



POEDA: AN EXAMPLE OF ASSOCIATION FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN SPAIN

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study is to investigate the experience and achievements of Spanish for rural development through the case study of POEDA in order to provide the opportunity for delivering the good practices in other regions and countries. The association provides a core of unity, convergence and representation of all the public and private entities, social partners and individuals who work and are interested in the endogenous development of the region, through the diversification of rural economies, the contention of rural exodus and depopulation, and the improvement of the incomes and quality of life of inhabitants. Around these target objectives, POEDA frames its general activity around three projects: an international rural-urban cooperation project; the PRODERCAL program for local development; the LEADERCAL initiative for rural advancement.

Key words: rural development, program, advancement, associations, POEDA

MAIN OBJECTIVES AND FOCUS AREA OF POEDA

POEDA (Spanish abbreviation of Páramo-Orbigo-Esla Associate Development) is a Spanish partnership composed by different local agents (e.g., municipalities, associations, business schools, developers, unions, etc.) and devoted to the social and economic development of 53 rural councils of the regions Páramo, Órbigo and Esla, in the south of the province of León

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From this focus, POEDA offers an “associate

development” program for the expansion of the added value generated by local agriculture as motor of development, from three angles: i) agricultural production, transformation and commercialization; ii) tourism and diversification of rural economic activities; and iii) human capital formation and qualification, patrimony, environment, and community services.

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- an international rural-urban cooperation project;
- the PRODERCAL program for local development; and
- the LEADERCAL initiative for rural advancement

PRODERCAL program for local development

PRODERCAL (Rural Development Program of Castilla y León) is a program for development and economic diversification in rural areas cofinanced by the European Union with EAGGF (European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund) and ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) funds, the government of the Spanish territory of Castilla y León, and the national Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. It is embedded within a more general initiative devoted to boost regional endogenous and sustainable development in Castilla y León .

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Within this project, POEDA aid mainly focus on four axes, namely:

- Axis I. Production, processing and marketing in the agricultural and food industry.
- Axis II. Tourism and diversification of activities in rural areas.
- Axis III. Training and qualification of human capital.

- Axis IV: Heritage, environment and community services.

Table 1 summarizes the key actions linked to each of these four axes, all of them oriented to the improvement of the economic rural environment and the creation of employment.

Table 1. Key areas of the PRODERCAL Program

<p>PRODUCTION, PROCESSING AND MARKETING IN THE AGRICULTURAL AND FOOD INDUSTRY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for the introduction of cash crops or alternative new • Support cooperative projects to close cycles of breeding and production in the area. • Promotion of investment in the process of handling, primary processing of agricultural and forestry products in the area • Promotion of investment in telematics equipment and new technologies to improve production or sales and improved quality control of products .. • Technical assistance for studies of market for local products. • Enterprise development services to support farms. • Promotion of activities and partnerships for integrated management and innovative promotion and marketing of agricultural products. • Promotion of names, trademarks and introduction of quality strategies for local products. • Support for innovation in production and processing of products in the area. • Valuation of the features distinguishing the local products • Support for recovery and marketing of local agricultural recovery and especially in the marketing of local agricultural products especially in new markets • Interregional and international cooperation with business or activities of the sector.
<p>TOURISM AND DIVERSIFICATION OF ACTIVITIES IN RURAL AREAS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for the creation, modernization or expansion of tourist places in the Páramo - Esla - Órbigo • Support for the creation, modernization or expansion of services and activities to complement the supply of accommodation and catering. • Support for the creation and implementation of systems and policies distinctive quality of tourist services in the area. • Support for collective promotion of resources and activities in the area. • Recovery of the sections of the Camino de Santiago and the Ruta de la Plata • Creation and enhancement of routes and other resources used for tourism. • Supporting the implementation of new technologies in the management and marketing of tourism services. • Support for the creation of small infrastructure and services to support tourism. • Support for SMEs engaged in manufacturing or marketing • Supporting the implementation of innovation in SMEs • Creation of centers or areas of economic activity • Allocation of spaces and services to support industrial activity • Support for handicrafts from the area. • Support the acquisition and deployment of new technologies • Modernization of working facilities associated • Supporting the implementation of activities in social services • Support for cooperation and sectoral associations and cross-

TRAINING AND QUALIFICATION OF HUMAN CAPITAL HERITAGE, ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valuation of the banks and basins of the rivers and Órbigo Esla and wetland area • Valuation of hunting and fishing activities • Waste disposal and recycling • Recovery, rehabilitation and protection of cultural heritage, movable and immovable of special ethnographic interest. • Value and protect customs, folklore and traditional native cultural • Support activities and organic farming • Support to dissemination and implementation of "best practices" • Support for interregional cooperation projects and for the enhancement of transnational Camino de Santiago and the Ruta de la Plata. • Infrastructure CreAcción permanent cultural. • Support energy production from biofuels.

