



# **Delivering social economy solutions in lagging rural areas through LEADER: the Užimtumo namai case (Lithuania)**

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Good Practice Webinar  
Territorial instruments (LEADER/CLLD, ITIs and Smart Villages): lessons for the future

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# Local context and challenges

- Tulpiakiemis village, Ukmergė district (Lithuania)
  - ~30 km from nearest town (Ukmergė)
  - Very limited transport (few bus connections per week)
  - Difficult access to jobs and services

## **Socio-economic context:**

- High share of elderly residents
- Low-income households
- Limited skills and work experience

## **Additional challenges:**

- Outmigration of younger population
- Lack of local employers
- Social isolation and low community engagement

## **Key challenge:**

- Residents cannot commute to jobs
- Need for **local, accessible employment solutions**



# Project overview

- ▶ **Project:** Development of Social Business by “Užimtumo namai”  
**Measure:** LEADER (EAFRD) – NGO Social Business (LEADER-19.2-5)  
**Period:** Feb – Aug 2020
- ▶ **Budget:** €42,817
  - EAFRD: €28,253
  - National: €4,986
  - Private: €9,578
- ▶ **Main objectives:**
  - Create local employment opportunities
  - Improve social inclusion
- ▶ **Additional objectives:**
  - Activate economically inactive residents
  - Develop a sustainable rural social business model
  - Strengthen local community resilience
  - Pilot an innovative employment solution in remote areas



# How the project works

- • Establishment of a local “**Employment House**”
  - Modular container infrastructure including:
    - o workspaces
    - o rest & sanitary facilities
    - o storage and equipment
- **Work activities (based on orders):**
  - Assembling calendars
  - Packaging magazines and SIM cards
  - Sewing and packing tasks
- **Flexible model:**
  - Work depends on incoming orders
  - Flexible working hours
  - Participation via individual activity licences



# Target groups and approach

## ➤ Target groups:

- Elderly people
- Low-income residents
- Women with care responsibilities
- People with limited skills/work experience
- Long-term unemployed / inactive persons

## ➤ Approach:

- Bring jobs directly to the village
- Ensure low-entry barriers to employment
- Provide flexible and adaptable work options
- Build confidence and social participation

## ➤ Key idea:

→ Social business as a tool for **inclusion + employment**



# Results

- ▶ • 2 full-time jobs created
- 11 vulnerable people engaged
- ▶ • All planned outputs achieved
- ▶ **Post-project growth:**
  - From <10 participants
  - To >20 engaged people
- ▶ **Wider impact:**
  - Increased local activity and motivation
  - Improved income opportunities
  - Stronger community cohesion
- ▶ **Recognition:**
  - 1st prize – “Well-being Creators”
  - Future Village Creators Awards (2021)



# Key takeaways

- ▶ • LEADER can deliver **real impact in remote areas**
- Small investments → **high social return**
- Social business = effective rural tool
- ▶ **Effective response to:**
  - Limited mobility
  - Unemployment
  - Social exclusion
- ▶ **Main lessons:**
  - Bringing jobs closer to people works where commuting fails
  - Flexibility is key for vulnerable groups
  - Small-scale pilot projects can be scaled up
  - Community-based solutions are more sustainable
  - Partnerships with private sector (orders) are crucial
  - Social innovation can emerge from rural areas





**Thank you for your attention!**

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