EERI Project Report
EMPOWERING EUROPE'S RURAL INNOVATORS

Inteligência Local; Pozitiva Samobor; Romagna+; Sea Greece

PROJECT DETAILS

Project Name: EERI - Empower Europe's Rural Innovators
Programme: Erasmus+ Youth Exchange
Project Reference Number: 2023-3-PT02-KA152-YOU-000184492
Main Beneficiary: Inteligência Local (Portugal)
Project Duration: 16th - 23rd November 2024
Location: Vilares da Vilariça & Cerejais, Portugal
Participating Countries: Portugal, Italy, Greece, Croatia

Project Partners:
Poitiva Samobor (Croatia)
SEA Greece (Greece)
Romagna+ (Italy)

Number of Participants:
24 participants, including young people from fewer opportunity backgrounds

Project Description:
"E.E.R.I. - Empower Europe's Rural Innovators" aimed to create a
transformative and empowering experience for young participants from rural
communities across Europe. We looked to develop an environment of
collaboration, creativity, and skill development, that harnessed the potential
of rural youth (Y) as innovative changemakers who can contribute to
sustainable community development and address pressing challenges.
E.E.R.I. is a natural extension of our core values and mission as an
organization. iLocal is an organization committed to regenerating local
economies, fostering sustainable development, and empowering communities
through collaborative and innovative approaches. E.E.R.I. directly aligns with
iLocal's ethos of engaging with rural areas to create positive change and
harness the potential of local resources, including its most valuable asset:
youth.

PROJECT DETAILS

Our approach to development emphasized bringing collaboration, participation, and interconnectivity providing the YE as a platform for 30 young people from Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece and Croatia to come together, exchange experiences, and create lasting networks. We must note that in the proceedings of implementing our first project E.E.R.I. we had trouble communicating with our Spanish partners, who then terminated their partnership last minute, not being able to reach our main participant mark of 30 youngsters. By nurturing these connections, we created E.E.R.I to help participants realize the strength in unity, fostering a sense of European community and encouraging collaborative solutions to shared challenges.

EERI'S PROBLEMATIC

Our youth exchange addressed several main social problems faced by rural communities across Europe, promoted many advantages enjoyed by people living in predominantly rural regions, like, more space, a better quality of life, lower living costs, and less pollution. Whilst also bringing awareness to the fact that these advantages are outweighed by challenges, like, fewer job opportunities, weaker infrastructure (energy, transport, information networks), and poorer access to public services such as healthcare, education, or commercial services. Through non-formal education activities, we looked to explore the reasons for the challenges outweighing the benefits, and that some people – often those who are relatively young – too often choose to leave rural regions in search of greater opportunities and/or prosperity. These problems are reflected in both European and national statistics, highlighting the necessity of E.E.R.I.:

EERI'S PROBLEMATIC

- Nearly 9 out of 10 regions in the EU that are primarily rural recorded negative crude rates of natural population change between 2015 and 2020.
- Between 2015 and 2020, fewer young people and adults of working age resided in the largely rural regions of the EU, while an average of 1.8% more persons aged 65 or older did.
- As of 1 January 2021, young people (under the age of 20) made up less than one in five (19.7%) of all residents in remote, primarily rural parts of the EU; this was the lowest share ever recorded based on the urban-rural typology.

- There were 11 areas in the EU where the annual average crude rate of natural change decreased by at least 10.0 percent.
- These areas included four interior Portuguese regions, Alto Tâmega, Beiras e Serra da Estrela, Alto Alentejo, and Beira Baixa; the regions of Ourense and Zamora in northwest Spain; Liko-senjska upanija in northwest Croatia; and Serres in northern Greece.
- Two eastern island regions of Greece that were close to Turkey, Lesvos, Limnos, and Ikaria, Samos, had the highest population growth rates in the EU during the time period under consideration (at least 1.0% annually).

Source: https://bit.ly/3F0GLQH

Other useful links:
https://bit.ly/3rAWO4Q
https://bit.ly/3RI8pJQ
https://bit.ly/46c3jKk

EERI'S OBJECTIVES

- Enable participants to explore innovative approaches to addressing rural challenges through workshops, discussions, and hands-on activities. Encourage them to think creatively and develop solutions that contribute to local development.

- Provide participants with practical entrepreneurial skills, including idea generation, project planning, team collaboration, and presentation. Empower them to transform their innovative ideas into impactful projects.

- Raise awareness about the principles of sustainability, circular economy, and green innovation. Encourage participants to integrate these principles into their projects and initiatives to contribute to a more sustainable Europe.

- Embrace the principles of inclusivity and diversity by ensuring equal participation opportunities for all, regardless of gender, background, or abilities. Create an environment where different perspectives enrich the learning experience.

- Inspire participants to think beyond the project's duration and consider how their learning and projects can contribute to the long-term development of their rural communities and Europe as a whole.

ACTIVITIES AND METHODS IMPLEMENTED

Future of the Rural World

General Objective: To explore and co-create visions for the future of the rural world, considering different values, technologies and risks.

Session structure:
Morning (10am-1pm)

Topic 1: Introduction and Icebreaker
Objective: To break the ice and introduce the topic of the future.
Method: Inspired by the "ICEBREAKER" from the "Futures Design" workshop.
Activity: "Better or Worse?" Participants move to the front (better) or back (worse) of the room, depending on whether they believe the rural world will be better or worse in 10 years.
Activity: "I Can, I Can't" . Participants move to the right (they can influence) or to the left (they can't influence) the future of the rural world.
Brief discussion on the different perspectives.

Topic 2: Values and visions
Objective: To identify and discuss the values that will shape the future of the rural world.
Content: Presentation of the 19 basic values (adapted from "Futures Design").
Openness to change, autonomy, security, social justice, etc.
Method:
Individual reflection: Each participant chooses the values they most identify with.
Group discussion: Participants form groups based on the chosen values or contrasting values.

ACTIVITIES AND METHODS IMPLEMENTED

Topic 3: Exploring Possible Futures
Objective: To explore different future scenarios for the rural world, considering technologies and risks.
Content: Technology charts and risk charts (adapted from "Futures Design").
Method:
The groups explore the cards and describe a future scenario for the rural world, integrating the values discussed earlier.
Each group presents its own scenario.

Afternoon (15h00 - 17h00)

Topic 4: Narratives of the Future
- Objective: To create detailed narratives about the future of the rural world.
- Method: Using Myriorama cards to create stories (adapted from "Futures Design").
- The groups create visual and textual narratives that describe everyday life in the future rural world.

ACTIVITIES AND METHODS IMPLEMENTED

Topic 5: Prototyping Future Artifacts
- Objective: To develop prototypes of objects or services that would exist in the future rural world.
- Content: Discussion about which objects could illustrate the future rural world.
- Method:
- The groups create prototypes using simple materials (e.g. pens, paper, plasticine).
- Presentation of the prototypes and discussion of their impact on the rural world.

Topic 6: Check-out and Reflection
- Discussion of the main learnings and insights from the workshop.
- Reflection on how participants can apply these visions and ideas to their personal projects.

Resources:
- Value Charts (adapted from "Futures Design")
- Technology and Risk Charts (adapted from "Futures Design")
- Myriorama cards (adapted from "Futures Design")
- Prototyping materials (paper, pens, plasticine, etc.)
- Projector and sound system (for presentations)
- A4 sheets
- Pens, markers

ACTIVITIES AND METHODS IMPLEMENTED

Why the Rural World?

General objective: To train trainees about the rural world and rurality, encouraging reflection on the centrality of the community and the relationship between the rural and urban worlds.

Total duration: 4 hours (15h - 18h30)

Session structure:

Topic 1 - Check-in and Interknowledge

- Objective: To promote inter-knowledge among participants.
- Activity: Each participant goes to the surrounding area, collects an object that identifies rurality, introduces themselves and explains their choice.
- Tools: Group dynamics.

Topic 2 - Introduction

- Objective: To present the concept of the rural as the true meaning of "we" (community).
- Content: Oral presentation on the importance of community in the rural world.
- Tools: Oral presentation.

Topic 3 - Imagining VdV in 1920

- Objective: To contextualize the problem of the rural world from a historical perspective.
- Activity: Trainees create a contextualization map of VdV (Vila de Rei, presumably) in 1920, and can use the internet or interview the facilitator (role playing) or use ChatGPT.
- Tools: Context Map.

ACTIVITIES AND METHODS IMPLEMENTED

Topic 5 - Describing VdV
- Objective: To contextualize the problems of the rural world today.
- Activity: The trainees create a contextualization map of VdV today, marking the losses (in red) and the gains (in green).
- Tools: Context Map.

