

EURACADEMY SUMMER SCHOOL
DEVELOPING SUSTAINABLE RURAL TOURISM
Gotland, Sweden 10th - 21st August 2002

THE PARTICIPANTS' HANDBOOK

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1. Introduction

This 'handbook' is written to help you to orient to the Summer School. It aims at giving you an overall idea of the methods that will be used in order to achieve the goals of this paneuropean gathering, and it will state some of the arguments for why these particular methods and approaches are used.

The general goal for the Summer School is to start a learning process – both a personal and a shared one - of building up knowledge on the subjects of sustainable rural tourism and sustainable rural development. All of us who will meet on Gotland have already experiences from this field and many of you act as animators in your own areas and countries. Yet there is always something new to learn and to reflect on, something to share, something new to create and to experience and someone new to meet. We, who are responsible for the Summer School, want both to provide you with fresh ideas and tools to use at your work, and to invite you to share your knowledge and experiences with others – thus we all will learn and we all will teach and make the most of the opportunities available during the whole of 10 days and even after!

2. Our Educational Approach

The key words describing our educational approach are: **adult learning, self-directed learning, learning as a process, learning by doing** and **group dynamics**. As these are so central to our way of working at the Summer School, we describe them briefly below.

Adult learning is described by Michael Knowles. He calls it andragogy. With this term he wants to emphasise the differences between the way adult people and the children/youngsters learn. Knowles states that adults approach learning as problem-solving and learn best when the topic is of immediate value. Adults need to know why they are learning something and they want to learn experientially. As adults have lots of previous experience and have different reasons for partaking in any educational activity, their expectations on any learning environment vary tremendously. Adults, generally, benefit the most from active participation in the learning process and by given chances to process their own experience trough reflection, analysis and critical examination. Instructors and experts are therefore seen more as recourses and facilitators than as lecturers or graders.

Adults can also be seen as **self-directed learners**, and self-directed learning has been important in our approach in organising this Summer School. We all have different experiences, and we know different things. Learning styles differ and each adult has his or her way to learn best. On the whole, however, adults can be described as grown-up, independent individuals, who are accustomed to take care of themselves and their responsibilities. They seek solutions to their problems, use their previous experience and knowledge to perform their tasks. Adults also see things in broader perspectives. These are skills that we partly develop as we grow up and in general all adults use these skills– also when learning is involved! This implies that much learning is self-directed. Self-directedness is not, however, the same as acting alone, but other people (students, tutors, instructors) involved in the learning process are seen as supporters and sparring partners to reflect ideas with. They are also as mirrors that give us feedback and help us to correct our direction, if it seems to be false in some way. A self-directed learner doesn't have to learn alone. Adults usually want to learn both alone and with groups of different people

Some things we learn at once; lets say for example by watching a model performance and then trying to do the same ourselves. Some factual knowledge can be learned instantly; understood and remembered. But if we see **learning as a process**, it brings to mind the idea, that learning

something takes time and effort - gathering and processing information and transforming it to knowledge and understanding. Even those two little examples mentioned above can be seen as parts of a process: you have to have some previous knowledge and experience if you want to understand what the model performance is about, or to what things new factual knowledge can be connected to and used as a part of. As little children we start to learn, gather experiences, observe the world and try to make some sense of it - understand it and connect different things in meaningful and usable ways; construct our knowledge. All this is an ongoing process that never stops - people live and learn all the time. Learning is a comprehensive experience melting together reasoning, emotions, imagination, intuition and experiences. *Studying is a very special learning process*, for when studying we set goals for ourselves and our learning and concentrate on certain chosen themes. This Summer School should be taken as a comprehensive learning experience with many different learning processes going on at the same time. When it comes to studying, we all may choose our goals, move towards them and in the end evaluate ourselves if those goals are met or not.

