disadvantaged Austrian regions since the end of the 1970s, along with general improvements to infrastructure.

To successfully implement this policy, two types of measures have been prioritised by the Federal Governments and the Länder: different kinds of technical assistance were provided at local level, as were various kinds of financial assistance.



- Objective 1
- Objective 2
- Objective 5b
- Objective 5b partly eligible

**Surface area:** 83 855 km<sup>2</sup>

**Land use:**

forestry: 38 770 km<sup>2</sup>

crops, livestock: 20 420 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population:** 7 800 000 inhabitants (1991)

under-15s: 18% • over-60s: 14%

**Density:** 93 inhabs/km<sup>2</sup>

(EU average: 115 inhabs/km<sup>2</sup>)

**GDP per capita (1994):** ECU 20 670

(EU average: ECU 16 650)

**Unemployment rate (1994):** 6%

**Areas eligible for**

**Structural Funds (1995-1999)**

**Objective 1:** 3 965 km<sup>2</sup>; 270 900 inhabitants;  
ECU 165.6 million

**Objective 2:** 8 692 km<sup>2</sup>; 636 600 inhabitants;  
ECU 101 million

**Objective 5b:** 50 100 km<sup>2</sup> ;  
2 275 000 inhabitants; ECU 411 million

**Rural nature**

**Rural areas:** 91.2% of the total surface area  
(EU average: 79.6%)

**Rural population:** 42% of the total  
population (EU average: 14%)

**Density:** 52 inhabs/ km<sup>2</sup>

**Average income:** 90.8% of the national  
average income (1989)

**Agriculture and forestry sectors (1992):**

3.3% of GDP; 15-20% of the working  
population in rural areas (Austria: 7.9%);  
average surface area engaged in farming:  
12.9 ha (EU average: 16.4%)

**Tourism:** 14% of GDP; 250 000 jobs  
(400 000 jobs tourism related)

**Administrative bodies which  
deal with rural development:**

**at national level:** Federal Chancellery  
(coordinates regional development and  
regional policy; ERDF; Objectives 1, 2, 5b;  
Community Initiatives including LEADER);  
Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry  
(EAGGF; Objective 5a); Federal Ministry of  
Employment and Social Affairs  
(ESF; Objectives 3 and 4);

**at regional level:** Land governments  
– of the 9 Austrian Länder, 8 are participating  
under LEADER

**at local level:** 2 301 communes.

A Development Programme for Mountainous Areas was launched in 1979. This initial experience of integrated development served as a basis for implementing the Local Self- Development Assistance Programme (FER) in 1983.

Since 1990, the FER has exclusively provided funding in the area of technical assistance (advice to companies, setting up projects, etc.) but the Federal Government and the Länder have also created an Investment Fund to promote employment, which, in 1990, under the name of "Premiums for Local Innovation (RIP)", extended its funding in order to cater for companies undertaking innovative projects and investment in these (products and processes).

Other initiatives implemented by the Federal Government, the Länder and the communes also provide assistance for local development.

Since 1990, policies implemented to assist agriculture have prioritised organic production, the processing and marketing of products, and further training.

Similar measures have been taken in all the other Länder, and each year considerable financial resources are made available to revitalise rural areas, with particular emphasis being placed on innovation.

Structural policy is also implemented by the local Foundations for Employment, which receive assistance from the Ministry of Social Affairs. These provide support for job seekers and workers, in areas that are

disadvantaged or undergoing conversion, in fields like vocational guidance, advanced training and setting up businesses. In Objective, 1, 2, and 5b areas, further measures are implemented by offices in charge of coordinating local development (Regionalmanagement-Einrichtungen), which are supported by the European Union, the Federal Government and the Länder.

The activities of these bodies are administered by the Austrian Framework Regional Development Programme, which serves as the basis for implementing the main strategic priorities taking into account the needs, projects and programmes of the Federal Government, the Länder and the communes. This is redefined every 10 years by the Austrian Conference for Regional Development, a permanent umbrella organisation for national, regional and local bodies as well as the social partners. At national level, local development policies are coordinated, in partnership with the Länder, by the Federal Chancellery (Bundeskanzleramt).

This body is in charge of coordinating LEADER II, which receives ECU 23.3 million in Austria. Under LEADER, the Länder have put forward 8 regional programmes which should lead to around thirty local action groups being set up, and which will be linked via a national LEADER network coordinated by the ÖAR (Österreichische Arbeitsgemeinschaft für eigenständige Regionalentwicklung - the Austrian association for self development at local level).



**"Without women, there can be no development."**

**Helga Konrad, the Austrian Federal Minister for Women's Affairs**

**How would you describe the situation of women in Austria? What, for instance, are the specific problems encountered by women living in rural areas?**

In Austria, women make up 51.6% of the total population. 62.7% of women work outside the home. Yet, their income only amounts to 70-77% of men's income. On average, an Austrian woman has one or two children and in general, the household duties are left to her, even if she has a job. This is one of the main problems – family and household responsibilities are often an obstacle to financial independence. In addition, the inadequate number of child care facilities makes it difficult for women to work outside the home, and even when they do, this lack of facilities constitutes an obstacle to career advancement. Male dominated power structures, prejudices, etc. have, up until now, often hindered women's careers.

Legislation passed in 1993 in favour of women and equal opportunities should

result in equal employment opportunities among the sexes, at least in the public sector.

The number of women active in politics is only rising slowly, and is an uphill battle: a quarter of the seats in the Austrian parliament are currently held by women.

The problems faced by women living in rural areas can be summarised as follows: low income, lack of employment opportunities and lack of security.

**Are there specific measures in place to cater for women living in rural areas?**

In certain areas, rural women have set up associations to promote their interests. On the eve of the "World Conference on Women" in 1995, women farmers got together at a seminar entitled "Bread and Roses". The seminar provided a forum for women to discuss their specific problems. In Beijing, a workshop on the situation of women living in border areas was also organised: in addition to facilitating discussions and sharing of

information, a "projects exchange" was also proposed. The increase in the number of child care facilities will bring long-term benefits enabling women in rural areas to take up employment.

In the framework of the major employment initiative that will be launched next year, specific projects for women in rural areas should be set up and funded. In the case of rural women, factors such as greater mobility and less isolation should, in particular, be emphasised.

**What contribution can women make to rural development?**

Without women, there can be no development. Their contribution is indispensable if we want to successfully implement consistent rural development policies, which will cater for their specific needs and expectations of women in rural areas, and take their views into account.

# Equal partners in development

**Women play a pivotal role in maintaining rural communities. As well as their economic activities, they make major contributions to the maintenance of family and community life.**

BY MARY BRAITHWAITE [\*]

**Yet, most rural** development strategies – to their detriment – do not fully recognise women's contribution and roles. Successful rural development depends on harnessing the skills and resources of all citizens and on delivering benefits which meet their different needs. Two principles are therefore essential for effective development: the integration of equality between women and men in rural development strategies and active participation by all in their implementation.