Topic 6 - Designing VdV 2030
- Objective: To envision potential solutions and the future of VdV, relating them to the concept of community.
- Activity: Brainstorming (10 min) + prototyping/scenarios (30 min) + presentation (based on the NABC). Trainees can generate a new idea or explore an idea they already have.
- Tools: Brainstorming, prototyping, scenarios, NABC presentation (Needs, Approach, Benefits, Competition).

Topic 7 - Check-out and Reflection
- Objective: To promote reflection on the workshop.
- Activity: Word cloud.
- Tools: Word cloud.

Resources:
- Materials for prototyping (paper, pens, plasticine, scissors, glue and other building materials.)
- Projector and sound system (for presentations)
- A4 sheets and cardboard
- Pens, markers and other drawing materials
- NABC Model: A model or guide to help participants structure their presentations based on the criteria of Needs, Approach, Benefits and Competition

ACTIVITIES AND METHODS IMPLEMENTED

How is the Rural World Changing?

General objective: To strengthen personal and collective connection, awakening creativity and reflecting on individual responsibility and that of others in building change.

Total duration: 3 hours (10:00 - 13:00) + 2 hours (15:00 - 17:00)

Session structure:

Topic 1 - Assumptions
- Objective: To introduce the idea that knowledge is built collectively and that each experience is an invitation to discovery and active participation.
- Activity: Brief oral introduction to the importance of shared knowledge and the role of each person in the learning process.
- Tools: Oral presentation, metaphor of knowledge is like an island.

Topic 2 - Presentation: "Who am I?" meditation
- Objective: To connect participants with different phases of their lives and encourage self-exploration.
- Activity: Guided exercise in meditation and written reflection, where participants revisit key moments in their lives.
- Tools: Guided meditation, reflective writing, optional sharing.

Topic 3 - Creative Confidence
- Objective: To stimulate creativity and deconstruct the fear of making mistakes through quick, intuitive exercises.
- Activity: Draw 10 circles creatively (2 min). Quick drawing of an owl and a chicken (30 seconds). Collective counting from 1 to 30, without overlapping (60 seconds).
- Tools: Paper, pens, quick creative thinking dynamics.

ACTIVITIES AND METHODS IMPLEMENTED

Topic 4 - Responsibility: Me and the Other (Agent of Change vs. Victim)

Objective: To explore the concept of responsibility and the difference between taking an active role in change versus adopting a passive stance.

Activity: Individual and group reflection on the emotional charge of the word "responsibility", followed by a discussion on how to turn challenges into opportunities for change.

Tools: Facilitated discussion, pens, post-its, whiteboard.

Topic 5 - Journaling + Sharing (over lunch)

Objective: To provide a moment of individual reflection and sharing on the morning's insights.

Activity: Each participant writes freely about their experience and can choose to share in pairs or small groups.

Tools: Personal diary, spontaneous sharing.

Lunch Break (13:00 to 15:00)

Topic 6 - Group Dynamics

Objective: To break the ice and recharge the group's energy after lunch.

Activity: Surprise and interactive dynamics to stimulate participants' energy and focus.

Tools: Playful exercise, group interaction.

Topic 7 - World Café: Agent of Change

Objective: To collaboratively explore how each individual can be an agent of change within their community.

Activity: Discussion in small groups about different perspectives on the role of a change agent. Each group records ideas on a flipchart and rotates between tables. At the end, each group presents its main insights.

Tools: Tables, flipcharts, colored pens, post-its.

Resources:

Sound system

ACTIVITIES AND METHODS IMPLEMENTED

How is the Rural World Changing? (continued)

General Objective: To strengthen personal and collective connection, awakening creativity and reflecting on individual responsibility and that of others in building change. (continued)
Total duration: 3 hours (10:00 - 13:00)

Session structure:

Topic 8 - Check-in / Reflection of the previous day

Objective: To consolidate the previous day's learning and prepare the mindset for the new day.
Activity: Quick group sharing on what made the biggest difference the day before and how they feel today.
Tools: Wheel sharing keywords.

Topic 9 - Regeneration: from Human-Centered Design to Life-Centered Design

Objective: To introduce the transition from human-focused design to design that considers the entire living system.
Activity: Visualization of inspiring content on regeneration followed by a debate on practical applications of this concept in the real world.
Tools: Video, guided debate.

Topic 10 - Dreaming Without Limits (Journaling)

Objective: To explore personal dreams without time and money restrictions.
Activity: Individual exercise where each participant freely reflects and records what they would do if there were no financial or time constraints.
Tools: Video, personal diary, optional sharing.

ACTIVITIES AND METHODS IMPLEMENTED

Topic 11 - Design Innovation Methodology: Disney's Innovation Framework

Objective: To connect the dream with action, using the Design Innovation methodology.

Activity: Each participant revisits their reflection from topic 8, connecting it with the other participants in the room. They then go through the Design Innovation methodology, passing sequentially through the three stages:

Dreamer: Free exploration of the idea, without limitations, dreaming even bigger about the ideal version of the project.

Pragmatic: Structuring the concept, identifying the resources, steps and strategies needed to implement it.

Critical: Identifying the main challenges and obstacles, anticipating solutions to ensure the viability of the idea.

After this journey, the participants gather in a circle for a final discussion, where they present their ideas, have another round of constructive feedback and refine their projects, consolidating the insights.

Tools: Presentation of the methodology, A4 sheets, pens, group sharing.

Topic 12 - Journey Circle Dynamics and Final Reflection

Objective: To symbolize the journey of reaching a goal, highlighting the role of support and social interaction. To consolidate learning.

Activity: Participants form a circle with a goal in front of them and, as they progress towards it, they face progressive challenges that encourage interaction and collaboration, making the course more dynamic and engaging.

Tools: Symbolic element to represent the objective, large space, sharing wheel, key words.

ACTIVITIES AND METHODS IMPLEMENTED

How Can the Rural World Be Transformed? Creating Communities

General objective: To get to know and experience the fundamental characteristics for implementing networking processes and collaborative management.

Duration: 2 hours (10am-12pm)

Topic 1: Introduction and Purpose
- Objective: To establish common ground and understand the importance of collaborative systems
- Method:
  - Presentation of the workshop's objectives
  - Explanation of spaces, participants and methodology
- Activity: Short round of presentations focusing on experience with collaborative work

Topic 2: Network Structures in Organizations
- Objective: To understand different models of networked organizational structures
- Content:
  - Geometries and Topologies
  - Organizational management styles
- Activity: "Game of Wool and Bottles
  - Practical visualization of different network structures
  - Reflection on the advantages and disadvantages of each structure

Topic 3: Roles and Actors in the Community
- Objective: To identify and understand different roles in a collaborative community
- Method:
  - Watching the video "Teamwork Penguins, Hormigas, Cangrejos"
  - Activity: "Discovering Roles in Action"
- Final discussion and summary of the day

Topic 4: Check-out and mid-term reflection

ACTIVITIES AND METHODS IMPLEMENTED

How does the rural world change? Creating Communities (continued)

Duration: 2h (15h-17h)

Topic 5: Social Spaces and Technologies
Objective: To explore different types of collaborative spaces and social technologies
Content:
- Face-to-face spaces
- Virtual spaces
- Hybrid spaces

Method:
Analysis of illustrative videos
- "Carmela's Huella"
- "A Day Made of Glass
- "Tomorrow (GPS)"

Group discussion on practical applications

Topic 6: Framework of Common Understanding and Rules of the Game
Objective: To establish principles for effective collaboration
Content:
Presentation of the concept of holacracy
Video: "Working without bosses - Holocracy"
Activity: Collaborative construction of a set of rules for networking

ACTIVITIES AND METHODS IMPLEMENTED

Topic 7: Check-out and Reflection

Objective: To consolidate learning and define next steps

Method:

- Listening Circle
- Sharing key learnings
- Identification of practical applications
- Implementation commitments

Resources needed:

Projector and sound system

Ball of yarn for network dynamics

Bottles for dynamics

Post-its and bookmarks

A4 sheets

Printed support material

Pre-loaded videos

Guide to key concepts

Templates for network mapping

Checklist for implementing collaborative systems

ACTIVITIES AND METHODS IMPLEMENTED

Erasmus+ & Youthpass Certificate

General objective: To present the different opportunities of the Erasmus+ program and the Youthpass certificate, enabling participants to take advantage of these opportunities.

Duration: 1h30m (17h-18h30m)

Session structure:

Topic 1: Introduction and Icebreaker

Objective: To find out about participants' experiences and expectations of mobility programs

Activity: "Map of Europe" - Participants position themselves on an imaginary map of Europe:

Where have you been?

Where would you like to go?

Activity: "Timeline" - Participants position themselves on a line indicating when they want to participate in a mobility program (next 6 months, 1 year, etc.)