Learning by doing emphasises experiential learning and that we learn by handling the tasks and problems at hand in our everyday life. Learning by doing emphasises also that when we act, we use our personalities, knowledge and capacities to a fuller extent. For learning by doing to be effective, however, it needs to be combined with reflection. So, learning by doing encourages us both to experiment, seek different approaches, make new assumptions and try to find different solutions to the problems at hand, and to reason, reflect on and evaluate our experiences. That way we can all the time construct our knowledge anew. This is also motivating and even fun! Something to do best with others and socially share the learning experiences into which everybody brings something of their own.

Human beings are social by nature and do we our best when we can solve problems together, set goals together and try to achieve those together - whether it was to kill a mammoth in ancient times or nowadays to find solutions to the problems of Rural Tourism in Europe. But it is not self-evident that any group of people will work together efficiently and harmonically. In fact, even when everyone in a group seem to be in accordance about the common tasks and goals, there may be still be monumental problems in their capacity to work as a team! The idea of working and learning together, sharing experiences, and making the best out of our various backgrounds and knowledge, has been touched on already in this handbook. For this to be successful, we need to be aware of that when we work in groups, there are particular kinds of challenges which have to do with the group setting itself. This is what **group dynamics** is about. A simple, but helpful, way to think about groups, is the FIRO-model (**F**undamental **I**nterpersonal **R**elationship **O**rientation), developed by Schutz. He postulated that there are three dimensions to account for all interpersonal phenomena:

1. *Inclusion* - the need to socialise, to be in the company of, or in contact with, people
2. *Control* -the need to influence, make decisions, direct, have power over, have impact on
3. *Openness* -the need to share one's inner thoughts and feelings

Corresponding to these three interpersonal behavioural needs are three needs that affect our feelings when interacting with others: *significance* (we all need to feel worthwhile, important, meaningful), *competence*, (we also all need to feel strong, intelligent, capable) and *likability* (and we need to feel that we are good, attractive, likable).

The interesting thing is that these dimensions can be traced in how groups develop and the FIRO model is often drawn on in leadership trainings. In the beginning of any new group, the focus will be on *inclusion*, and most participants tend to be generous and welcoming, but also rather superficial in their communication with one another. At the back of one mind the central question

may be: is this a group that I want to belong to? The next stage, that groups tend to go through, is dominated by the *control* dimension. Then the participants become more aware of their need for control, and the generous atmosphere may be changed into one of more conflict. During this stage the group will handle issues of hierarchy and structure, and the participants will strive to get a position they feel at home in. If the group succeeds in handling the control stage, then a well working team can develop, and the questions of *openness* come into focus. Within the group, openness will dominate, and the group will be able to accept that some participants will be nearer to each other than to others. In relation to other groups, however, the risk is that group members become more closed, and that the group can become rather arrogant and suspicious towards other groups. The FIRO model can be used to understand what happens in groups, both in short term settings (such as a small group discussion session) and over longer time (such as the whole Summer School).

We have tried to design the curriculum of the Summer School according to these ideas of learning and group dynamics, and we have chosen learning methods that best serve adult learners. That has led to that there will be plenty of time for joint reflection and discussion, for sharing examples and experiences. But there will also be time for individual reflection and for formulating your own goals and learning outcome. To achieve this, we have designed the tasks and assignments that are described in the following section. To make it all happen is a challenge for us - but also a challenge for you as participants, professionals and animators, who might apply these ideas and approaches to your own work, supporting learning and self-developing adults back home!

3. The Summer School Curriculum

This section gives an overview over the Summer School and how it is structured. The particular parts are described more fully in the following section.

The Summer School has four main parts. The first, *introductory* part, aims, of course, at giving you an overview over the coming events and the place we are in. It also aims at letting you get to know the other participants, and what their interests are. This is done both in a small group presentations and in the *Open Space discussion*. The introductory part also includes the session on *Sustainable Rural Development* and the visit to the *Medieval Festival in Visby* which both is an interesting case of cultural tourism, and an occasion for us to get to know one another better.

