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**Details of activity**

Background to the case study	<p><b>Aims and objectives</b></p> <p>The overall aim of the project is to improve the regional development policies and instruments by developing innovative tools for supporting entrepreneurship and maximizing sustainable use of natural resources and human potential in marginal rural areas.</p> <p>The main focus of the project is to stimulate rural, natural-resources-based entrepreneurship by creating, testing and developing innovative strategies and tools for supporting micro and small businesses, especially for less competitive persons such as young people, women and long-term unemployed persons.</p> <p>At the interregional level, an INTEREG IIIC transnational project is being undertaken with the following objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improvement of cohesion and regional development through development of business environment in rural marginal areas.</li> <li>2. Enhancement of the positive impact of the policies of the European Union.</li> <li>3. Development of innovative and efficient development strategies and tools, which will stimulate rural entrepreneurship, creation of new employment opportunities and reinforce equal opportunities in entrepreneurship.</li> <li>4. Strengthening of co-operation, transfer of know-how and best practices of European marginal rural regions at international level.</li> </ol> <p>At the local level, the project focuses on the following specific objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. To develop innovative strategies and tools for supporting new micro- and small businesses.</li> <li>6. To increase the competitiveness of the local enterprises orienting them to invest on highly competitive fields, making it possible to re-</li> </ol>
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value the old trades (traditional handcrafts, agricultural and food-typical products, alternative tourism) and to value the local resources and the territorial specificities by means of an integrated tourist offer.

7. To stimulate cooperation between companies in order to reduce the gap due to the micro-dimension of the local enterprises by means of a network to facilitate their positioning in the market through the organization of an integrated tourist offer.
8. To initiate and test new appropriate support methods especially for people with a lower ability to compete such as young people, women and unemployed persons by improving their equal opportunities for getting engaged in entrepreneurship.
9. To enhance the administrative capacity and knowledge of the public sector and entrepreneurship supporting organisations for the purpose of improving support instruments for rural entrepreneurship.
10. To exchange and promote new business support instruments and methods elaborated by operation and strengthen their impact at regional and interregional level.

#### **Brief rationale**

The starting point for international co-operation between the Project Partners (Finland, Estonia and Italy) under INTERREG IIIC was created by PONTES association, which offers the forum for marginal areas in Europe. Meetings in Italy and Finland in spring '98 and in Estonia in spring '99 created a common understanding and network for co-operation. The provinces of Kainuu in Finland, Põlvamaa in Estonia and National Park of Cilento and Vallo di Diano in Italy started the interregional cooperation whit Materra project, financed by the Ecos-Ouverture programme and implemented between 1999 and 2003.

The area of co-operation was developing the role of women in local economic life and women entrepreneurship.

Partner areas have similar characteristics: peripheral location, less developed infrastructure, high unemployment rate, but wide natural resources and high diversity of landscapes, culture and heritage. Therefore the aim of the first common project was formulated as follows: to develop support functions like culinary heritage, green by-products and environmental values for tourism by promotion of women entrepreneurship.

The results of the implemented project had a positive impact on tourism industry and women entrepreneurship in the respective regions. Moreover, the project captured the attention of entrepreneurs of other sectors and groups because it set a positive example on how to support rural women entrepreneurship and revealed what should be developed and implemented in the future. The project partners and teams also got new ideas how to utilize