Topic 2: Youth Exchange Programs and Training Courses

Objective: To understand the characteristics and differences between Youth Exchange and Training Course

Content:

- Types of programs (durations 5-21 days vs 2-60 days)
- Ages (13-30 vs 18+)
- Purpose
- Key features

Method:

- Interactive presentation
- Group exercise: Create a "recruitment poster" for each type of program

ACTIVITIES AND METHODS IMPLEMENTED

Topic 3: European Solidarity Corps

Objective: To explore the different ESC modalities

Content:

Types of programs

- Short-term (2 weeks - 2 months

- Long-term (2-12 months)

- Humanitarian Aid (2-12 months)

Method:

Interactive quiz on the differences between programs

Analysis of real project cases

Topic 4: Finding Opportunities

Objective: To enable participants to find opportunities

Content: Platforms and resources

- SALTO

- European Youth Portal

- ESC App

- Telegram groups

- Instagram

Method:

Practical workshop with mobile devices

Create profiles on the relevant platforms

Topic 5: Youthpass and Skills Development

Objective: To understand the value of Youthpass

Method:

Youthpass filling simulation

Reflection on skills developed

Exercise: "My learning journey"

Resources needed:

Computer and projector

Internet for all participants

Smartphones/tablets

Sheets and markers

Post-its

ACTIVITIES AND METHODS IMPLEMENTED

The Forgotten Territories Game: Let's Play and Create?

General Objective: To identify priorities and potential for local social innovation through a playful and participatory methodology.

Duration: 3 hours (10am-1pm)

Session structure:

Topic 1: Introduction
- Objective: To contextualize the workshop and present the objectives
- Method: PowerPoint presentation of the workshop proposal
- Content: Project framework and methodology

Topic 2: Icebreaker - Natural Dimensions
- Objective: To create an initial view of the participants' priorities
- Material:
  - Base divided into 4 quadrants
  - Representative natural elements:
    - Leaves = civil society
    - Stones = political context
    - Branches = entrepreneurship
    - Seeds = knowledge
- Method: Each participant fills in up to 2 priority quadrants

Topic 3: Initial questionnaire
- Objective: To collect initial data from the participants
- Method: Individual completion of the questionnaire

ACTIVITIES AND METHODS IMPLEMENTED

Topic 4: The Forgotten Territories Game
- Phase
  - Drawing of dimension and sub-dimension cards
  - Individual assessment (scale 1-5) of relevance to local development
  - Collective sharing of results
- Phase
  - Assessment of the current and desired state (2030) of the dimensions
  - Creating relationships / interdependencies between letters
  - Practical examples from everyday life
  - Collective sharing
- Phase
  - Integration of a free theme letter (Art, Nature, Climate, ?)
  - Identification of challenges, opportunities and key partners
  - Discussion on current status and possible futures
  - Creation of a final dashboard with the main results

Topic 5 - Check-out and Final Reflection
- Summary of findings
- Comparison with the initial quadrants exercise
- Feedback from participants on the activity