It is currently popular to talk of the need to recognise women as a "vital human resource" and, as a consequence, to encourage them to become "more economically active". The implication is that women who are not currently "active" in the formal labour market do not make an economic contribution, and that these women have spare time on their hands which could be used more profitably elsewhere. In rural areas, this is far from the truth.

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[\*] **Mary Braithwaite** is author of a study on women in rural areas, published by the European Commission (1). She is involved in research activities and projects on equal opportunities in European local development. She is also a specialist in participative methods for the planning and evaluation of development projects in Europe and the Third World.

## Active, but not recognised

It is true that unemployment amongst rural women is generally far higher than amongst rural men. In some regions, female unemployment is more than double. In rural areas of Portugal, nearly two-thirds of the rural unemployed are women.

Female unemployment in rural East Germany rocketed after 1989, with more than 80% of women who worked formerly in the agricultural sector losing their jobs, at a far faster rate than their former male colleagues. In only a few rural regions is male unemployment higher than female.

This is the case in England and Scotland, due primarily to the growth of part-time, low-paid service sector employment, which has been taken up primarily by women. If one is to include those women who are seeking paid work, but who are not counted as being unemployed, the situation in most rural areas is even more grave than the picture given by official statistics. Moreover, participation of rural women in the formal economy (as expressed in labour market activity rates) tends to be lower than for rural men, and generally lower also than for urban women. This is particularly the case in Objective 1 rural regions, where traditional agricultural societies still predominate.





## Fewer opportunities, more constraints

These low rates of participation and high rates of unemployment are due to a range of phenomena, including: traditional attitudes about the respective roles of women and men; a severe shortage of suitable paid jobs for women in rural areas; and certain obstacles - in particular the absence of transport and of care services - restricting women's access to the labour market. Current trends aggravate the already difficult situation of rural women. The cutbacks in public services and in public sector employment and further centralisation of the location of both public and private services affect rural women doubly, making it both more difficult to obtain jobs and to access the services they need for themselves and their families.

In fact, taking a broader view than just formal labour market activity, rural women generally have more roles and responsibilities and work longer hours than men. In France and Ireland, where information on people's use of time is available, rural women, and particularly farm women, have the fewest number of free hours, fewer than urban women and most rural men. Rural women everywhere have multiple roles: in the domestic sphere they are household managers and family carers; in the community they maintain social and cultural services, predominantly on a voluntary basis; and in the economy, if they are not formally engaged as employees or entrepreneurs, they are often active in family businesses

and farms. In contrast, they are generally less involved in decision-making at local or regional levels. Often their domestic and community maintenance roles not only restrict them from participating in decision-making, but provide the support which enables men to participate. The unequal share of family and domestic responsibilities is a significant constraint to the equal participation of women and men in rural development. Some examples of initiatives which address the interests and needs of rural women and encourage their participation illustrate some possible solutions to these problems.

## Sectoral strategies

In addressing female unemployment, strategic initiatives are required. These need not be targeted uniquely at women. The Taste of Ballyhoura initiative in Ireland, developed by the LEADER group Ballyhoura Development Ltd., was a well-planned rural tourism initiative aimed at improving the quality and turnover of local restaurants. The new jobs created were predominantly full-time, and the majority were taken by women. By targeting employment initiatives at sectors where women will have a higher chance of being employed, a real impact can be made on female employment. —————>

— Support for self-employment and enterprise is also important. Rural women are often very good at identifying local needs and resources which can provide opportunities for business ventures. However, long-term quality business support is needed, to provide women with the confidence, skills and back-up to develop successful enterprises. In some areas, specific women-only support initiatives have been established, such as the Women's Enterprise Centre in Launceston, in the south-west of England, which offers advice, information, training and premises for women starting out or already in business. As a result of the Centre's activities, its parent company, Enterprise Tamar, can claim that almost half its clients are female. In the remote community of Montemuro in Portugal, a women's enterprise initiative, run by a partnership of local associations, craft groups and public agencies, has trained and supported local women to develop a range of projects: child care centres, an integrated rural tourism scheme and marketing outlets for local handicrafts.

### Integrated approach

While women-only initiatives can play a role, it is important that mainstream business support agencies ensure that their services are equally accessible to women and men. This may involve: training of business advisers to be aware of gender issues; training and promotion of female advisers; ensuring that the terms and conditions of financing or credit schemes do not discriminate against women; advertising training and support services in ways which encourage female as well as male participation...

*Making time for work: Kanturk's crèche*  
[Duhallow LEADER area, Ireland]



Employment or enterprise initiatives should not only respect and build on the existing roles and motivations of rural women, but should also offer improvements to their professional status. Many rural women in family businesses or farms have no recognised independent professional status, and little time for pursuing a conventional training course. A national open-learning training programme launched in France in 1991 provided the basis for the development of an innovative distance-learning training package, aimed at providing the female partners of fishermen and oyster producers in Finistère, Brittany, with the skills and professional status required to diversify and develop the family business. However, care should be taken that the businesses created do not add to women's isolation or burdens. Home-based teleworking, or the offer of bed and breakfast accommodation to tourists, may provide useful income, but can reinforce the isolation of rural women and the unequal share of domestic and family responsibilities.

### Daring to be different

New or non-traditional sectors also offer opportunities for rural women, not only as a source of jobs, but also to solve some of the problems of transport and care support in rural areas. In the Vogelsberg region of Hesse, Germany, a partnership project, involving public agencies and transport companies, has trained unemployed women in bus driving and created new bus routes in rural areas. One of the tasks now is to make the new routes profitable, through the development of transport services, such as distributing agricultural products to urban centres. A similar idea lay behind a training programme in Haute-Vienne in France aimed at enabling rural women to become bus drivers: the dual objective was to diversify the occupational choices for rural women and to highlight the mobility problems of those without personal transport.

On a farm in a remote area of Northern Ireland, a successful private business, Kinawley Integrated Teleworking Enterprise Ltd. (KITE), provides training and teleworking opportunities for fourteen local people, primarily women, as well as a crèche for their children. The enterprise was initiated by three women, and is currently managed by one of them. Surprisingly, KITE found it difficult to obtain start-up financing from development agencies. Its founders attribute this to a lack of vision by staff in the agencies they approached, who, used to more traditional initiatives, could not believe that such an innovative project for the region (teleworking and childcare) promoted by women could be a success. While many women may need to develop the confidence required to start a business, many development agencies must learn to be more confident about the ideas





*The "farmer's wife"  
often does the administration  
on the family farm.*

and capabilities of women. Because many ideas developed by rural women concern non-conventional activities and types of businesses, and often integrate a number of objectives (income-generation, employment, improvement of social life, environmental protection, maintenance of culture...) they may not be taken as seriously by development agencies, and may therefore not be given adequate support and funding.

## Strength in numbers

Projects may be initiated and developed by individual women, but often it is groups or networks of women that develop successful initiatives which benefit local communities. Networking is at the heart of the success of KVINNUM, a women's association in Jämtland, northern Sweden (see accompanying article). In addition to a committee and a working group, which bring together representatives from all the main public authorities, KVINNUM promotes "reference groups", each comprising 20 to 25 women from different backgrounds who are motivated to develop their communities or particular local services. With more than 60 reference groups in the county, KVINNUM has played a major role in facilitating the process of ideas generation and project development by and for women.

