

Regional brand boosts rural development



21/01/2014

The Nitra-Self Governing Region is the first region in Slovakia to have established its own financial instruments to support the implementation of LEADER-type integrated strategies on rural development. A good example of the success of these initiatives was the creation of a regional brand.



The Nitra Region in southwest Slovakia contains 354 villages and has a population of 700 000. The region has the mildest climate and the most productive agricultural centres in the country. In 2006 to 2008, the regional authorities created the conditions for the implementation of integrated strategies of territorial development in rural micro-regions. In particular, they provided training, increased professional capacities to mobilise local potential, and prepared for the implementation of LEADER-type strategies. Five LEADER local action groups (LAGs) were approved but the regional authorities decided to launch an additional programme to finance 15 other public-private partnerships operating outside of the LEADER areas. In 2013, up to 116 projects were implemented in the areas concerned.

Regional brand

This specific regional programme has supported a regional branding project that aims to promote the area, build capacities and introduce regional branding of products in villages. One positive outcome was the brand, 'Regionálny produkt PONITRIE®' (www.produktponitrie.sk), which was set up to denote quality, respect for local culture and traditions and green values. A network of local producers and service providers are involved in the brand's production. The project concerns three

LEADER groups and three other public-private partnerships.

Adopting a 'bottom-up' approach, the regional authorities worked with representatives of craftsmen and producers from the area, whose knowledge and experience were reflected not only in the brand's design, but also in the devised criteria for evaluating the quality of products and granting certificates. Such cooperation also ensured the successful marketing of the brand and the distribution of products.

Partnerships were forged in a wide range of areas: painting on canvas, silk and glass; production of high quality replicas of contemporary weapons; production of utility and decorative ceramics; creation of miniature folklore costumes; wood-carving, macramé, engraving and Easter egg decorating; ornamented honey-cakes; grape cultivation and wine production; bee-keeping and bee products (e.g. candles from beeswax); production and sale of mead wine; animal husbandry and horse breeding; operation of a teahouse; agri-tourism accommodations; boarding and conference services and summer camps.

Certificates

In December 2013, certificates were delivered to the first users of regional brand. These included a tourism operator, food

producers (pumpkin seed, beeswax, mead wine, goat's milk and cow's milk), traditional crafts producers (boxwood, decorative ceramic subjects, wooden statue and reliefs, dolls in folklore costume, landscape oil paintings), and accommodation and boarding providers.

In short, the brand is adding real value to the local products of the region, boosting local sources, creating new job positions and connecting individuals and groups.

Regionálny produkt PONITRIE®
(Nitra, Slovakia)

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