Resources needed:
- Game material:
  - 40 cards (6 dimensions, 30 sub-dimensions, 4 free themes)
  - Numerical data
  - Base for pinning letters
  - Post-its and writing material
- Natural elements for the icebreaker
- Projector for presentations
- Printed questionnaires
- Consent forms
- Material for visual documentation of the activity
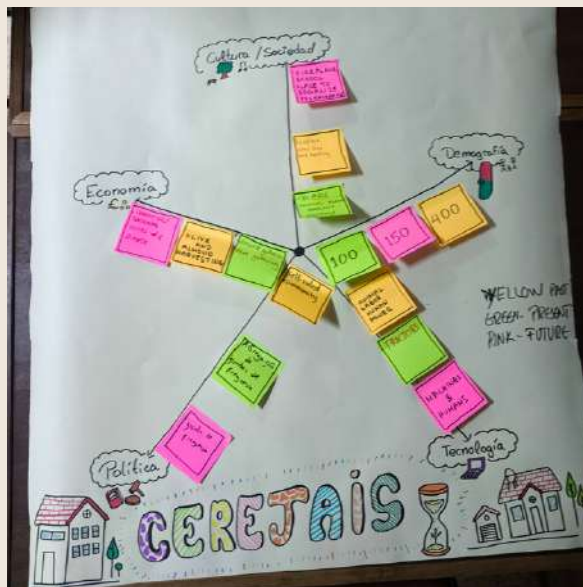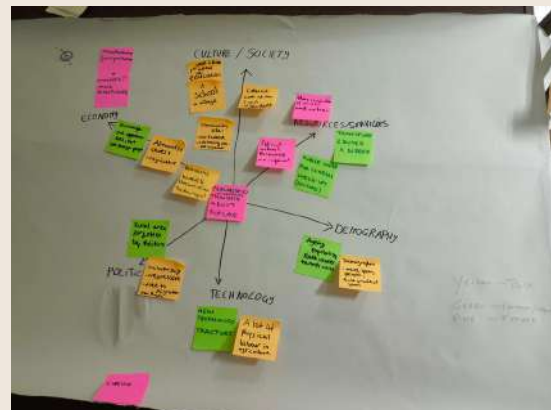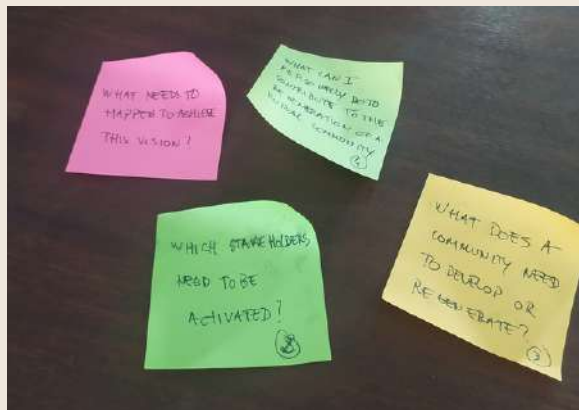- Game guide for each group
- Consent model
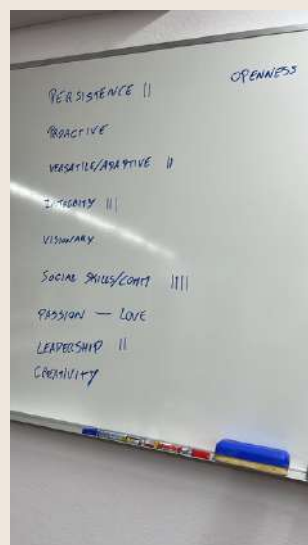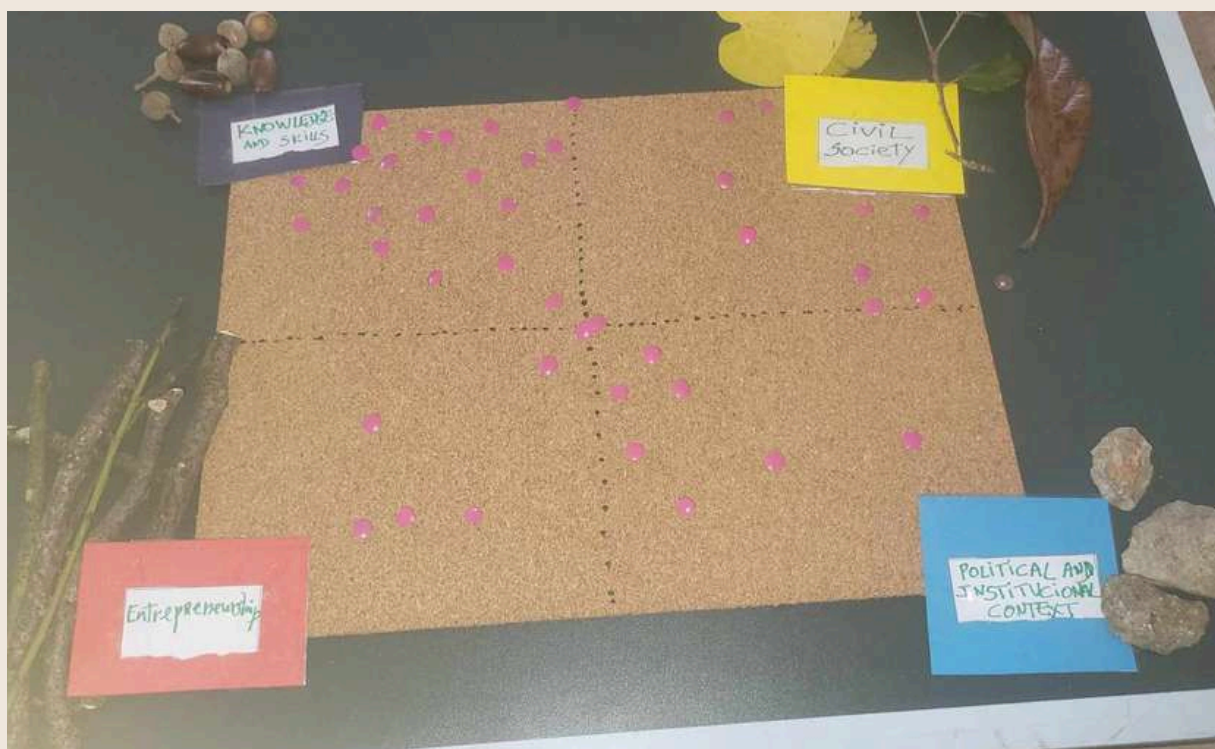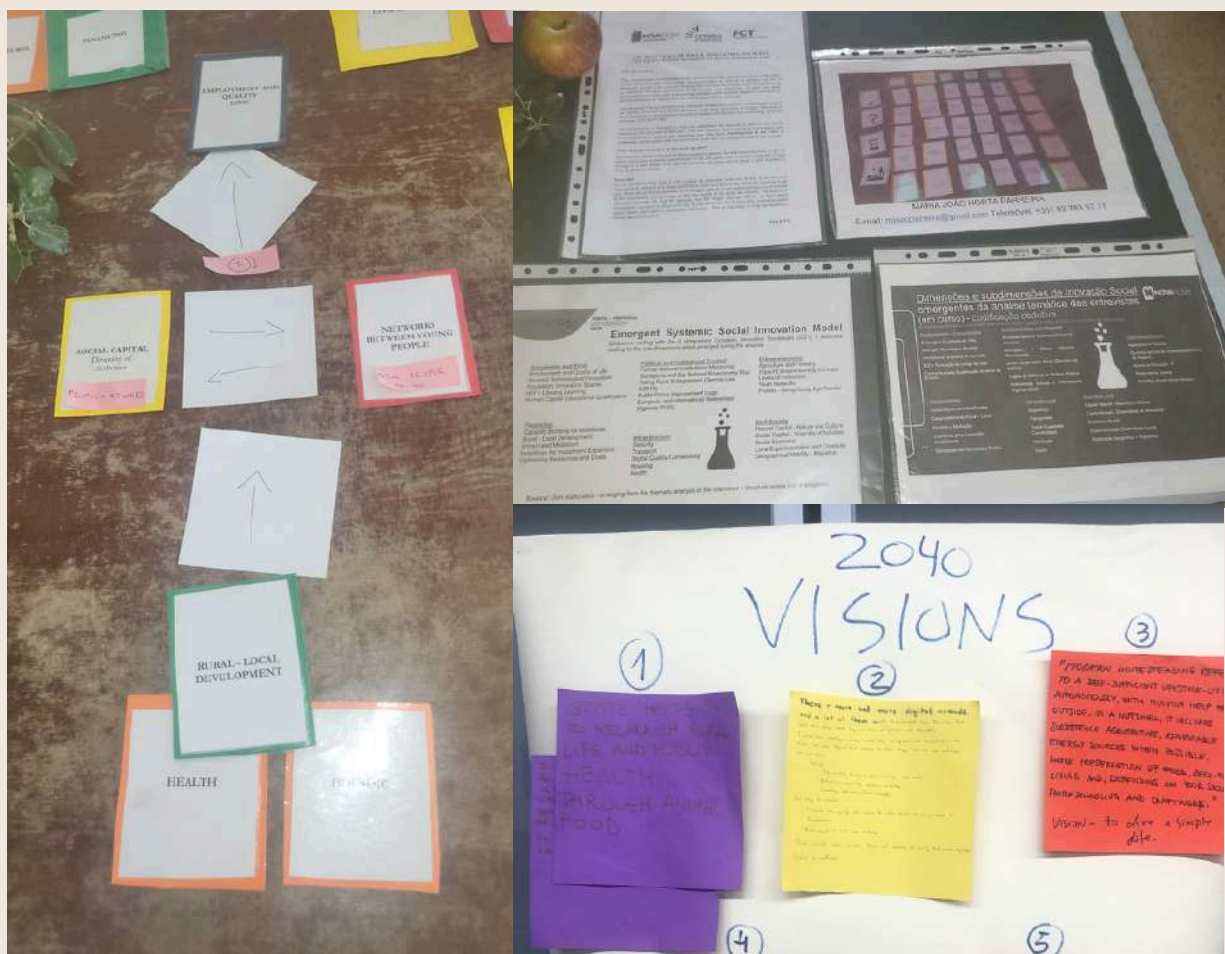- Log sheets for each phase
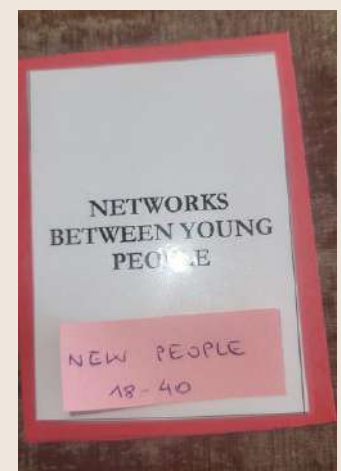
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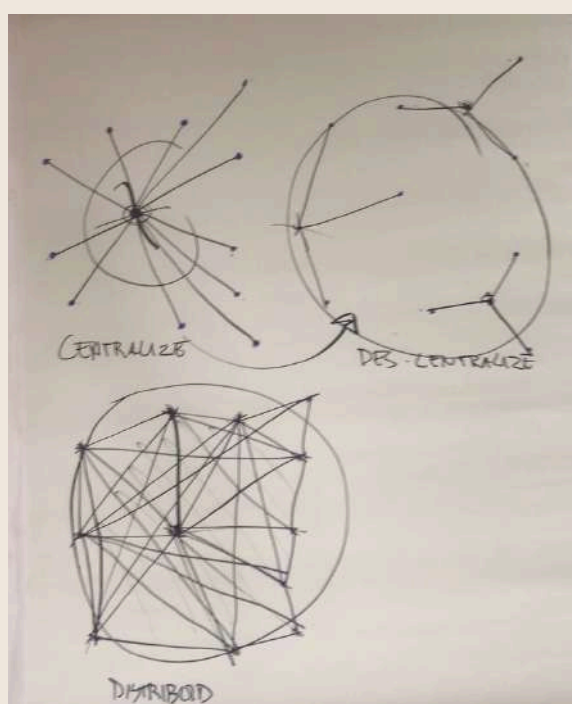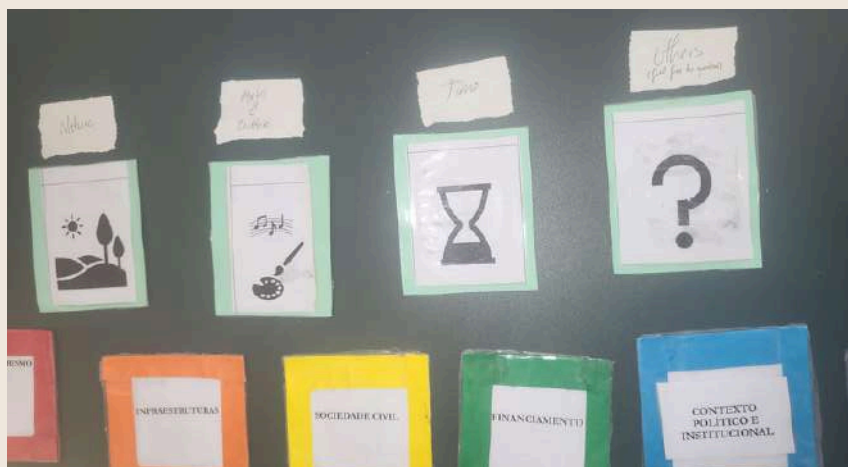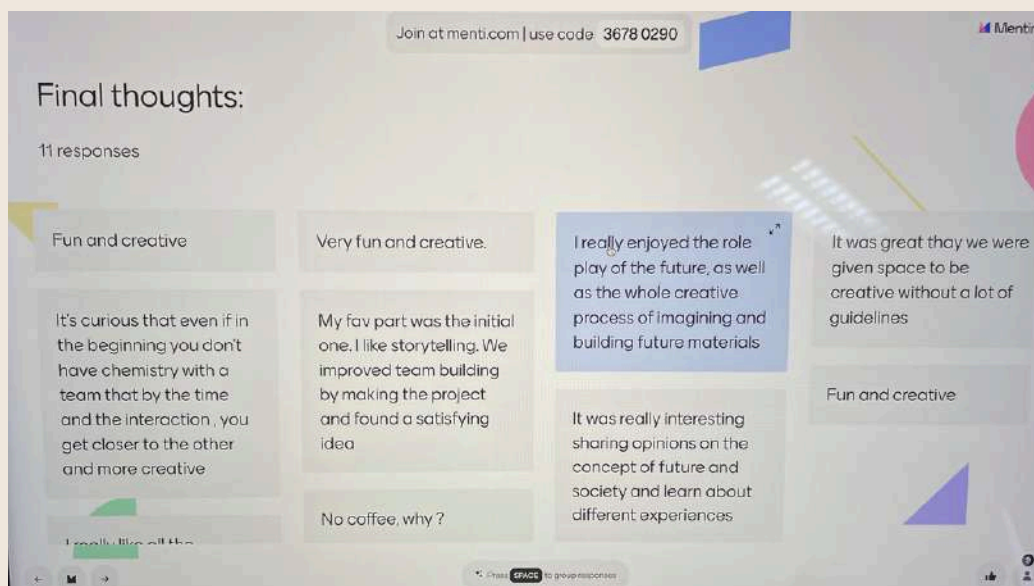
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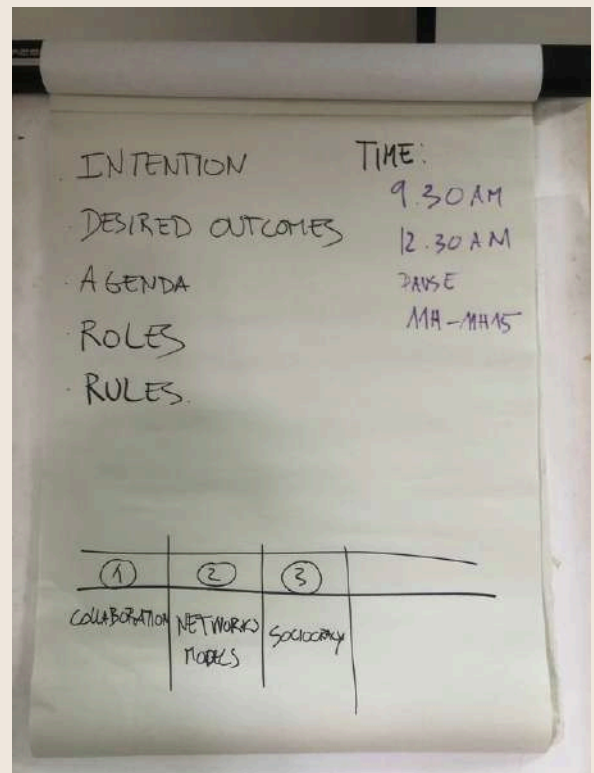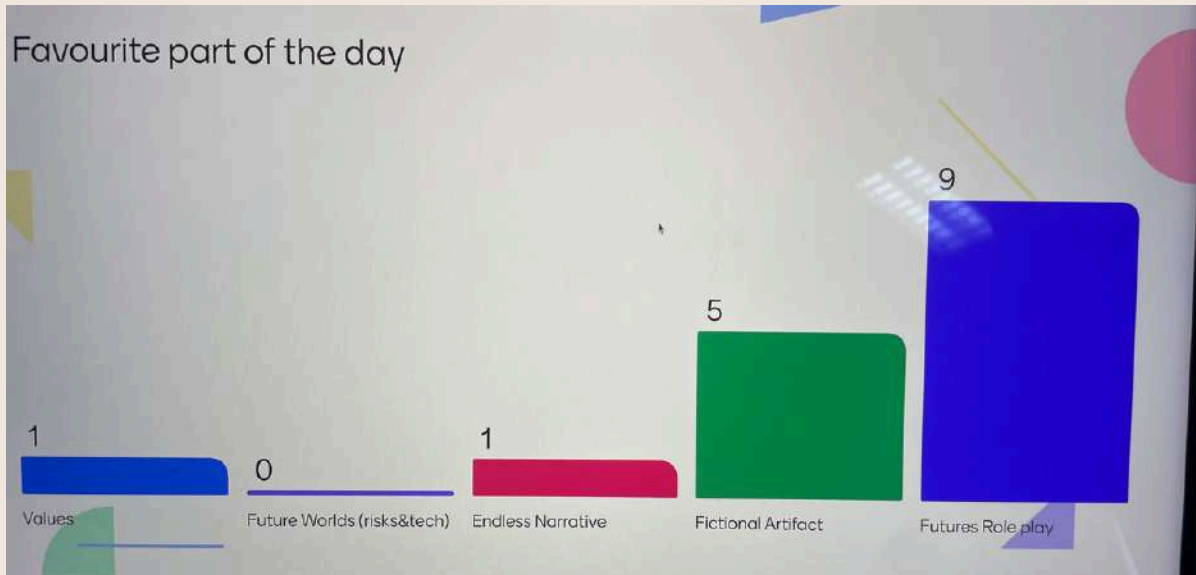
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PROJECT RESULTS