On the island of South Uist in Scotland, an informal network of women, started initially by a group of mothers who were organising a pre-school playgroup, has developed rapidly into a formal organisation. Called Cothrom, it provides training and employment opportunities - in textiles, tourism, culture and childcare - for women on the island. At the end of 1994, Cothrom had also become a centre of distance-working on behalf of a private enterprise, creating eighteen jobs for local women.

In Greece, the successful agritourism cooperatives, many of which are run by women, are also examples of the benefits of collective initiative and of group working.

## Participation in planning and decision-making

Development agencies can, however, do much more than promote projects by and for women in order to ensure that women's needs and interests are better

met. Bringing women into rural development also means ensuring participation in planning and decision-making, concerning development objectives, strategies and projects. Providing information to women about rural development and demonstrating that it is open to their ideas and their participation can be an important step. In the south of Portugal, the association IN LOCO (also a LEADER group) organised participative meetings with women from villages in the Serra do Caldeirão, at which the women explored their problems and identified possible solutions. In such meetings rural women can develop a solidarity through the sharing of problems, and create the motivation to take solutions forward.

It is also important that women take an equally active part as men in the formulation of policies and strategies by development agencies and authorities, and also that these agencies and authorities commit themselves to ensuring that their activities are equally accessible and beneficial to women and men. Training and promoting women development planners, and improving the representation of women and women's associations on committees and boards (through setting targets, or changing the timing, location and style of meetings...) would make a positive impact. In Ireland for example, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry has asked LEADER groups to ensure that their management boards comprise at least 40% women.

## Integrating equality

Systematic checking ("gender proofing") of policies, strategies and projects should be undertaken prior to their adoption or approval in order to verify that they will not discriminate against women, or will even make a positive contribution to greater equality between women and men.

This will require information about the situation, roles, needs and motivations of women and men in the region and a planning method which integrates this information.

Obtaining such information is one way of involving women and men in the development process, if participative analyses and appraisals are used as part of the information collection.

In Norway, a cooperative project between a number of government ministries, "Municipal Planning on Women's Terms", set out to establish participative planning processes and organisational structures in six municipalities to ensure that women and "the woman's perspective" are integrated into municipal planning and initiatives. Each municipality created a working group, of 7 or 8 women, whose role is to ensure that the interests and needs of women are taken into account in municipal policies, programmes and projects.

Methods and instruments for the identification, planning, monitoring and evaluation of projects which integrated gender differences and equality objectives are being developed by European organisations, although primarily in the context of their cooperation with third world countries. These could be used by rural development agencies to develop approaches adapted to a European context.

What is also required on the part of rural development agencies and authorities is a conscious commitment to ensuring equality of access and benefits between men and women. At European level, the integration of equal opportunities into all Structural Fund programmes has recently been made a priority. It is nonetheless necessary for these commitments to be translated into concrete objectives and indicators, and to be taken into account in the monitoring and evaluation of projects. Only then will it be possible to judge whether the policies and projects concerned bring the intended effects in terms of equality and the quality of life for women and men in rural areas.

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(1) "The Economic Role and Situation of Women in Rural Areas". Green Europe series. 1994. Official Publications Office of the European Communities, L-2985, Luxembourg. Published in 9 EU languages. A Supplement, covering the three new Member States, is currently being produced.



**Little by little, the application of the European Union's principle of equal opportunities for men and women has been extended. Its current ambition to incorporate this principle into all relevant EC policy areas is likely to affect many Europeans, especially women.**

The EC's policy of promoting equal opportunities was originally provided for in Article 119 of the Treaty of Rome, which establishes the principle of equal pay for men and women. In the spirit of Europe's "founding fathers", this principle aimed to eliminate unfair competition and to prevent "wage dumping" since women were obviously being paid far less than men.

Almost 40 years later, women are still being paid between 15-30% less than men, even before allowing for non-remunerated efforts. There is no doubt that the arrival en masse of women into the job market in the course of the last 20 years has led to a new situation, requiring new solutions from the European institutions.

#### **Equal opportunities - the letter of the law**

Article 119 has served as the legal basis for more socially-oriented policies. The European Communities have continued to build on the principle of equal pay and have extended the scope of its application by adopting, between 1975-1992, six Directives, based on numerous examples of jurisprudence delivered by the European Court of Justice, which make up European legislation in the area of equal opportunities. This legislation covers equal pay; equal treatment in access to employment, training, promotion and working conditions; equal treatment in social security; equal treatment for self-employed men and women; safety at work for pregnant women.

Transposed into the legislation of the twelve, and subsequently the fifteen Member States, these Directives have consolidated and developed the recognition of minimum rights and the elimination of sexual discrimination. Discrimination between the sexes, originating from an outdated approach to women's rights, is found ensconced in the twists and turns of the various codes, laws and regulations covering social and family relations as well as legislation in the areas of employment, social security, civil liberties, succession rights, etc., and legislation governing rural communities.

# Equal opportunities for men and women: an European ambition

by Marie Jouffe (\*)

## A Community action programme for equal opportunities: information and analysis

Though indispensable, this legislation has not brought about true equality, and so, in 1982 the European Commission launched its First Action Programme for equal opportunities for men and women. Today the Third Programme with the same objective has reached completion and the Fourth Programme was adopted by the Council of Ministers of the European Union in December 1995 for the period 1996-2000.

As a result of the three Action Programmes implemented at European level, a new awareness of the respective situations of men and women has emerged, especially in relation to employment and the working environment. This awareness is the result of research and studies undertaken by networks of experts, support for pilot projects and exchanges between Member States, in areas ranging from employment to education, through vocational training schemes (e.g. IRIS network), setting up businesses (e.g. ILE programme) as well as actions to raise awareness and circulate information on the role of women in society as a whole.

These actions confirm, for instance, that on the job market, the overall situation of women continues to be less favourable than that of men: higher female unemployment rate, lower pay, greater family responsibilities, less training or less recognition of similar qualifications. Action in this area has also highlighted the role of women in society and the extent to which they care for dependent relatives – children or elderly family members. During the last five years, studies, actions and pilot projects have all focused on the specific needs of women in rural areas, notably in connection with the ESF programme NOW (New Opportunities for Women), which concentrated on equal opportunities.

This action has resulted in the identification of a number of factors which are an obstacle to equal opportunities. Taking these as a starting point, the European Commission's White Paper on Social Policy outlines the following three areas as priorities for further action to promote equal opportunities:

- > to eliminate existing segregation on the job market and to promote women's work;
  - > to reconcile women's working and family lives;
  - > to increase the role of women in decision-making.
- These three priorities will be emphasised under the Fourth Action Programme to be implemented in the period 1996-2000.

## Integrating equal opportunities: new approach for the future

In contrast to previous programmes, which focused on specific actions catering for specific groups of women, the Fourth Programme will adopt a new approach, by aiming to integrate equal opportunities into all relevant policy areas.