	<p>and expand the existing experience for supporting small businesses in economically backward areas, what kind of methods should be used and how to build up support structures that would meet the needs of the target group in the best possible manner and thus be efficient and effective. The project partners had also proved their capacity, ability to co-operate and willingness to continue and expand the co-operation.</p> <p><b>Implementing organisation</b> The project management is structured in two levels: on regional level and on interregional level.</p> <p><b>Funding</b> Total cost: Euro 739.616,00 ERDF Funding: Euro 554.712,00 (=75%) National co-financing EU Member States/Partners : Euro 184.904,00 (=25%)</p> <p><b>Activity start and end date</b> January 1/01/2005 – December 31/12/2007</p>
Description of activity	<p><b>Outline of programme / activities and approaches used</b></p> <p>The project is articulated through the following components:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Capacity building which will guarantee enhanced business support structures by organising trainings and expert assistance for local advisors (seminars, joint-meetings, networking) and small-scale investments in order to ensure capacity and sustainability of resource centres.</li> <li>2) Testing-stimulating entrepreneurship will involve a series of local activities for micro and small businesses. The actions include formulating local strategies and programmes by strategic partnerships and the implementation thereof (face-to-face advising, group advising and workshops, seminars, trainings, studies, researches, fairs and presentations), as well as providing several support services in resource centres.</li> <li>3) Exchange of information and best practices by exchange of experts, study-visits, meetings and conferences, at interregional level. It also includes a comparative study, published guidelines and website to demonstrate and disseminate of the results.</li> </ol>



**The operation uses the following methods:**

1) Strategic partnership groups (equal representation by both local and regional authorities, experts, entrepreneurs and representatives of target groups). The partnerships together with international expertise will formulate innovative strategies and tools, ensuring relevance to local needs and the needs of target group and best solutions which efficiently strengthen the business environment and stimulate micro and small-size entrepreneurship.

2) The target groups will be directly involved in the planning and implementing of the activities by means of the participatory approach. The specific activities (advising, workshops, seminars, trainings, studies and researches, fairs, presentations) will be planned together with entrepreneurs in order to ensure relevant programmes which suit their needs in the best possible way. The entrepreneurs will be encouraged to provide regular feedback and make proposals to project management as well.

The selected approach will create also a community-oriented basis to maximize human potential, help sustain the rural identity and culture and will add social capital in involved areas.

Following the specific objectives of the operation, new institutions in the form of business resource centres will be developed. The centres will implement the strategies and tools formulated by strategic partnerships.

Since population of rural villages is scattered in the inner areas with difficulty of movement and access to information and services, an Itinerant Resources Centre will be organized and equipped with portable computer, so as to be able to be present, according to a previewed calendar, in several places of the territory. In such a way also the inhabitants of the more marginal centres, representing, moreover, the most consisting part of the target group, will be able to access the service supplied by the Centre. The staff assigned to the Centre will be accommodated in the Municipalities, while a permanent central office will be established and will work in the P.N.C.V.D. offices, carrying out all the activities of management and coordination. The centre and the relative equipments, moreover, will be put at the beneficiaries' disposal (entrepreneurs who do not have an equipped office). The Centre will establish contacts and interact with other institutions and regional agencies for the development, many of which present in the strategic partnership, that will assure life to the structure beyond the duration of the project.

As a new method of advising the face-to-face advising model will be developed. The adviser will be professional contact person for the entrepreneur and provide specific help him/herself or through other short-term experts, guaranteeing this way high-quality help and consultancy specifically addressed to the beneficiary (incl. accounting, legislation, taxation, product development and marketing, etc.) which will help prevent or smooth out the





challenges facing an entrepreneur. Centre will also encourage the formation of cooperation groups of entrepreneurs through group-specific advising and practical workshops. This ensures provision of specific information and advising but also fosters the entrepreneur's contacts and networking, which facilitates co-operation and joint actions and thus increases the economic efficiency of entrepreneurs. The centre will also arrange training courses and seminars as well as studies, researches, fairs and presentations proactively fulfilling in this manner gaps in entrepreneurship training and providing practical knowledge basic in the respective area of activity.

**Origins – how it came about – bottom up / top down, grew from previous initiative (if so what)**

The idea of this project is based on the experience of the previous implemented project Materra – Ecos –Ouverture (2000/2002). The actions carried out by Materra project have given positive results, but they have also created expectations at local level. The short duration of the previous project has not helped to support sufficiently the target groups, that need a longer start-up time. Therefore, this project has been proposed to continue the past actions by means of a program enriched by more contacts and better knowledge of the needs of the target groups, as well as of the strategies and instruments to use for achieving positive, concrete and long-lasting results.