Our project has left a lasting impact at local, national and European level through entrepreneurial innovation, intergenerational dialogue, community involvement and wide dissemination, promoting an extension beyond the participants and the organisations directly involved.

1. Participant-orientated results

- Participant testimonials (written and video) were shared publicly, providing a first-hand view of the project's impact
- 4 Project reels were created by iLocal, with 10246+ views
- 5 'How to Survive as a Rural Entrepreneur' videos and testimonials were created by participants with real-world advice for aspiring rural entrepreneurs
- 4 EERI dissemination sessions in Portugal, Italy, Greece and Croatia involved more than 40 young people in activities about EERI, rural regeneration and European opportunities

"For me, the project was very challenging because I had to get out of my comfort zone a lot. Being part of it was a chance to contribute to meaningful change while learning from others who share the goal of driving rural innovation in Europe."

2. Entrepreneurial and Educational Impact

1. Shark Tank Rural Edition, where participants developed structured 5 business models for rural sustainability, local economic regeneration and community-orientated projects
2. Exposure to real-world entrepreneurship where participants learnt directly from local business people, artisans and rural entrepreneurs
3. Workshop on funding and Erasmus+, where participants explored funding for future projects and opportunities from Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps

The evaluation forms revealed that after the exchange participants felt more confident in entrepreneurship and rural innovation, with some expressing an interest in pursuing careers in rural development.

PROJECT RESULTS

"I learned about some innovative solutions for rural areas, collaborative approaches, and the importance of local empowerment."

3. Personal and intercultural growth

EERI has had a personal and emotional impact on participants beyond technical skills:

Greater leadership and self-confidence, participants increased their ability to speak in public, work in teams and make decisions

Expanded worldviews through contact with locals and international peers

Emotional and transformative experiences with activities such as the fire ritual and self-exploration workshops.

4. Evaluation data and impact assessment

- 17 out of 22 people surveyed rated the project with a score of 7/10.
- Only 2 participants rated the project with a score of 5 or less
- The majority of participants (17 out of 22) rated the activities higher than 7/10
- Of the 17 participants mentioned above, 12 gave our activities marks of 8, 9 and 10
- No participant gave our activities a rating lower than 4
- 15 of the 22 EERI participants rated their learning above 7/10

"I gained confidence in expressing myself, leading discussions, and making decisions. The project made me realize that leadership is not about knowing everything, but about creating space for others to grow with you."

"I now have a deeper understanding of rural innovation, sustainable development, and community-driven change. But beyond that, I also learned the importance of self-reflection and trusting my own instincts."

5. Digital and community dissemination

A strong digital presence ensured that EERI's results reached a broad audience beyond direct participants:

- 50+ posts, videos, and reels shared across social media, accumulating 60000+ views.

PROJECT RESULTS

4 dissemination events in PT, IT, GR, and HR, reaching 40+ young people. EERI Project Report uploaded to Salto Youth, making project insights accessible to YWs across Europe.

6. Improvement feedback
Besides the positive evaluation, some feedback also highlighted areas for improvement:
- A more balanced programme, as some participants found the pace too intense, with little time for rest and reflection.
- The need for a stronger introductory phase to help participants get better situated.
- More interaction with the community, as some participants wanted field trips and more immersive activities.

"It was the first time, so: good job!!! Thank you for the patience and for your effort to organize such a big project. We will remember it for the rest of our lives! Keep in touch and see you soon"

7. Long-Term Impact
The success of EERI is already leading to follow-up initiatives:
1. New Erasmus+ projects inspired by EERI are in development
2. Participants are applying their skills in local communities, launching entrepreneurial projects and grassroots initiatives.
3. Stakeholder relationships built through EERI are leading to new collaborations in rural development and innovation.
4. Youth House in cooperation w/ Alfandega da Fé is planned for our region

EERI has laid the foundation for lasting impact and demonstrated that young people can play a critical role in shaping the future of rural Europe. It is also proof that rural areas are places of opportunity and is an inspiration for similar new initiatives, fostering long-term collaborations.