This new approach will involve integrating the principle of equal opportunities into all arrangements, procedures, and policies drawn up in other areas: which will obviously encompass social policy, but also areas such as the environment, transport, business, regional policy and rural development.

Evidence of this new approach is already visible at the highest level of the Commission, in the formation of a Group of Commissioners to deal with equal opportunities. In this respect, it is not insignificant that for the first time in European history, five women were appointed as Members of the European Commission in 1995. This group has already submitted a Communication to the Commission, to incorporate equal opportunities for men and women into all the Community's policies and actions (1) – which was adopted on 21 February last.

In the context of this approach favouring integration across the board, assistance will not be limited to the awarding of funds for equal opportunity policies. According to the existing legislation, this policy will also receive support from the Structural Funds and those programmes which qualify under the Structural Funds should aim to integrate the principle of equal opportunities.

One such programme is LEADER. But the evaluation of how the principle of equal opportunities has been applied in local action groups will not be limited to headcounts of women participants in training schemes or recipients of self-employment grants. Rather, the objective is more ambitious, concerns overall structures and includes actions which will have an impact, in the medium and long-term, on involving everyone in community development. In short, this involves ensuring progressive attitudes to the roles of both sexes in society. This will be a crucial factor in rural development programmes which aim to sustain local populations in rural areas.

(\*) A lawyer specialising in social affairs, Marie Jouffe worked at the European Commission as an expert during the implementation of the Third Community Action Programme for Equal Opportunities for Men and Women (1991-1995), where she was particularly involved in the reform of the Structural Funds and opened the file on women in rural areas.

(1) COM (96) 67 final



# Women and rural development the e

Since its objective is to promote *integrated* development involving the *whole local community*, LEADER does not formally target specific groups, as do certain other Community Initiatives, (e.g. the EMPLOYMENT-Human Resources Initiative). On the other hand, while women are not specifically targeted in LEADER measures, a number of projects do concern them directly. LEADER I is proof of this.



# Development: Experience of LEADER I

**Based on local initiative** and mindful of the diversity of social and cultural environments in which LEADER actions are carried out, at European level there is no official reference to equal opportunities between men and women in the LEADER programme. This is perhaps regrettable: when it comes to the social roles accorded to both sexes, rural areas are rather conservative and it must be said that women are often very much in the minority when it comes to representation

on boards of management of local action groups (the recent initiative in Ireland, requesting minimum female participation of 40% on boards of management is, however, a notable exception.)

All the same, women are to be found active and in large numbers during all the implementation stages of LEADER: local area analyses undertaken in many LEADER areas, village appraisals in Britain, "village renovation" schemes in Germany, etc. have, in particular, involved women, who are very active at grass-roots level, whether as development officers or project promoters.

In fact, the importance of the role of women in LEADER is evident in the following respects:

- > demographically, women often outnumber men in LEADER areas. This is particularly true in southern Europe – Greece, Spain, Portugal and the Mezzogiorno – where the population drain and emigration of men has been considerable;
- > faced with limited opportunities or keen to have their own source of income, women have ventured into new areas which are often innovative;
- > their role is often crucial in the rural tourism sector, which receives large-scale support under LEADER. We know, for instance, that agri-tourism, based on a willingness to open up to the outside world, as well as a desire for an additional source of income, is usually organised by women;
- > LEADER measures - "exploiting local farm produce"; "support for SMEs and the crafts' sector" - affect a number of women farmers, farmers' wives, with more than one job or who do craft work.
- > combined with other programmes - e.g. NOW - LEADER actions incorporating training and integration affect, in particular, women who want to set up their own business, go back to work, etc.;
- > the creation of telecentres and other facilities, linked to new information technologies promote teleworking, which can lead to new career opportunities, especially for women.

The following examples present some LEADER I actions which have directly concerned women.



*Training local  
development  
"animators"*  
[Serra do Caldeirão,  
Portugal]



Ready-made dishes business [Inishowen, Ireland]

## Services for women

The isolation and the lack of available services makes a major difference to the quality of life of women living in rural areas. Certain local groups have acted to rectify this situation: in Ireland, the **Duhallow** group has assisted the setting up of a centre catering for women in the local area. In addition to providing health services, a crèche and training activities, the centre also serves as a meeting place for women enabling them to have contact with other people and increasing their independence.

The fact that the responsibility of looking after the children generally falls to women is a further obstacle that prevents women from working outside the home. This problem is even more acute in rural areas, where crèches and child care facilities are rarely, or possibly never, found in the vicinity.

In the United Kingdom, the **South Gwynedd** group (Wales) has set up a network of child care centres for a modest fee, in order to facilitate women who wish to return to work.

In Portugal, the **Ribatejo Centro** group (Lisbon and the Tagus Valley) has provided training for women to organise care facilities and activities for children aged 6-12. Ten jobs have been created in these care centres which are attached to schools, giving mothers more freedom to work.

## Back to work

One of the first actions of the **Antur Teifi** group (Wales) involved setting up different types of training for women who wanted to go back to work. In connection with LEADER II, the local action group has provided funding for 3 series of educational radio programmes for women. Equal opportunities, self-confidence, integration

into the job market, and involvement in community life, are just some of the messages carried by the programmes that have been broadcasted on the air since October 1995.

The **Argyll & the Islands** group (Scotland) has provided funding to equip a mobile unit that gives women everywhere in the area the opportunity to take cookery classes, catering especially for women who want to go back to work.

## Actions for women farmers; new sources of income

LEADER actions which assist the diversification of farming and carrying out multiple jobs involve a high proportion of women living in rural areas.

The **Lot-et-Garonne** group (Aquitaine, France) works in partnership with the Plurielles association, which was set up by women, and which actively supports women farmers who are looking for new sources of income in connection with family-run farms or would like to take up employment outside the farm.

In Ireland the **Barrow, Nore, Suir** group has provided funding for courses, catering mainly for women farmers, which are intended to lead to commercially viable activities, based on local needs and skills (including traditional lace, organic vegetables, etc.).

The **Serras de Montemuro, Arada e Gralheira** group (Central Portugal) has run training courses in the areas of farm production, beekeeping, aquaculture, and organic farming, specifically for women. The group has also organised courses on traditional techniques in the manufacture of linen. Following this training, five of the participants set up their own business. A gourmet cookery course also enabled ten young women to branch out on their own.



## Setting up and running businesses

In the United Kingdom, the **Galloway** group (Scotland) has designed an advice and assistance programme, which caters in particular for women: "Homebase" turns informal activities into small businesses and cooperatives. Participants are mainly given instruction in how to draw up a business plan. The programme also consists of personal development workshops (building self-confidence, group interaction, etc.). Two cooperatives - one specialising in vegetarian food, the other in the manufacture of chocolate, are now up and running, while 6 of the training course participants are now self-employed in trades such as hosiery and tourism.