**Who is involved in the design, management and delivery of the programme**

Partner Organizations are responsible for management and delivery of the operation. Strategic partnership and target groups are involved in the progress design of the programme.

Project partnership

Finland

Kainuu Rural Advisory Centre / Kainuu Rural Women's Advisory Centre  
(Lead partner)

THE REGIONAL COUNCIL OF KAINUU (PARTNER N°8)

Estonia

Põlva City Government (PARTNER N°2)

Põlva Municipality (PARTNER N°3)

PÕLVAMAA DEVELOPMENT CENTRE (PARTNER N°4)

BUSINESS SUPPORT CENTRE OF RÄPINA (PARTNER N° 5)

Italy

ENTE PARCO NAZIONALE DEL CILENTO E VALLO DI DIANO (PARTNER N°7)

PROVINCIA DI SALERNO (PARTNER N° 8)



	<p>Recognition – has the programme been recognised as good practice? If so, by whom?</p> <p>The project is in a early stage, therefore results in terms of transfer of best practices have not been achieved so far. Nevertheless the project has been marked and cited as a positive model by regional and ministerial authorities and by Development Agencies (Sviluppo Italia, Cevitec, BIC) both for what concerns pilot actions of training and guidelines for environment sustainable enterprise creation (Linea Parco) and for the Resources Centre model (CRAI).</p>
<p>Policy context within which the programme operates</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there an explicit relationship between policy priorities / local activities?</li> </ul> <p>The project is coherent with the PNCVD development strategies and programme. In particular, it is coherent with the basic idea of a sustainable local development based on the relation among different activity sectors and interventions in the field of infrastructures and education and training.</p> <p>It is also coherent with the local development regional programme supporting local handcrafts and agricultural and food small enterprises supposed to become part of a local qualified tourist system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the policy context supportive / prohibitive?</li> </ul> <p>The policy context is supportive due to the coherence of the project with the local development political strategies.</p>
<p>Geographical focus of the case study</p>	<p>At what level does the programme operate?</p> <p>At regional level the project operates in the area of the National Park of Cilento and Vallo di Diano.</p>
<p>Partners' details</p>	<p>The interregional co-operation between project's Partners (Finland and Estonia) will confer an added value to the operation through an exchange of experts and interregional networking. This will ensure transfer of know-how and best practices, integration of the knowledge and experience and enhance competence in project management, implementation and policy-making. This enables to achieve the aim of the project to search and exchange knowledge and innovative solutions for sustainable rural entrepreneurship.</p>

### Theme-Specific Questions

<p>Who was targeted by the programme?</p>	<p>The target group consists of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• disadvantaged people, with reference in particular to people living in the inner areas with difficulties to access information and services;</li> <li>• unemployed women, young people aiming to create their own enterprise, unemployed people in general;</li> <li>• enterprises who have been beneficiaries of Materra project actions.</li> </ul>
<p>Which levels of government were involved, informed or consulted?</p>	<p>Local administrations, associations, research centres and Universities will be involved, informed and consulted both at regional and national level.</p>
<p>What actions resulted in mainstreaming?</p>	<p>Particular interest has aroused the creation of Park Line, a brand of quality to which join a net of artisans and small enterprises who operate in textile sector (apparel, equipment and complements of furnishings) and in the field of products by herbs and natural cosmetics. The formula of the network of enterprises has concurred to safeguard the autonomy of the single artisan and micro business conferring an added value in terms of image and favouring the positioning of the products on the market. The model Park Line has been introduced in other Italian national Parks (Park of Pollino and Park of Vesuvio), and has stimulated similar initiatives on those areas.</p>
<p>Sustainability</p>	<p>The project runs until 2007 so it is still too early to say if and how it will be sustained. However, the work of the MATERRA project under ECOS OUVERTURE was a predecessor of this INTERREG IIC project and continues on the work undertaken in 2000-2002.</p>