PROJECT RESULTS

EERI Project Website: ilocal.pt/empower-europes-rural-innovators/

PROJECT RESULTS

Who is this Experience For?

The Journeys are **aimed at young people aged 17 to 28**, who are committed to rural development and ready to become change agents in their communities.

Selection Criteria:

Community Commitment: Candidates with a history of community involvement or interest in rural development.

Diversity and Inclusion: Priority for those bringing unique perspectives, especially from rural or underrepresented areas.

Total Participants: 30 young leaders from Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece, and Croatia. Let me know if you'd like more translations or adjustments!

SUBSCRIBE

What are the E.E.R.I?

Personal and professional development with Youthpass certification.

Integration into the Academy of Change Agents for the Interior.

A network of contacts with emerging leaders and experts.

Rural area invision from Participants

Videos created by participants

Participant Testimonials

"I feel energized because this project has opened to me a lot of perspective reffering to my career. My greatest learning is that connection with ourselves and others is essential to make ideas become reality. Next time I will try to bond with all participants since the first day, in order to share as many moments as possible. I don't leave anytjing but I will bring with me GRATITUDE."

"I felt challenged and excited to collaborate with a diverse group of people from all over Europe. The opportunity to share experiences and learn innovative practices applicable to the rural context was inspiring. It was an incredible experience that took me out of my comfort zone and made me grow both as an individual and as an entrepreneur.I also took away this idea: How can a group of young people, who don't know each other and don't speak the same language, come together to create a 'Greater Good'? The essential values for a fairer society, such as respect, kindness, empathy, inclusion, and cooperation, have shown me to be the cure for today's sick society. I describe this journey with the following metaphor: "Like a young tree growing in a forest full of diverse species." Because I feel strengthened by the connections created and inspired by the group's diversity, ethics, and

"To work for other I need to work on myself first When I applied for this project there was only 2 days fot the deadline to apply. I was focused on professional development and when I arrived I dove instantly into a personal development workshop that made me reflet about my current confusing personal life. I'm runing away, as I did everyday when I runned. Through the days I saw/experienced/shared knowledge and experiences that made me look inside and focus in this big important thing: myself and my relationships to be able to develop professionally and help others, as I want so musch."

"Nothing happens by chance... I was at a training session in Pinhel, where I met a guest who used the rural environment to integrate refugees, and I was completely fascinated by the idea. And isn't it funny that, in the same week, this opportunity popped up out of nowhere in a WhatsApp group?! Of course, I felt it was a divine sign and applied at the last minute, without great expectations. I went back home, washed my clothes, and set off on this new adventure. And what an adventure... I've been part of several projects, both short and long-term, but none has ever made me cry. I stopped to reflect on why it was different this time. I think the answer lies in love. The project was made with so much love, and love is, without a doubt, the most powerful force in the world. Of course, there were flaws and aspects to improve, but don't let that weigh you down. It was incredible! It exceeded in quality

PROJECT RESULTS

EERI Participation Form - available in website

EERI Post ENG

Empower
Europe's Rural Innovators
November 2024

Exploring new paths for better rural repopulation

From 16 to 23 November

September 2024

23th September: OpenApplication Phase

30th Setember: 1st round Interview with candidates

November 2024

12th November: Pré-Mobility Meeting

15th November - Travel to Portugal

16th to 23th - E.E.R.I. Sessions

24th November - Travel back home

October 2024

23th October: Participant Selection Final list

24th October: Start of participant preparation sessions

24th October: Start of Preparation of Post-Mobility Dissemination Activities

December 2024

Until 15th December: Period of dissemination activities

Until 15th December: Submission of travel documents

16th to 28th December: Expense reimbursement period

JORNADAS NA ALDEIA '24

About **Us**

iLocal has been developing its work in the picturesque village of Vilares de Vilariça. Located in Alfândega da Fé, in the heart of Trás-os-Montes, Vilares de Vilariça is renowned for its rich cultural heritage and vibrant community spirit. This village provides the ideal location for the event, not only for its beauty and tranquillity but also because it showcases the rural development practices that E.E.R.I aims to promote. iLocal is an organisation dedicated to transforming forgotten territories in Portugal, fostering innovation and sustainability through an approach that appraises both cultural heritage and new technologies. Our work is based on the belief that rural development can be dynamic, inclusive, and sustainable, advocating that its narrative should not be limited solely to agriculture. With a rich history of effective collaborations with academic institutions, such as IPB (Polytechnic Institute of Bragança) and partnerships with government entities, iLocal is at the forefront of rural development initiatives. Our goal is to create resilient communities that can thrive economically, environmentally, and socially, by mixing sustainable development with the appreciation of local knowledge and traditions. Through projects like "Regenerando VdV - Aldeia Inteligente 2030", we work to implement practical solutions that promote self-sufficiency and socio-economic well-being. These solutions range from strengthening local enterprises, such as sustainable agriculture, to implementing green technologies, always with the utmost care for long-term environmental and social impact. We challenge the current way of living in contemporary society. Through our macro programme (Regenerando VdV - Aldeia Inteligente 2030), we connect people seeking a more human and sustainable way of life, and together, in community, we co-create the conditions to regenerate forgotten territories. Our commitment is to empower the communities where we operate, co-creating initiatives, activities, and projects that aim to enhance quality of life and well-being, foster a cyclic, self-sufficient, and sustainable development of VdV across economic, social, cultural, and environmental dimensions. We aspire to become an Innovative Practice Community (IPC), capable of creating an ecosystem that attracts and supports innovation, interdisciplinary action research, and generates lasting positive social impacts, with the potential to integrate 100 new inhabitants into VdV by 2030. This will also serve as an inspiration for new models to rehabilitate forgotten places in the interior of Portugal.

JORNADAS'24
NA ALDEIA

EERI - EMPOWER EUROPE'S RURAL INNOVATORS

What The
E.E.R.I Are

The EERI project follows the "Jornadas na Aldeia," a series of annual gatherings designed as a creative experimental field where individuals and collectives have the opportunity to immerse themselves in a collaborative and innovative environment. These gatherings, which will take place, are essential for testing and applying practical and innovative solutions in response to the challenges that arise each year in the Vilares da Vilariça community. In 2024, we decided to open the doors to an ERASMUS+ program, with the central theme "Empower Europe's Rural Innovators," focused on exploring and developing the of

participants' leadership potential as change agents capable addressing and transforming the realities of forgotten rural territories, both in Portugal and across Europe.

This year's E.E.R.I, taking place from 16th to 23th of November , will serve as a critical pilot for testing and evaluating the training model that will be integrated into a larger project, the "Academy of Change Agents for Rural Areas" (AAMI). This innovative programme, developed in collaboration with the Polytechnic Institute of Bragança, aims to address the shortcomings of previous public policy efforts directed at rural repopulation and revitalisation. Many of these policies failed to achieve the desired results, and AAMI seeks to learn from past experiences to build a robust and effective support network.

The goal is to empower 10 to 15 Changemakers annually, providing them with intensive training to become true agents of change in the territories where they will be integrated for two years. During this time, these leaders will receive continuous support from iLocal, inspired by the actions of this first-try taking place in Vilares de Vilariça. This edition of E.E.R.I not only assesses our trainment but also evaluates the feasibility of extending this model to other regions in Europe, aiming to promote a cohesive and integrated approach to sustainable rural development and planning the next repopulation network for Europe's rural areas. Co-financed by European funds and various social investors from the public and private sectors, E.E.R.I is a role-model of how collaboration and innovation can lead to significant and lasting transformations in rural areas.

JORNADAS
NA ALDEIA'24

Public Policies and
Local Partnerships
Integrated

E.E.R.I exemplify how strategic partnerships and integration with public policies can significantly enhance the impact of community projects. In collaboration with the Polytechnic Institute of Bragança, local authorities, and with financial and strategic support from the EU, the project aims to align activities with rural development and education policies, ensuring that efforts are sustainable and receive continuous institutional support.

Academic Institutions Partnerships: Collaboration with the Polytechnic Institute of Bragança allows the integration of academic research with community practice, providing a solid foundation for the development of training and leadership programmes.
Support from Local and National Policies: We work closely with local and national governments to ensure that our initiatives are aligned with public policies, maximising impact and ensuring the lasting of the projects.

Replicable Models Development: The goal is to create community-development models that can inspire other regions in Portugal and Europe, using iLocal's macroprogramme as a case study to inform future public policies.

European Union Support: The project is backed by EU funds, which provide not only financial resources but also strategic guidelines that ensure compliance with best practices in sustainable development and inclusive education.

This approach not only strengthens iLocal's Mission and Vision but also promotes an environment of open innovation, where public policies and community practices mutually influence each other for the benefit of forgotten regions across Europe.