An association in the **Raia Centro-Sul** area (Central Portugal) is organising a course in traditional embroidery. There will be 25 participants on each training course. The objective is to encourage 'home working' and the creation of small production units. This LEADER group has also been involved in the provision of a marketing service for craftspeople and other self-employed workers in the area.

In Italy, the **Basilicata Sud-Occidentale** group (Basilicata) supports the local area's traditional crafts: ceramics, basketwork, etc. It has, in particular, contributed to the re-establishment and reopening of 12 shops selling craft products. Women are the main beneficiaries in this initiative.

In Spain, the **Navarra** group (Navarra) has partially funded the modernisation of a women's cooperative specialising in hosiery. The group is also funding training in tapestry (300 hours) for women who are relatively unqualified. Courses in business management complement this training, which sets out to promote self-employment.

The Campo de **Calatrava** group (Castille-La Mancha) has supported the setting-up of a cooperative to manufacture and market bobbin lace (Encajes de bolillos). This venture which aims, in particular, to provide employment for women aged over 45 and under 25, has already created 6 jobs.



St-George's Cooperative [Koani, Greece]

**Alcarria Conquense**, another LEADER group in Castille-La Mancha, has assisted the setting-up of a crafts-women's association.

Women's cooperatives are both numerous and very active in Greek rural areas: the **Chalkidiki** group (Central Macedonia) has supported the setting-up of a weavers' cooperative. LEADER has also assisted all the stages of placing products on the market by funding the setting up of a point of sale, publishing promotional brochures and the cooperative's attendance at different fairs and trade exhibitions.

In St-George, a village of the **Kozani** LEADER area (Western Macedonia), 17 women joined forces to set up a cooperative producing two highly-appreciated regional specialities, but still not readily available on the Greek market: the "pitoura" (a variety of pasta) and the "trachana" (a variety of semolina). The LEADER group has helped construct the premises and purchase the necessary equipment. Furthermore, the group has also set up a centre for advice and technical assistance for companies and women's cooperatives.

In the Meteores region, the **Kalabaka-Pyli** group (Thessaly) has assisted the setting-up of a women's cooperative specialised in packaging and marketing medicinal plants, grown in the mountains.

Staying in Thessaly, the **Elassona** group has assisted craftspeople who make folkloric costumes and "kilims" (highly-renowned woven carpets). The LEADER action has led to the modernisation of this traditional craft and has assisted the marketing of products.

The **Evros** group (Eastern Macedonia) has participated in setting up a "Centre for Crafts and Home Working". Run by a women's cooperative, this aims to encourage local craft production and ongoing training of women in the area. <



Carpentry training  
[Sierra Sur de Sevilla, Spain]



Women in rural Norte (Portugal)

# Lagging behind, assistance needed

**Jobs are scarce in rural areas in Portugal. Particularly so for women who are ill- equipped on a job market offering few opportunities. For women who have not emigrated, in addition to jobs in tourism, employment in the traditionally female domains such as crafts, farm produce, is often the only way of taking part in the formal economy. Provided, that is, if they succeed in overcoming the considerable cultural and structural obstacles. A look at the situation of women in three LEADER areas in Norte: Alto Cávado, Alto Tâmega and Basto.**

***"You have no idea* of the influence of the Brazilian TV soaps!" says Teresa Lima, the financial director of ADRAT, the local action group in Alto Tâmega (northern Portugal). Teresa would not be the first to astound a visitor to the area with such a comment: the syrupy soap operas that Portuguese TV started to churn out ten or so years ago *"have, believe it or not, brought modern influence to the most backward villages"*, confirms Francisco Botelho, formerly in charge of a LAG and a development adviser in Ribeira de Pena, one of the four "municipalities" in the Basto LEADER area. The similarity of these remarks demonstrates that Portuguese women have come a long way: the inward-looking attitude that dominated Portugal for so long, its development lag, particularly evident in the inland area, the paternalistic attitude of the dictatorship years have all left the fair sex lagging behind. The recent influx of consumer society values, brought to the area by TV and returned emigrants, has created needs requiring a sudden demand for money in a rural economy unable to respond, and all the frustration that this causes. *"In one way, it is not the 'traditional' rural woman, who has most***

cause to complain", Teresa explains, "she has never known anything else... It is most difficult for women living in town centres, such as here in Montalegre: since these women are more educated, they want to be free and try to find salaried jobs, which are thin on the ground around here. As for girls who would like to go on to further study, money is often a problem. I am also an economics teacher and I see a lot of girls with potential, but who cannot afford to continue their education."

### Emigration

At first sight, the countryside of Norte seems highly populated: houses are scattered all over the hillsides and valleys and it is hard to know where villages begin and end. One notices quickly though that a large proportion of the buildings are boarded up or under construction: these big modern houses belong to the tens of thousands of emigrants who have left their homeland to work in France, Germany, the Benelux countries or Switzerland, but who dream of returning home one day to retire. The population density in LEADER areas is therefore relatively low (Alto Tâmega: 30 inhabs./km<sup>2</sup>) or at best, average (Alto Cávado: 96 inhabs./km<sup>2</sup>; Bas-to: 83 inhabs./km<sup>2</sup>), but nowhere is it known what this would be if all the emigrants returned home for good. Emigration has taken its toll on the rural areas of Minho and Trás-Os-Montes. "Emigration is a last refuge for men, and a road to freedom for women, but is undoubtedly also the cause of many social problems." According to Teresa Lima, emigration has destabilised this rural society, beginning with family relationships: "very often, as soon as emigrant children reach the compulsory school age, they are sent back to their grandmothers in the native village. But having already experienced the consumer society in northern countries, these children have needs for which a subsistence economy such as that found in rural Portugal cannot cater."



Promoting the local crafts sector: fashion show, funded by the **Alto Tâmega** group

### Self-employment

In the midst of the major transformation which rural Portugal has undergone in the last 10 or 15 years, women appear ill-equipped to "earn their living" and to become part of the official economy: poorly-qualified, their chances of finding a salaried job are low, given the lack of opportunity on the local job market. Self-employment is therefore almost always their only option and the crafts sector (notably the textile trade in this part of the country) is the area which seems to have the most to offer: by giving a professional dimension to the traditional activities carried out by rural women, by setting up a viable crafts sector, the local development agencies, supported by the Portuguese government (Committee for Conditions for Women, Institute for Crafts Employment, etc.) and the European Union (including the NOW, ILE and LEADER programmes), intend to fully exploit this important source of employment for women. L'Aliança Artesanal de Vila Verde, in Alto Cávado, is a cooperative involving around 80 craftworkers. The origins of this organisation date



back to 1948, when at the time, the “Women’s Work for National Education”, an institution during the Salazar régime encouraged women to do craftwork in the home. *“In a way, this inherited association with former times turned out to be an obstacle to setting up our cooperative in 1988”*, recalls the Director, Maria da Conceição Pinheiro. *“Confined to their household and family chores, women have been isolated for a long time now; and have thus become individualistic. Motivated by their wish to spend more money as well as by governmental incentives, they were slow to enter the spirit of cooperation. Now the income generated by the cooperative has brought with it a feeling of confidence and solidarity. Training in the area of design and promotions that we organised under LEADER have also largely contributed to a spirit of solidarity that did not exist before.”*

