

Vital Rural Area is a European co-operation project (2009-2014), comprising 13 project partners from six North Sea countries, focused on the strengthening of rural areas. The central part of the project is formed by the **Rural Power Pack**, a general working method for sustainable regional development created with a large number of best practice pilot case studies. This **Rural Power Pack** provides an interactive toolbox to be applied in other regions throughout the EU27.

The main goal of the **Vital Rural Area** project is to develop transnational strategies to strengthen regional rural areas by finding new and innovative solutions to three main socio-economical problems, encountered in most rural areas: lack of economic development and innovation, negative or insufficient regional promotion and downsizing of the level or accessibility of services and amenities. These problems were converted into three main challenges:

1. The empowerment of SMEs towards new economic prospects and innovations
2. branding of regions for professional marketing
3. optimising services, for more and better accessible services and amenities

Vital Rural Area's 43 projects focused on one of these three main issues, and covered one or more of these seven themes:



The projects evolved into best practice pilot case studies that have been discussed and improved and sometimes tested and implemented in other Vital regions.

The **Co-operative Agreement Approach** was used as an organisation and process instrument that ensured the sustainable implementation of project results.

Developed alongside the delivery of 'best practice' project results, the **Rural Power Pack** is an integral and general working method, that can be applied in many situations where commonly encountered problems or challenges are faced. It consists of a problem solving methodology including practical tools and instruments.

THE RURAL POWER PACK

THEMES AND CONTENTS WORK PACKAGES 1. SME EMPOWERMENT 2. BRANDING 3. SERVICES	LOCAL/REGIONAL APPROACH 1. PROBLEM ANALYSIS 2. PROPOSED SOLUTIONS 3. EXECUTION OF PROJECT 4. EXPERIENCES / RESULTS	METHODOLOGY 1. PROBLEMS/CHALLENGES 2. SOLUTIONS 3. BARRIERS 4. TOOLS
THEMES Education Broadband & Digital Services Sme Empowerment Good Governance Community Building Wellbeing & lifestyle Profile & Branding	BEST PRACTICE PROJECTS - Lessons learned / experiences - Applicability check - Sustainability check - Extension Of Knowledge By Exchange	COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT APPROACH KEY PROJECTS PRESENTATION

In Norway our partners are Rogaland Fylkeskommune in Stavanger and Finnøy Kommune. They specialize in several of the Vital themes, most dominantly in Wellbeing and Lifestyle, Broadband implementation and applications, and branding and profiling issues. The Lifestyle coaching project is a successful incubator project within the theme Wellbeing and Lifestyle that has been highlighted in Norwegian media and transferred to other Norwegian regions.

DISSEMINATION OF PROJECT RESULTS AND PARTNER SEARCH

Our project results and experiences are now being disseminated throughout other regions and EU-countries. We are searching for new regional partners who can contribute their experiences and ideas to improve our knowledge on specific subjects and the **Rural Power Pack**. To facilitate this process we have introduced 'country pages' on our website, maintained by the partners. A **Virtual Meeting Room**, containing a Skype conference facility, a live stream for connecting partners and a social media corner, facilitating webinars and master classes is now under construction.

UPCOMING WEBINARS

Upcoming webinars using the Virtual Meeting Room will be launched in early 2014 and focus on the following:

1. **The Innovation House** concept introducing new partners working focused on stimulating and connecting young entrepreneurs
(Simon Simonsen, scs@vejenkom.dk)
2. **Webbased coaching programme for Lifestyle improvement.** Healthy ageing by personal coaching to improve health and lifestyle.
(Eli Viten and Helga Idsø Kloster, Helga.idsoee.kloster@rogfk.no; eli.viten@rogfk.no)
3. **Broadband implementation and applications.** In several Vital regions there is a vast experience on broadband implementation. We are now investigating future perspectives on optimal use of the broadband facility (services, care, education, entrepreneurship)
(Simon Simonsen, scs@vejenkom.dk).

We invite you to join us in these activities. Do not hesitate to contact one of us to share your knowledge



PROJECT MANAGER VITAL RURAL AREA

Dr. Peter Laan, Project manager *Vital Rural Area* is an experienced project manager and rural expert, who has been working with EU-programming including LEADER for more than 20 years. In Vital Rural Area, Peter - together with the partnership - developed the Rural Power Pack and its methodology and is responsible for the dissemination of the project.