**JORNADAS
NA ALDEIA**

How E.E.R.I **Will Be**

E.E.R.I. offers an unique and immersive experience that combines theory and practice in an intensive and collaborative learning environment. This programme is structured not only to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge but also to ensure the practical application of the skills learned in real-world rural development contexts. The 8-day programme is divided into several stages, each designed to address different aspects of the central theme " Empower Europe's Rural Innovators":

Teaching Methods

E.E.R.I utilise a variety of teaching methods, including non-formal education, project-based learning, and simulations. This multifaceted approach is designed to accommodate different learning styles and ensure that all participants can actively engage and fully benefit from the programme.

Introduction and Orientation: During the first two days, participants will undergo a series of orientation sessions, including an introduction to leadership and rural development concepts, as well as discussions on the specific challenges facing rural areas in Portugal and Europe.

Workshops and Seminars: This is followed by intensive workshops and seminars led by experts in sustainable development, leadership, and innovation. These sessions are designed to equip participants with the necessary knowledge to understand and tackle the challenges in their communities.

Practical Projects and Community Collaboration: A significant part of the programme involves participation in practical projects. Participants work in groups to develop innovative solutions that can be implemented in their communities. This phase also includes direct interactions with local communities to ensure that the proposed solutions are both viable and sustainable.

Evaluation and Feedback: In the final days, participants will present their projects to a panel of experts and receive valuable feedback. This stage is crucial for refining proposals and preparing participants for effective implementation in their localities.

Planning Future and Support Network: The journey concludes with planning sessions where participants strategize for the ongoing implementation of their ideas. Additionally, they will be introduced to the E.E.R.I alumni network, which provides continuous support and collaboration opportunities.

Opening and Onboarding Session:

The journey begins with a comprehensive introduction to the year's theme, "Empower Europe's Rural Innovators" This segment includes presentations on the programme's objectives and significance, along with icebreaker activities to help participants integrate and connect with each other.

Workshops and Lectures:

A series of educational workshops covering essential topics such as sustainable leadership, social innovation, and community development strategies. These workshops are designed to equip participants with the knowledge and skills needed to act as agents of change within their communities. Additionally, guest speakers will share their experiences and insights on the challenges and solutions in rural development.

Practical Activities and Field Projects:

Participants will apply the theories learned through field projects that involve direct interaction with local communities. These activities aim to implement sustainable development concepts in a real-world context, allowing participants to observe the impacts and refine their approaches.

Evaluations and Feedback Sessions:

Regular feedback sessions where participants can discuss project progress with mentors and receive valuable guidance for improvements. These sessions also serve to assess both individual and group performance in relation to the programme's objectives.

Closing Ceremony and Future Plans:

The journey concludes with a closing ceremony that celebrates the participants' successes and learning. Additionally, plans are discussed for the continued application of the skills acquired and the maintenance of the networks formed during the programme.

Recreational Activities and Territory Exploration:

To enrich the participants' experience, the programme includes guided tours, interaction with the local community, recreational activities, and creative spaces that foster relaxation and reflection.

JORNADAS NA ALDEIA '24

For those interested in becoming part of E.E.R.I., the process is inclusive and seeks to engage young people with diverse backgrounds, as well as those who are passionate about rural development and eager to make a difference in the forgotten communities of Portugal and Europe.

Enrollment and Selection Process

Online Registration: Candidates must complete an application form available on the project's official website. If access through the website is not possible, a direct link is provided here. The form includes questions about personal details, previous experience, and motivation for participating in the project. **Selection Criteria:** We prioritise candidates who demonstrate a strong commitment to community development and have a genuine interest in rural sustainability issues. Young people from rural areas, as well as those facing social or economic challenges, are especially encouraged to join the participant group.

JORNADAS
NA ALDEIA

What's Next?

E.E.R.I. have a robust follow-up plan aimed at extending the project's impact and ensuring that the experiences and learning are integrated and applied by participants in their communities.

Follow-Up Activities

Project Promotional Video: A video will be produced during the project to capture valuable moments and insights. This video will promote both the project and the Erasmus+ programme in general, and will be widely shared to inspire more young people to get involved.

School Dissemination: Participants will visit local schools to share their transformative experiences and the impact of the Erasmus+ programme. They will use dynamic presentations and non-formal educational activities to engage students.

Youthpass Certification: To formally recognise the learning outcomes and skills acquired, participants will be guided through the process of completing their Youthpass certificates—a reflective exercise that documents their personal and professional development.
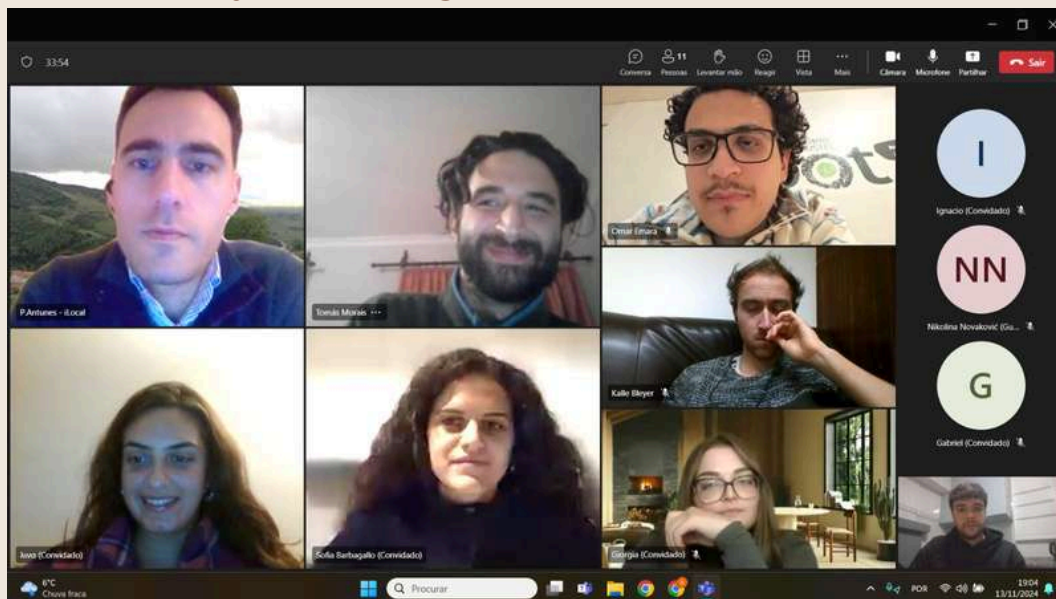
Partners who **made it possible**.

PROJECT RESULTS

EERI Pre-Project Meeting

EERI Instagram Stories

EERI Pre-Project Meeting

EERI DISSEMINATION

The EERI - Empower Europe's Rural Innovators project implemented a dissemination strategy aimed at reaching diverse audiences, both inside and outside the participating organisations, and sharing knowledge, inspiring new actions and promoting rural innovation at local, national and European level.

During and post-mobility dissemination activities
 iLocal and partner organizations published daily social media updates to share insights, project's activities, learning outcomes, and participant experiences. These posts are compiled in the Digital Footprint document, which is annexed to the report, with engagement metrics like views, likes, and shares to measure the project's online reach. Our project digital footprint consisted of 50+ posts reaching over 60000+ accounts

4 promotional video reels of the project developed in partnership w/ Alfandega da Fé Municipality, showcasing key activities, participant testimonials, and the overall experience of the exchange were filmed, edited, and published on social media, as well as iLocal and partner websites, increasing the project's visibility and reaching 10246+ views on Instagram.

We developed a project webpage where we include information, pictures, testimonials and videos from EERIs Activities and moments: ilocal.pt/empower-europes-rural-innovators/

"How to Survive as a Rural Entrepreneur" video series, shared across partner networks and youth platforms, was developed by participants, which consisted of five videos covering innovation, sustainability, and rural business strategies. Videos are available in the EERIs Website page.

Also, project reports and key outcomes were uploaded to Salto Youth, in the form of the EERI Project Report ensuring that youth organizations, trainers, and stakeholders could access and replicate the methodologies used in EERI.

EERI DISSEMINATION

Participants, acting as Erasmus+ ambassadors, organized post-mobility school presentations to share their experiences and promote mobility opportunities to other young people in their local communities w/ around 40 pax. from 4 countries.

Additionally, national teams published, through organizational websites and social media channels, participant testimonials in text format, which are also annexed to the report, reflecting on their personal growth, learnings, and how the project impacted their views on rural innovation.
Also, partners held workshops and knowledge-sharing sessions to integrate EERI's methodologies and insights into their regular training programs for youth.

In order to continue the impact of the project through new initiatives and partnerships, we conducted networking and follow-up meetings with local decision-makers, rural entrepreneurs, and educational institutions.