The cooperative therefore succeeded in overcoming an important obstacle, since, as Teresa Lima points out, *“as soon as an activity becomes profitable, it is taken up by many women and the local market becomes saturated very quickly. It is then necessary to market the craft activities outside the local area. This requires forming an association, which is very difficult given the lack of training and the individualistic outlook of the women in question.”*

Along with the lack of solidarity, there is also a lack of initiative and entrepreneurship. Here again, according to Teresa Lima, *“the root of the problem is cultural: those who did not emigrate tend to be resigned. There is always the old fatalistic attitude of ‘as long as there’s enough to eat, we will be alright’, which, interestingly, is voiced more often by men than women.”*

This analysis of the situation, which was confirmed by several of the interviewees, is contradicted by the

experience of Maria de Freitas Soares: this dynamic seventy-year-old, treasurer of the Social Centre of Covide, managed to enlist the support of the entire village in order to construct, during 1990-1994, a complex of four buildings housing a multi-services centre, a training workshop and a sales point for local craftspeople. The same individual used her own funds to set up a foundation for local development – Calcedónia – which is currently making preparations to provide Covide with a crèche, a communal oven for baking bread and a catering service. *“Setting up a foundation is not very common in Portugal”*, the leaders of the Alto Cávado LAG point out. This LAG has assisted several training schemes and has provided funding for equipment: *“there is no doubt that what is happening in Covide is rather exceptional and owes a lot to the charisma of this remarkable woman.”*

## Private

That is why here development agencies count a great deal on the few local women entrepreneurs and do not hesitate to support private initiatives: *“I have seen too many collective ventures fail due to commercial problems”*, explains Francisco Botelho. *“Demand for a product is a basic criteria that we look for when deciding which projects to finance.”*

According to Francisco, this justifies the assistance provided by the Basto LEADER group to the Casa do Campo, an aristocratic residence, with internationally-renowned 19th century gardens. For ten years now, Armada Meirelles and her daughter Gabriela have offered “Turismo de habitação” (top-quality accommodation in a manor house) and also provide training in embroidery and the art of filigree for women in the local area. LEADER part-financed the conversion of an old outhouse into a shop for the top-of-the-range products, made to order by the local craftspeople. Gabriela Meirelles also markets these herself in Porto and in Brazil. *“LEADER has brought new life to this area”*, says Alfredo Coelho, development officer. *“The Casa de Campo is an example of a profitable activity which prompted an awareness in this part of the areas. It directly provides employment for 10 people and gives work to around ten craftworkers.”*

The ADRAT agency supports Modabarr, a craft enterprise engaged in the manufacture of clothes, which managed to combine tradition and modern-day style: *“though this*



The Social and Crafts Centre in Covide  
[Alto Cávado]



Craft cooperative supported by LEADER

is a private venture, it has already triggered several collective initiatives", says Fernando Montalvão Machado, ADRAT's director. "Upstream, it has enabled the reintroduction of a traditional craft that could have disappeared forever - the spinning of wool. Thanks to the craft enterprise, it has provided 5 full-time jobs; and more generally, it has upgraded the status of local crafts and serves as an example to all the other women that it is possible to adapt traditional products to present-day tastes". Fashion shows, funded by LEADER, have inspired other craftspeople and attracted the attention of a major distribution chain. The purchase of computer equipment has also enabled the modernisation of business management and the manufacture of dress patterns, designed by Agnès Ellouz, a Parisian who has lived in the region for some years now.

The textile sector is not the only craft activity to receive funding under LEADER: the small agri-food businesses also receive assistance. Basto has provided 50% of the necessary funds to modernise a craft confectionery business, owned by two women. ADRAT has provided funding amounting to ECU 15 000 for the purchase of the necessary equipment for the purposes of expanding the Artefumo company, which employs 4 people and which manufactures smoked ham, the speciality of the Chaves region. The owner, Antónia Gonçalves, remarked in passing that she had to get a man to negotiate the purchase of the land: "I didn't have any credibility and I am still wondering if this is because I am young or because I am a woman."

Of course, the other sector generating employment or an additional source of income for women is tourism. In Alto Cávado, for instance, LEADER and the ATAHCA agency have encouraged rural tourism in 11 picturesque villages by providing up to 65% of the funding to restore façades and to build sixty tourist apartments, most often run by women farmers.

So is the involvement of women taken into account when selecting which projects to assist?

"We don't give women special treatment, replies Francisco Botelho, we support families: rural Portugal is characterised by economic, social and cultural conditions that are not comparable to those found in countries to which the Portuguese traditionally emigrate. It must, however, be said that it is being recognised that women who have emigrated, have a major influence on local initiative. The situation of women in rural areas has undoubtedly improved, even if there is still a long way to go..." <

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## Jämtland [Sweden]



Like in the "good old days":  
tourist activities organised  
by the Åtigårn cooperative

# Where Women take the initiative

**In the vast province of Jämtland (North Central Sweden), women are often the driving force behind development initiatives.**

**In this especially sparsely** populated region (2.7 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>), some 300 groups, cooperatives, networks, etc. mainly run by women are active in all kinds of economic, social, and cultural activities bringing vitality and an outstanding quality of life to this rural, widely-dispersed part of Sweden.

*"I think that history can partly explain our relative ease in rallying the women", says Margaretha Lindbäck-Hansson: "In Jämtland, there has always been a tradition of resistance dating back to the days of the pioneers, an egalitarian tradition (the feudal system never existed here) as well as a tradition of independent women, used to 'holding the fort' while the men went to work faraway in the forest."*

Margaretha is in charge of a co-operative of 13 women, who, since 1995, have been engaged in restoring and running a 19th century farm. This old farmhouse has been renovated and today serves visitors meals or a cup of coffee, and can even offer accommodation (in its first year of business, 50 people stayed at the farmhouse). Nothing out of the ordinary, except that the

hostesses, dressed like peasants from the last century, cook in the open hearth and that the farmhouse's very nature means that visitors who stop over have to live exactly like in the last century: spartan conditions of times past (no running water or electricity), helping with the animals, the option of travelling to the farmhouse by horse and cart, etc.

*"We are taking on more members now to help share out the work", explains Margaretha. But won't that also mean sharing out the earnings among a lot of people? "Yes, but money is not our priority", she replies, "what matters, is the life that our project brings to the village. Our long-term goal is to set up similar attractions around Storsjön, the "Big Lake", the geographical and historical heart of Jämtland."*

Almost everywhere, women have been the initiators behind such ventures. The scenario is often the same: Stage 1 – (at the end of the 1980s), the national campaign Hela Sverige ska leva ("All Sweden shall live") promoting the revitalisation of the countryside and where the involvement of women was strong. Stage 2 – informal women's "networks" formed in the villages (there are currently 50 in Jämtland) which lead to discussions, needs' analysis, identification of projects; Stage 3 - creating a legal entity, often by setting up a "co-operative" (in Sweden, requirements for co-operatives are simple: in general, the law only requires statutes and the involvement of at least three



members).