The second part focuses on *the 6 themes of Rural Tourism* described in the Thematic Guide. Each theme is explored during a session which will begin with a plenary introduction given by a specific introducer. This is followed by a small group discussion. It is in these discussions that your own case will be a valuable and important in-put. To ensure participatory reflection, the small group discussions are guided by a *given format*, and a tutor will facilitate them. The sessions will end with plenary discussions, which include a summing-up of how the group wants to develop the Thematic Guide and further discussions with the introducer.

Two evenings, there will also be some optional sessions on *'The animator's tools'*. These may include sessions on conflict handling, how to support actor's self-confidence, marketing, planning tools, as well as other topics which the participants ask for, providing we think that we have the appropriate competence in the teaching team, or which follow-up on the Open Space discussion.

The **third part** is the *Study Tour*. During the tour you will be able to further explore the themes and questions discussed during the previous sessions. You will work in project groups, and each group will go to a particular part of Gotland, and have their own programme of visits.

The *Study Tour Groups' reports* will feed into **the fourth part** of the Summer School: the joint reflection and sum-up. A central part in this is the session on '*Development principles for sustainable rural tourism*', but the final *evaluation* of the Summer School and your own reflections on your '*portfolio*' (these are described in the next section) will also be important in the summing-up of the journey we will have gone through during these 10 days.

| Sat 10 | Sun 11 | Mon 12 | Tue 13 | Wed 14 |
|---|--|--|--|---|
| <i>Introduction and presentations</i> | <i>Sustainable rural development</i> | <i>Introduction to sustainable rural tourism</i> | <i>Protecting and managing the heritage, with tourism</i> | <i>Entrepreneurship: how to encourage enterprises related to rural tourism</i> |
| <i>Formation of groups of interest (an Open Space experience)</i> | <i>Visit to Medieval Festival in Visby</i> | <i>Creating the tourism product</i> | <i>Synergies: how tourism can benefit other parts of the rural economy</i> | <i>The local community: how to involve and sustain the local people through tourism</i> |
| <i>Rural Europe Festival (Opening dinner)</i> | | | <i>The Animator's Tools</i> | <i>The Animator's Tools</i> |

| Thurs 15 | Fri 16 & Sat 17 | Sun 18 | Mon 19 | Tue 20 |
|---|--------------------|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| <i>Strategic planning: a formal approach to the long view</i> | <i>Study tours</i> | <i>Study tours, prepare reports</i> | <i>Study tour reports</i> | <i>Ideas for collaboration, projects etc</i> |
| <i>Formation of study tour groups and group work</i> | | | <i>Development principles for sustainable rural tourism</i> | <i>Evaluation of the Summer School</i> |
| | | <i>Iron Age feast</i> | | |

4. Tasks and assignments for the participants

During the Summer School and *even before that* there will be different kinds of tasks and assignments for you to make. Some of the assignments are divided to sub-tasks that will form a whole through the learning process (e.g. the Portfolio and the Evaluation of the Summer School) while others like Students' cases, Group session sum-ups and Study Tour Reports are more like peaks in the whole Summer School learning process.

To prepare before coming – Your Expectations

Write a few lines on your expectations and personal goals on the Summer School. What is it you want to have experienced, discussed, learnt more about, developed or started up with someone, when you come home again? Begin to think along these lines!

What you write down will be the starting point for your '*portfolio*' (which described below) and a way to prepare you for the *Open Space* discussion at the beginning of the Summer School. We arrange the Open Space especially to help you to find those who have similar interests, ideas and problems as you do. There will be some 50 – 70 persons altogether taking part in the Summer School in one role or another, so this is a good way to give everybody some idea of interests we share, and a way to start finding the persons from whom to learn the most.

To prepare before coming – Your Own Case

Bring a case on Rural Tourism which relates to one of the six themes in the Thematic Guide. You will be asked to present this case in the small group discussion on the theme in question. The case will be added to our list of cases and it may also be used in the new edition of the Guide! It can be a good or a bad example, and it can support or refute the ideas presented in the Thematic Guide. It can also be a case which illustrates the theme from your country or region. You should, one way or another, personally know the case, and be able to discuss it with others.

