

## SPAIN

# Fostering local development in rural areas

### Location

Móra d'Ebre

### Programming period

2014 – 2020

### Priority

P6 - Social inclusion & local  
development

### Measure

M19 - LEADER/CLLD

### Funding (EUR)\*

Total budget 67 110  
EAFRD 31 542  
National/Regional 35 568

### Project duration

2014 – 2017

### Project promoter

Consorci Intercomarcal  
d'Iniciatives  
Socioeconòmiques

### Contact

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### Website

[www.cowocatrural.cat](http://www.cowocatrural.cat)

\*Budget for the year 2016/2017

This inter-territorial cooperation project sought to expand a network of co-working spaces in rural Catalonia and raise awareness of their benefits.

## Summary

The project promoters thought that rural co-working spaces could stimulate economic activity and help maintain the population in rural areas where abandonment is a real threat. This offers opportunities for professionals who want to work in a collaborative space without the need to move away from a rural environment.



Following a pilot project to set up co-working spaces in rural areas, ten Catalanian LAGs launched a continuation inter-territorial co-operation project to create and expand a network of co-working spaces and further promote this new way of working in rural areas.

## Results

14 co-working spaces have been created from 2014 to 2016 .

More than 130 professionals are linked to the co-working spaces.

Small success stories included examples of families staying in a rural area for a holiday while a parent had to connect to their work via a co-working space.

## Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ Co-working in rural areas is an innovative concept that can potentially do a lot to encourage and enable people to live and work in rural areas.
- ❑ Co-working spaces depend on high-speed broadband, and other basic services that must be available in the area.
- ❑ However, the existence of motivated professionals is more important than just having an available space.
- ❑ Even small successes in enabling individuals and families to spend more time in a rural area can have a positive impact on the local economy.
- ❑ It would be useful to network and exchange with similar initiatives in other European rural areas to discuss common challenges and solutions, and look for entrepreneurial opportunities.

## Context

Co-working is a way of working that allows independent professionals, entrepreneurs and SMEs from different sectors to share the same physical and virtual work space. In the city of Barcelona, co-working spaces are increasingly popular and the network COWOCAT was put in place to connect them.

The project promoters thought that rural co-working spaces could stimulate economic activity and help maintain the population in rural areas in Spain where abandonment is a real threat. This new way of working would be an opportunity for professionals who want to work in a collaborative space without the need to move away from a rural environment.

## Objectives

Following a pilot project to set up co-working spaces in rural areas, ten LAGs launched a new inter-territorial cooperation pilot project in 2014, called Cowocat\_Rural, to set up a co-working network in the rural areas of Catalonia.

The project aimed to generate employment in rural areas by offering new opportunities to professionals and entrepreneurs that can be attracted by the better quality of life and reduced living costs in rural areas. More specific objectives of the project include:

- spreading and developing the co-working network as a new way of working through ICT in rural areas;
- raising awareness and creating synergies with other territories;
- attracting talent and maintaining (or increasing) the population in the rural areas.

## Activities

Since the beginning of Cowocat\_Rural, participating LAGs have supported the creation of new coworking initiatives. In order for a new initiative to be included in the network, it is required to have a 'territorial animator' to help select and support the professionals that will be linked to a specific co-working space.

The 'animator' also stimulates cooperation projects among the community, creates synergies and tries to attract projects from investors or clients. The 'animators'

are mostly co-workers themselves, who choose to live and work in a rural area and will put all of their energy into making this self-sustainable in the long run.

The specific activities of this inter-territorial cooperation project in the year 2016-2017, included:

- conducting personal interviews with co-workers and potential co-workers, for the creation of a database of professionals.
- creating a database of existing public or private co-working spaces in the territories of participating LAGs.
- designing the digital platform of Cowocat\_Rural, which is a tool to encourage networking between co-workers and rural coworking spaces.
- organising meetings between rural and urban co-workers to encourage the creation of joint projects.
- organising an exchange event of successful experiences (Coworking Day de Móra d'Ebre, September 30, 2016).
- providing training to the territorial animators.
- designing and delivering training sessions at the High School Julio Antonio de Móra d'Ebre to raise awareness of students and teachers about the possibilities offered by coworking.
- participation in the International Rural Women's Day 2016, where Cowocat\_Rural was presented.
- preparation of the Communication Plan of the project.



## Main Results

14 co-working spaces have been created from 2014 to 2016 .

More than 130 professionals are linked to the co-working spaces.

Small success stories included examples of families staying in the rural area for a holiday while one of the parents had to connect to their work via a co-working space.

## Key lessons

Co-working in rural areas is an innovative concept that can potentially do a lot to encourage and enable people to live and work in rural areas.

Co-working offers an attractive life option to high school and university students that would like to live in rural areas in the future.

Even small successes in enabling individuals and families to spend more time in a rural area can have a positive impact on the local economy.

The fact of being, in a way, a pioneering project since no other network of rural coworking spaces exists in Spain, implies the need to generate knowledge based on own experience.

It would be useful to network and exchange with similar initiatives in other European rural areas to discuss common challenges and solutions, and look for entrepreneurial opportunities.

Co-working spaces depend on high-speed broadband, and other basic services that must be available in the area.

However, the most interesting finding of this project is that it is more important to have motivated professionals than having an available space.

*“When you have found the people that want to work, the space appears almost by itself.”*

Begoña García, project promoter

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## Additional sources of information

Twitter: @cowocatrural