This was the course followed by Agendum for example: *"We started off very basically as a women's network in 1990",* says Ann-Margreth Göransson, one of the project leaders and previously a local elected representative, who was disillusioned with "traditional" politics. *"In a region that is rather conservative when it comes to male/female roles, the initial goal was to rally the women to organise social and cultural meetings and events with the objectives of increasing the visibility of their actions, defending women's interests, and increase female representation in decision-making, especially at local and regional level. Later, we took the route of new technology and set up a telematics network, which is now linked to other women's networks in Europe. Agendum, set up in 1995, serves as the legal entity for coordinating all these activities."*

One concrete example of the cooperatives achievements is the purchase, with the assistance of the Swedish government and the municipality (\*) of Berg, of 20 computers which make up two mobile "computer units", transported every 10 weeks to a different village, making it easier to introduce computers to people in their own area and catering for everything "from word-processing to the Internet". Since 1994, this service has given around 500 people (mainly women) and most of the villages in the municipality the opportunity to benefit from computer training.

Klövsjö

Klövsjö (480 inhabitants) stakes a claim as the "most beautiful village in Sweden". The location can only be described as breathtaking: the lake forms a vast bay, traditional houses huddle around a small red and white church...

For several years now, the local population has been pursuing an ambitious initiative to revitalise the village and to improve the environment. This is a local women's initiative. It all began in 1986: the lack of childminding facilities for their children motivated five women to set up a crèche/nursery school. In 1988, they founded a co-operative and with the assistance of the municipality, they did up a large house enabling them to cater for 11 families. These women took it in turns to ensure that things ran smoothly and looked after the upkeep of the premises. 5 employees (1 full-time; 4 part-time) look after the daily running of the organisation. *"There is something in this system for everyone",* comments Lena Dahl, one of the founding members of the co-operative which now has 20 members: *"something for the State and the municipality, since it saves them money, something for the parents since they have a good childminding service, something for the children who play in a particularly favourable setting..."*

The success of the project really sparked off a collective spirit in the village: in February 1990, around the time of the "Jämtland Women's Week" – an event held every year –, the women of Klövsjö were trying to think of an action that they could undertake. *"As usual, it all began with a threat"* says one of the women, Ingalis Sjöberg-Bromée. *"The lake is very important to the village and when it was discovered that it was being considerably*

*polluted by water containing phosphates, we decided to do something about it and so, convinced the village women not to use detergents containing phosphates. The shop stopped selling these. Six months later, the level of phosphates in the lake had halved. This directly visible result encouraged everyone to keep up their efforts, so much so that their initiative attracted the attention of the national media. Now we are looking at how best to dispose of all waste water."*

Environmentally-friendly toilets were installed in several public buildings in the village. Here, waste is turned into compost and used as fertiliser. A project was proposed in the framework of funds reserved under Objective 6 (assistance to regions in northern countries with low population density): 12 machines were purchased and made available free of charge to interested households. Research on the environmental impact of the action, as well as a study aimed at making all the equipment used collectively in the village "environmentally-friendly" were carried out. In the meantime, several women turned to the manufacture of organic beauty products. Klövsjö's small supermarket now sells these, along with many other "green" products, and village's environmental awareness has been matched elsewhere in Sweden: *"as far away as Stockholm",* says Lena Dahl, *"where I was asked how we achieved what we did. To this, I answered - it all depends on your problem - ... Whatever it is that motivates you. For us it's the lake..."*

The "Villagers"

Around fifty kilometres north of Östersund, the town centre of the province and the only big town in Jämtland, a little way off the road that leads to Lapland, there are three villages – Högarna, Fagarland and Ollsta – with a combined population of 130 inhabitants. In the mid 1980s, this area's future looked pretty bleak: the gravel path was in a sorry state, the bus route, the shop and especially the school were threatened by closure. In 1985, the local people reacted by creating a discussion group which lead to an analysis of the situation and resulted in the definition of a strategy: *"The general idea was a realisation of the need to improve*



Serving local development: the Agendum cooperative



Building  
the Byssbon  
old-folk's home

services and to promote hospitality so as to attract new families to the villages", explains Britt-Inger Sundin, one of the leaders of the initiative.

The group rolled up their sleeves and got to work on two new projects, creating an ice-skating rink and converting the old communal school into a multi-services centre. The work was entirely carried out by volunteers and funded by organising events and raffles. "Here, the women will give anything a go! They started the work, but the men got involved soon afterwards..." Britt-Inger hastens to add.

The group set up a "village co-operative" called Byssbon (which means 'The Villagers' in Swedish), on the basis of one vote per member. The co-operative has 50 members. Thanks to a loan guarantee made available by the municipality, the co-operative was able to borrow ECU 340 000 to build three one-family houses, in keeping with the area's traditional architectural style. An advertisement was published in the national press and three families were selected to move into the houses (renting with an option to purchase). At the same time, a communal oven for making bread and leisure facilities (here too, there was a lake nearby) added a friendly touch to the atmosphere. Repairs were carried out on the road and the public lighting was improved in 1992. The following year, Byssbon undertook its most ambitious project from a financial perspective: a care centre for the elderly was built (9 apartments), made possible through a loan of ECU 612 000 guaranteed by the municipality. "The idea of this was to enable the elderly to stay in the local area, while at the same time vacating their houses for newcomers," explains Leif Ahlin, one of the co-operative leaders. This strategy would appear to have worked, since in the last three years, 7 new families (and their 11 children) have moved into the area, justifying the opening of a crèche in 1995 and the recent reopening of a shop. "It turned out that it was the shop that caused us the most bother" says Leif: "it was closed down several times down through the years. But 27 February 1996 was a big day for us here: the shop opened its doors for the first time in two years, for good, I hope!". An interest-free loan from the local population enabled a member of the Byssbon co-operative to take over the shop.

## Tuned in

According to Lennart Nilsson, the treasurer of the local co-operative, the total cost of doing up the villages will amount to around ECU 1.1 million, "not including the thousands of hours of voluntary work..." he hastens to add. Not only have the villages been revitalised, better still, they are tuned into the rest of the world since Byssbon has been active in the area of computers and telematics for many years now.

90 inhabitants (almost 70% of the total population!) have participated in a computer course. Around twelve of them have bought their own computers. 8 of these use computers at work. Byssbon was officially recognised as a telecentre within the Rural Telematics Network set up in Sweden, and 4 jobs have been created as a result. The co-operative is involved in teleworking by setting up and managing databases for different private companies. It is also in charge of the data base for the "Council of Local Initiatives" which brings together some 2 500 groups involved in rural development initiatives. It is no surprise therefore that Byssbon currently has been entrusted with the task of setting up a data base for Jämtland's Carrefour, a rural information centre supported by the European Commission. Residential training courses in computers are also organised on a regular basis.