Your task is to write a description of the case of at least *300 words* which includes:

- a) which of the themes of the Thematic Guide it relates the most to
- b) why you chose this particular case and how you are connected to it
- c) a description of the case as a **PROCESS**, by describing, for instance:
 - how was initiated
 - the kinds of actors who were/are involved
 - how they worked for it
 - how it was financed
 - what problems they met, and how they handled them
 - what you think has been the reasons for the success or failure

It would also be a wonderful addition if you could bring photographs and other material with you to illustrate the case. During the Summer School, we will make one huge exhibition of all these cases, so the photos will really add to the presentation!

To prepare before coming - A short Presentation of Yourself

Write a short presentation of yourself. This will both be used during the Summer School and in the future networking within the Euracademy. This presentation should include some information about

your experiences and interests related to Rural Development, and how you can be contacted. If possible bring it on a floppy disc, so we can feed into the computer directly.

Small Group Discussions: the format and sum-ups

Each theme is given a 3,5-hour block (half a day). Each block includes:

- a plenary introduction
- a small group discussion.
- a joint plenary sum-up.
- 10 min for individual reflection

The input for the *small group discussion* is: the text in the Thematic Guide, the plenary introduction, the cases that you have brought with you, and, last but not least, of course, all the experiences and knowledge present in the group. These discussions will be facilitated by the team of facilitators and they will follow a given format. This format builds on the questions which follow each theme in the Thematic Guide. These questions are:

1. According to your experience or the situation in your area, what are the main challenges when.... (The theme e.g. creating and marketing a tourism product?) How can these be handled?
2. What do you think are useful ideas in the chapter, including the cases? What do you find not useful or irrelevant
3. How should the chapter be changed to better cover the theme? What should be omitted? What should be added?
4. Note down other issues that you may wish to raise at the Summer School

In the groups, the discussions will have four main parts:

- first a round when everyone gives short comments especially question 1 above
- this is followed by the presentation and discussion of the cases prepared by participants, and
- a general discussion collecting ideas on the theme
- finally the group is asked to suggest what should be added or omitted in the next version of the the Thematic Guide. The group writes keywords on this on a big sheet of paper which they bring with along to the plenary discussion.

The group should also have chosen a secretary who writes down the main points in the whole discussion. So, the discussion will be documented both through these notes and the keywords on the big paper.

The Study Tour and the Study Tour Report

During the Study Tour, we get the opportunity to elaborate on the themes of Rural Tourism through the cases that Gotland provides us. The Study Tour forms a major part of the Summer School and is a chance for all participants to melt together their previous knowledge and experience, with the ideas and questions that have been raised during the first days of the Summer School.

The *Study Tour* will be made in groups of 6-8 people and each group will go to a separate part of Gotland. You will go in a minibus and will visit tourist entrepreneurs, local development groups and other actors relevant to Rural Tourism, who all have been contacted in advance by the Summer School organisers. You will stay the two nights August 16th and 17th in your study tour area, and on August 18th we all will gather at Gervide Gård (Case 6.4 in the Thematic Guide) in the afternoon.

Each group will have a computer along to work with, and you are recommended to work with your Study Tour Report all along the tour. The group shall present their report in the morning of August 19th.

The *Study Tour Report* is a result of the process during the Tour. For the planning and preparation of it you will be given some common guidelines and questions, but the actual result depends on the group that will produce it: what are your experiences, what do you see as important and what features related to Rural Tourism do you want to emphasise? When the groups are formed on August 15th, you will have time to prepare an interview guide to use during the Study Tour and time also to start planning the report. So, the planning of the Study Tour Report and the discussion of its content and form will start at the same time as the groups for the Tour are formed. But it will surely be further developed during the whole Tour.