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INSPIRING EXAMPLES LOOKING FOR NEW PARTNERS AND CONNECTION TO OTHER RURAL WORKERS

1. THE INNOVATION HOUSE

<http://vitalruralarea.eu/sme-empowerment/24-sme-empowerment-and-entrepreneurship/55-37innovation-house>



Rural Power Pack methodology	
 PROBLEMS/CHALLENGES	 Lack of jobs, education, ambition and power
 SOLUTIONS	 A concept/place to support SMEs and entrepreneurs
 BARRIERS	 Culture and habits, politics and timing  Money for investment
 TOOLS	 SWOT analysis for preparation  Case studies from other Innovation Houses

The main objective of the Innovation House concept is for it to be **an incubator to stimulate and support SME empowerment and entrepreneurship**. The general idea is to gather different SMEs and entrepreneurs in inspiring surroundings, collaborating with a supporting and inspiring staff. Enterprises in the house will have a distinct sense of community and must be willing to establish links with each other, but enterprises outside are welcome to use the services as well.

The Innovation House cannot exactly be copied from one place or one country to another, but a number of key elements can be identified and













combined in a local setting. One element is a house with different sized offices, meeting facilities and one meeting room equipped with support for idea-generation and creativity.

The original concept, developed in Vejen Kommun, was introduced and implemented in the Vital region of Lauwersland (Friesland, the Netherlands) and in Rogaland (Norway) in 2012 and 2013 and we are now searching for new partners who have experience in this field and are willing to share this with us.

2. WEBBASED COACHING PROGRAMME FOR LIFESTYLE IMPROVEMENT

<http://vitalruralarea.eu/wellbeing-lifestyle/27-wellbeing-and-lifestyle/87-webbased-coaching-programme-for-lifestyle-improvement>



Rural Power Pack methodology	
 PROBLEMS/CHALLENGES	 Ageing society, increase of lifestyle related illnesses, lack of service, infrastructure and access to ICT
 SOLUTIONS	 Lifestyle course for inhabitants (ICT based)  Attention, communication and PR  Improved infrastructure  Multidisciplinary working groups
 BARRIERS	 Lack of Infrastructure and ICT access  History, culture and habits
 TOOLS	 Interactive website facilitating lifestyle improvement: www.livsstil.finnoy.no

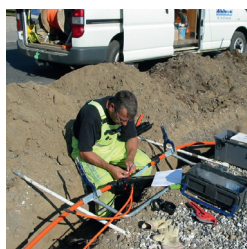
Servicing a healthy lifestyle is essential to wellbeing and healthy living in rural areas. It contributes directly to the quality of life. Both prevention and care are important challenges to deal with. In rural areas specific problems are more stringent because of distance to public and private services and sometimes also to a lack of ambitions and prospects.












A best practice project, performed throughout the Finnøy Islands using high speed broadband facilities and personal coaching, showed a clearcut positive result of an 8 week coaching programme in changing lifestyle.

The results of this project are now spread and applied in other regions in Norway and also offer opportunities for other partners throughout Europe. We are now searching for new partners who work in the field of Healthy Ageing and lifestyle improvement.

3. BROADBAND-APPLICATIONS

<http://vitalruralarea.eu/broadband-digital-services/23-broadband-and-digital-services/138-20broadband-and-digital-services>



Rural Power Pack methodology	
 PROBLEMS/CHALLENGES	 Lack of infrastructure, services, education
 SOLUTIONS	 Fibre network (FTTH) to everybody  Digital services, training programmes
 BARRIERS	 Politics, regulations, (change of) culture and habits  Money (missing broadband investment)
 TOOLS	 EU's 'Guide to Broadband investment'  Business-case tool

Since distance is always a key issue in rural areas, lack of fast broadband connection is considered to be a major challenge for future growth, development and settlement in rural areas. Networks based on fibre technology are therefore supposed to be a necessity to keep up life quality and company perspectives in the near future.

The Vital project performed in Vejen has become a leading example of broadband application in Denmark and is mentioned as an example of best practice by the EU-Commission. Next to that, other broadband

projects by Vital Rural Area partners have been inspired by experience from the Danish project, and in the Vital Rural Area project, broadband and ICT-applications have been the basis for many different pilot activities.

The actual challenge is to develop and implement new applications for fast broadband in services, care issues, and education. The time is ripe to capitalise on the facilities that can benefit from fast broadband, resulting in saving money for longer periods and therefore opening opportunities to maintain and develop quality and accessibility of basic services.