LEADERCAL initiative for rural advancement (Table 2)

Table 2. Key areas of the LEADERCAL initiative

<p>DIVERSIFICATION INTO NON-AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiatives to diversify agricultural activity, including those contained in the following steps, subject to compliance with the provisions of Article 53 of EC Regulation 1698/2005 in the sense that the holder thereof, is a member of the family unit exploitation.
<p>SUPPORT TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT OF MICROENTERPRISES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions that result in original ways to enhance a typical production and local crafts. • Aid to local product companies to access advanced computer and communication equipment. • Business initiatives that integrate environmental management systems, disposal of contaminants and safety in enterprises, which constitute an improvement in the quality of life of the rural population. • New initiatives and advanced packaging, labeling and packaging of products, extending their time to market and highlight the qualities of the product and the identification of the origin and the commercialization stage (tracking). • Proceedings of investment support for the creation of points of distribution, marketing and selling products mostly not included in Annex I of the Treaty, particularly if carried out through partnerships or other entities of a collective and by introducing new marketing methods (internet, etc.). • Aid to small businesses by young women and led to self-employment, and also within the family business to the pursuit of their own profession. • Preferential support to the collaborative working arrangements and coordination between business initiatives by youth and women. • Business support social services in rural areas to improve the quality of people's lives: child care, elderly homes, home care, home telecare, escort services. • Promotion of local production, promoted by bodies representing the sector and linked to quality products and support for county fairs (only the first celebrations). • Inventory of resources and of its defining characteristics in relation to their home country as well as conducting market research and put forward solutions that respond to problems and situations. • Support for the use of alternative energy in the processes of production, processing and marketing of local production. • Support for management of wastes from the processing and marketing agricultural products recycling and biological treatment.

PROMOTION OF TOURISM

- Actions for joint marketing of tourism existing in the region.
- Investment in the provision of accommodation classified as Rural Tourism Centres, or other type of tourist accommodation in rural areas, with a small capacity (less than 30 seats). Not including cottages.
- Design and build web pages for the promotion and marketing of the area, its businesses and tourism offerings, as well as promote the area and the connection between the various actors involved.
- Infrastructure conducive to the development of leisure.
- Publications and marketing studies to attain the goals outlined in the strategy for regional development.
- Alternative tourism activities (hiking, gourmet, organic, bird), ecotourism, cultural tourism and nature tourism.
- Signaling scenic environments and development of themed routes (geological, dining, etc).
- Create centers of tourism reserve and local information where there are no such basic infrastructure support.
- Creation of small businesses that offer tourist services in the environmental and cultural.
- Complementary tourism activities aimed at children (school farms, etc.).

BASIC SERVICES FOR THE RURAL ECONOMY AND POPULATION

- Projects to facilitate public access to telematics services and new ways of working using new technology.
- Establishment of information points oriented businesses and the local population.
- Incubators linked to local development.
- Cultural services.
- Promotion and encouragement of volunteerism and social integration.
- Projects in support of waste management.
- Provision of local services to the population and to support local small businesses

RENEWAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

- Improving living conditions of the territory's population.
- Equal opportunities.

CONSERVATION AND UPGRADING OF RURAL HERITAGE

- Investments for environmental certification of companies.
- Projects on the Natura 2000 Network.
- Actions to promote and spread of organic farming.
- Integration initiatives listed as items of cultural interest in the activities of socio-economic nature. Concerts, exhibitions.
- Ecological management of natural areas and protecting existing ecosystems.
- Recovery of degraded areas, restoration of local heritage and landscape restoration.
- Technical studies for the recovery of natural resources and heritage (diagnoses, inventories, etc..).
- Cataloging and inventory of natural resources for the development of new forms of tourism specialists.
- Creation of different routes of monumental historical content, tourist routes, etc.
- Actions linked to natural resources and local or regional culture with special reference to the comprehensive recovery of events and traditions, promotion, publishing and advertising artwork and / or audio.
- Infrastructure support to cultural activities and environmental communication and dissemination.
- Ethnographic museum of agricultural implements, flora and fauna, etc.