## Transferability?

The impressive success of this action naturally raises the question of its transferability to other "fragile" rural areas, a question which is not easy to answer, since in addition to the strong will of the local people, which enabled them to reverse a negative trend as well as to gain a strong foothold in the "information society", the Byssbon experience emerges in a favourable setting, which is not always the case in rural areas: a still steadfast pioneer spirit, in a highly developed country, solidarity networks that are active and well-organised, a "citizens" society enjoying strong support from the public authorities who seem to be particularly in tune with the needs of the local people, especially local women. Leif Ahlin also offers his personal explanation: "You know, I think that a big part of our success can be put down to the level of education of the local people - this is relatively high in the village and that made things easier." <

(\*) In Sweden, a "Municipality" ("Kommun") is the smallest administrative entity. Run by elected representatives, it is responsible for several key sectors, such as social security, primary and secondary education, zoning, assistance to companies, culture, etc. A municipality is always made up of several villages and often spans a very large area: in the province of Jämtland, for instance, there are only 8 municipalities.

**Land area:** 50 000 km<sup>2</sup> (12% of Swedish territory)  
**Population:** 136 000 inhabitants (1.5% of the Swedish population)  
**Demographic trends:** 1950-1975: -15% • 1975-1994: + 2%  
**Employment:** Agriculture/forestry: 5% • Industry: 14%  
**Public sector:** 41% • Tourism: 10% • Other services: 30%

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## The European Network for Rural Development

A major element of the LEADER Community Initiative is that it enables rural areas to exchange experiences and transfer know-how via the **"European Network for Rural Development"**. This network has three characteristics:

- > it is an open network, in which everyone who is directly involved in LEADER II may participate ("local action groups" (LAGs) and other collective bodies, authorities and institutions in charge of implementing the Initiative) as well as all those who are concerned about the future of rural Europe;
- > the network is enriched by the diversity of its members and the specific features of each European Union Member State;
- > rural actors feed the network with information about innovative actions "on the ground".

It is coordinated by the **"LEADER European Observatory"** whose role is to gather, analyse and disseminate innovative actions of integrated development and to promote the exchange of experience and know-how in rural areas.

The **Directorate-General for Agriculture (DG VI)** supervises the Observatory's activities, and following a call for tenders, has entrusted its coordination to the **European Association for Local Development (AEIDL)**.

The AEIDL's main tasks include: the dissemination of information by producing various publications (notably LEADER Magazine); setting up databases, organising seminars and colloquiums; providing technical assistance for transnational cooperation projects between LEADER groups.

Six specialist organisations in different EU Member States assist the AEIDL to carry out these various activities. These are: **Arkleton Trust** (United Kingdom), **Futour** (Germany), **INDE** (Portugal), **Iniciativas Económicas y Ambientales** (Spain), **ÖAR-Regionalberatung** (Austria) and **Telide** (France).

Each organisation is responsible for a particular theme ("Future Prospects", "Rural Development Methodologies", "New products/New Services", "Environment", "Tourism", "Local Products") and organises seminars and conferences as well as producing publications and analysing innovative actions, with the support of experts specialised in these fields.

Some Member States have also decided to set up **national LEADER networks** which are expected to become operational during 1996.

## LEADER publications

### Technical dossiers

In order to inform the LEADER II local action groups about the lessons learnt under LEADER I, the LEADER European Observatory has published three documents, consisting of revisions and additions to certain "LEADER Dossiers" published between 1993 and 1995:

- > **"Launching and Managing Implementing a Local Development Project: the Experience of LEADER I"** is a compilation of 4 Dossiers, each of which describes the main stages of project management; involving the local population, local area analysis, managing the project, analysis of its impact;
- > **"Exploiting Local Agricultural Resources: the Experience of LEADER I"** describes the various stages involved in commercially exploiting local farm produce via quality. The document also deals with attendance at exhibitions and trade fairs;

- > **"Marketing Quality Rural Tourism: the Experience of LEADER I"** analyses a strategy which could be used to develop discovery tourism, based on a community's natural heritage and culture, and which is environmentally-friendly: this looks at product development, quality of services, dealing with tour operators, etc.

### Methodology Guide

A **"Methodology Guide for the Analysis of Innovative Actions"** is also available. Presented in pocket folder form to facilitate the use of the sheets that come with it, the document was originally intended as a work tool for LAGs and can assist them in selecting, implementing and analysing innovative actions in the framework of the LEADER programme.

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## "Rural Europe": LEADER publications on the Internet

**"Rural Europe"**, the on-line information service of the European Rural Development Network, can now be accessed via the World Wide Web, at the following site address: [http:// www.rural-europe.aeidl.be](http://www.rural-europe.aeidl.be)

Here you can find most of the publications produced by the LEADER European Observatory (LEADER Magazine, INFO-LEADER, technical dossiers, etc.); the programme of activities; as well as the data bases currently being compiled ("Innovative Actions in Rural development", "National and regional LEADER Programmes", "Community actions in favour of rural development", etc.).

The information will be available initially in English and French, and will gradually be made available in German, Spanish, Italian and Portuguese.

For everyone with an interest in rural development, the "Rural Europe" site on the Internet offers an ever-increasing number of possibilities of working on-line including: participating in forums, sending and receiving messages, consulting documents, etc.



**Name:** LEADER

("Links between Actions for the Development of the Rural Economy")

**Programme type:** Community Initiative

**Target areas:** Objective 1 regions (development lag), Objective 5b areas (fragile rural areas) and Objective 6 areas (very low population density) of the European Union. However, up to 10% of the allocations in Objective 5b areas can be granted to non-eligible contiguous areas.

**Objectives:** to provide continuity with LEADER I (1991-1994), LEADER II is intended to:

- > encourage model local rural development initiatives;
- > support innovative, demonstrative and transferable measures which illustrate the new directions that rural development can take;
- > increase exchanges of experiences and transfers of know-how;
- > support transnational development projects proposed by those active at local level in rural areas and which express their solidarity.

**Beneficiaries:** LEADER II can assist two categories of final beneficiaries:

- > principally, "Local Action Groups", i.e. a combination of public and private partners jointly devising a strategy and innovative measures for the development of a rural area, on the scale of a local community (less than 100 000 inhabitants);
- > other rural collective bodies, public or private, (for example, chambers of agriculture, industry, commerce or crafts, cooperatives, business groups, local authorities, non-profit-making organisations), provided that their more specific activities relate to a plan for the rural development of a local area.

**Types of measures:** acquisition of skills in rural development, rural innovation programmes (vocational training, rural tourism, support for small firms, increasing commercial value locally and the marketing of agricultural, forestry and fisheries products; improvement of the environment and living conditions, etc.), transnational cooperation.

The various elements of LEADER II are organised around a "European Rural Development Network", permitting wide dissemination (through seminars, meetings and publications) of innovative measures implemented for the benefit of rural areas and fostering transnational cooperation. The network is coordinated by the "LEADER European Observatory".

**Duration of the programme:** 6 years (1994-1999)

**EU funding:** around 1 500 million ECU, of which over 900 million ECU are for Objective 1 regions, financed by the three Structural Funds.



**LEADER  
European Observatory**



**European Commission  
DG VI Agriculture**

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