Target Groups of Dissemination Activities
- Young people interested in rural entrepreneurship and innovation, business opportunities in rural areas, equipping them with real-world knowledge and entrepreneurial tools.

- Youth workers and educators to showcase the project's methodologies in non-formal education programs, providing them with new resources and approaches for teaching rural entrepreneurship.
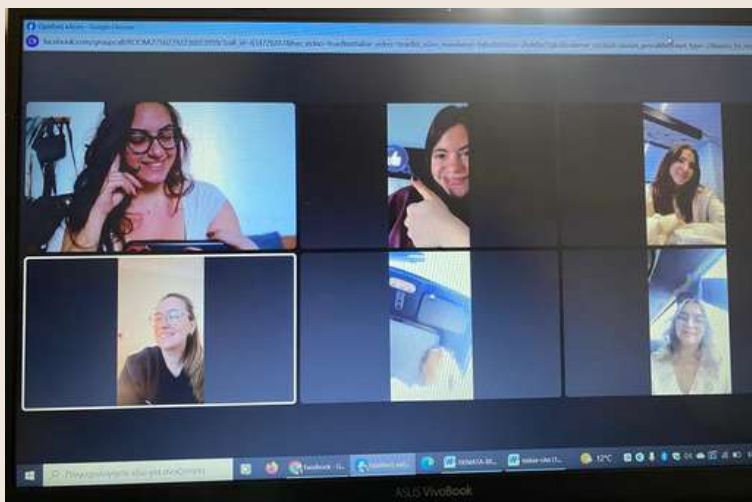
EERI DISSEMINATION

- Local communities and rural stakeholders, showcasing the project results with dissemination events, school visits, and video productions while engaging rural communities and highlighting opportunities for local development.

- Erasmus+ alumni and potential participants to share project results through European youth networks and contribute to increasing awareness and participation in Erasmus+ programs.

- Policy makers and municipal representatives to increase the engagement of local decision-makers in discussions on youth-led rural regeneration strategies and extending the project's impact beyond the youth sector.

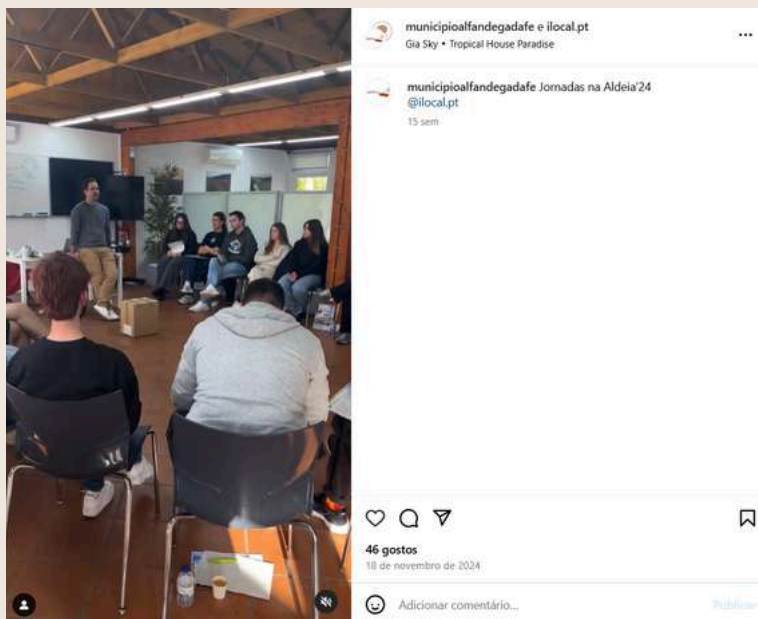Italian Dissemination Session

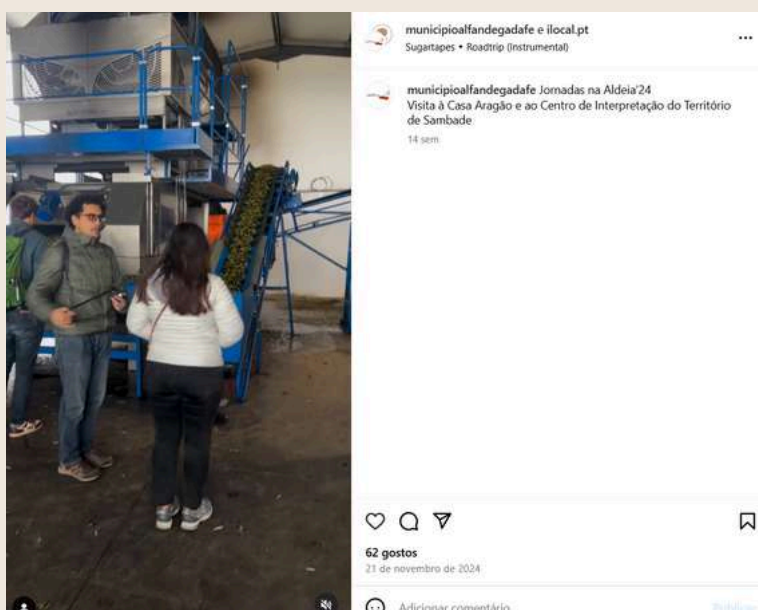# EERI DISSEMINATION

Greek Dissemination Session
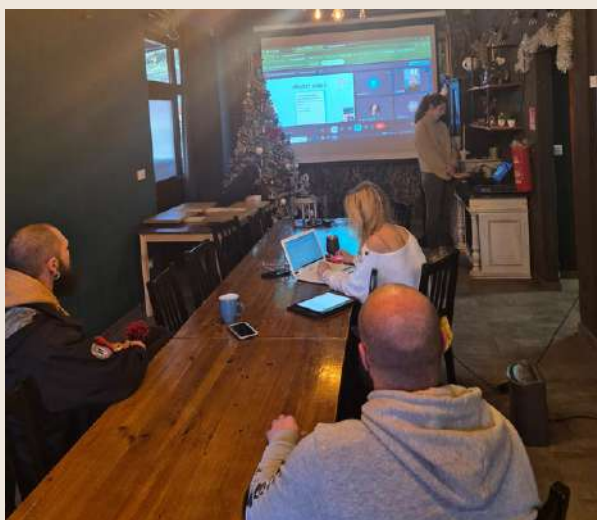
Croatian Dissemination Session

EERI DISSEMINATION

EERI Video 1
instagram.com/p/DChekgzgJC7/?hl=pt

EERI Video 2
instagram.com/p/DCmmXNwMktW/?hl=pt

EERI DISSEMINATION

EERI Video 3
instagram.com/p/DCpMpBps5wY/?hl=pt
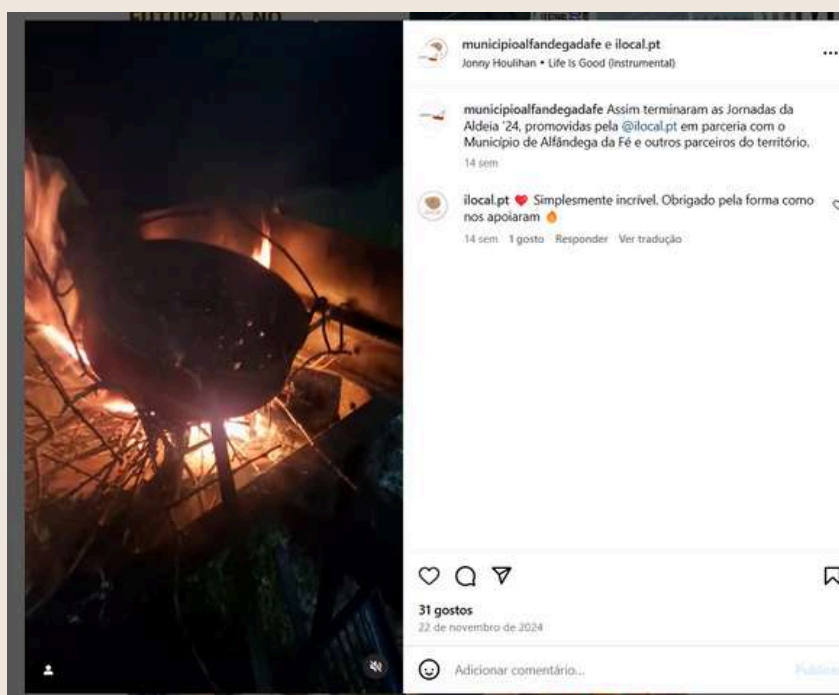
EERI Video 4
instagram.com/p/DCsWBRDtzqC/?hl=pt

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INTELIGÊNCIA LOCAL
ASSOCIAÇÃO PARA A REGENERAÇÃO, DESENVOLVIMENTO
E GOVERNANÇA DAS ECONOMIAS LOCAIS

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