TRAINING AND INFORMATION

- Formation of the population, particularly youth and women in new professions and trades related to the development district.
- Adapting training methods to the reality of rural areas: telecommunications training, flexible hours, multimedia methods, etc.
- Training schemes that combine training with practical realization of work activities, in order to promote employability.
- Training to incorporate practices that respect the environment, the processes of local agricultural production or processing.
- Training on the use and exploitation of natural and cultural resources.
- Vocational training linked to business needs (environmental monitor, guide, etc.).
- Support for the organization of conferences, seminars. related to the environment and local heritage.
- Training in specialties or professions exist in the area and demonstrated demand business

Axis IV of the PRODERCAL program, LEADERCAL is an initiative for the sustainable economic development of rural areas by improving the quality of life of citizens and the creation of an economic structure that diversifies the agricultural activity, while respecting the environment and the identity of territories.

To achieve these objectives, it is used the called *Leader approach*, which enables the development of strategies and decision-making in each zone, binding the socio-economic agents in rural areas in a supra-municipal entities called Local Action Groups (GAL).

Leadercal program is integrated into the shaft 4 of the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 Castilla y León, and are financed by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), the Ministry of Environment and Rural and Marine and the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock of the Junta de Castilla y León.

AID

The initiative helps LEADERCAL POED are aimed at enhancing the endogenous development of the zone of action of the Local Action Group.

Grants are awarded subsidy in the form of gross capital fund. Payment will be made by bank transfer to the bank account indicated by the beneficiary and which must be the holder, once the Group has proven the effectiveness of the implementation of investments and their adjustment to the project and approved conditions.

The amount of aid is the result of a percentage of the eligible investment and is determined according to the characteristics of the project and the promoter and the relevance to the objectives of the Local Development Programme Group .

The maximum amounts and limitations are determined in each call and the internal procedures of the group support.

The requirements for a project or initiative to be eligible are determined in the annual call for aid, the internal procedures of the Group, the Manual of Procedure of the Paying Agency and the scheme of implementation.

HELP LINES

- Diversification into non-agricultural activities.
- Support to entrepreneurship and development of microenterprises.
- Promotion of tourism.
- Basic services for the rural economy and population.
- Renewal and rural development.
- Conservation and upgrading of rural heritage.
- Training and information.

Axis IV of the Rural Development Program of Castilla y León, LEADERCAL initiative provides for the following list of eligible activities:

THE EUROPEAN TERRITORIAL QUALITY MARK

Nowadays, rural territories are facing a new situation, marked by a progressive withdrawal of the protection and the aid coming from the national States and the European Union. In

addition, they are exposed to an open and competitive space, which has its origin in globalization and the opening of the markets. The rural territories are not powerful enough to respond to this situation. In order to present themselves in the market on a collective local basis, several isolated territories have been aimed at setting up a global project of a differentiated identity that mirrors the efforts to achieve a territorial quality and is reflected in the image of a territorial quality brand. Nevertheless, they consider that the success and the viability of this effort can only be guaranteed by a critical mass, which is not always available to an isolated territorial mark.

Thus, the territories that already have their own brand within the framework of the territorial quality project have joined and now share and additional common brand, the European Territorial Quality Mark (ETQM), which endows them with a critical mass and, consequently, with the capacity of commercial success. It also makes it easier for them to be identified by the consumers. From this view, the ETQM is the collective image of genuine rural territories that work for promoting the development process, with the assistance of public organisms, private firms and all social institutions, and that offer quality products and services respecting the principles and values of environmental protection and production process quality.

The ETQM is the result of the cooperation between 19 local action groups from four countries (Spain, France, Italy, and Greece) within the framework of the Community Initiative Leader+.

In this international context, the brand operates as an “umbrella” mark that covers rural territories with their own regional brand to achieve jointly a real rural development on a sustainable and balanced scale, without exclusions. Particularly, the use of a common brand has five potential advantages for territories:

- Coherence. The approach is free of discriminations and exclusions, being accessible to all the territories and their populations. It represents a proposal of public and private development for all sectors (agri-food, tourist, craft industry, industrial, cultural, etc.).
- Social responsibility. By means of specific statutes, each territory establishes parameters of quality that guarantee that the firms are economically viable, that they are respectful for the environment, and that they show social commitment.
- Identity. The different territories identify and develop the local traditions and know-how, the history and the cultural landscape as a resource for local development and as a source of innovation.
- Participation. All the actors participate at each level of organization and management, with transparency of action, guaranteed by the voluntary and formal commitment of the partners.
- Control. Each brand of territorial quality has its own management and control committee. As a complement, the management and control committee of the ETQM has the task to control the conformity of the territorial marks with the European regulation.