The Portfolio

Portfolio is an old, today more or less reinvented method of studying and learning. Perhaps you have met the word before in relation to models, painters and photographers who show their pictures in a portfolio, but the word 'portfolio' is also used, in general, to signify that a subject or a process is presented and illustrated. Usually, it is a selection of somebody's work (as photographs taken of the model) put together for some specific purpose (to get work) and usually presented, evaluated and graded somehow (employer looks it through and gives the job or not).

We use it as a tool to monitor and reflect on learning processes, and thus as a tool for self-developing, self-evaluation and introspection. Your portfolio will be your personal learning notebook or diary, written, illustrated and collected during the Summer School - not meant for the eyes of others or as an object of discussion - but to entice you to reflect on your learning process and experiences. These personal notes are something to take home and use the best you can and also a storage from where to draw ideas from the activities of the Summer School.

You will all be given a file where you can collect all the material you prefer during the Summer School. You already have the Thematic Guide; in this file you will compile the rest of the Summer School material. So how to turn it into a Portfolio; isn't it just a material baggage? It *becomes* a Portfolio, because you choose what to put into it and why; lecture notes of your own, drawings, photographs, brochures, articles, dried flowers etc – whatever you want to. The most central tools to make this a Portfolio are your *personal notes and reflections*; those will tell you even long after this Summer School what happened, what you thought about it and how your own ideas and opinions developed.

We will help you to start the portfolio and finish it. The *expectations* and your *personal goals* for the Summer School which you have been asked to write, as well as the *short introduction* of yourself can be seen as the first parts of the Portfolio. Some more material for it will be produced as there will be *self-evaluation* tasks for you both at the beginning and at the end of the Summer School. At the end of each session, during the second part of the Summer School, there will also be *10 minutes for personal reflection*. The notes you write then will be important input for your portfolio.

The evaluation of the Summer School

We want to make the Summer School a good experience to everybody, and an open, continuous flow of feed-back and information is the best way to do that. So, the evaluation of the Summer School will be an ongoing process. As organisers, we need the feedback from you – both of things that are ok and run smoothly and of those not so ok – in order to make possible corrections. We see evaluation as a two-way process, not primarily as a means of criticism, but as a joint process of invention and development. Being an educational project, the evaluation of the Summer School has three dimensions which cover:

- how the Summer School has been organised and implemented
- the staff - their input and their learning
- your own input and your own learning as a participant

There will be several means of evaluation used during the Summer School:

- you can always share your thoughts with the facilitators, there will be staff meetings regularly when your comments will be brought up.
- there will be a Comments Box for you to drop ideas, wishes, remarks etc anonymously
- your goals and expectations on the Summer School will be used in the evaluation.
- as a part of the Portfolio process you are encouraged to also evaluate the Summer School
- when the second part of the Summer School is over, and you start to prepare for the Study Tour, there will be an inquiry to collect your comments so far
- as a part of the Study Tour Report there will be an evaluation task
- finally during the last day of the Summer School there will be a larger evaluation task in which you are asked to use the notes of your Portfolio, and then we will discuss about your comments first in small groups and then in a plenary that will end the actual Summer School.

The external evaluator of the Euracademy Project will also be present during the Summer School, and will partake in the overall evaluation process.

5. The teaching team

The Role of Introducers and facilitators

Our educational approach, based on the ideas on **adult learning, self-directed learning, learning as a process, learning by doing** and **group dynamics** presented previously, has consequences for how we look at the roles of the teaching team at the Summer School. We stated earlier that, according to adult learning theory, tutors and teachers are seen as resource persons and facilitators rather than as lecturers or graders. Successful adult education facilitators have been described as people who:

- view themselves as participating in a dialogue between equals.
- are open to change and new experiences/seek to learn from helping activities.
- are genuine in entering into personal relationships with learners
- accept and trust the learner as a person of worth (unconditional positive regard).
- have empathy (non-judgemental understanding, both intellectual and emotional) for the learner's perspective.

We also think of learning partly as a social process, and believe that sharing experiences and ideas, networking and collaboration are important for learning. However, in any group, processes of group dynamics are bound to develop. And such processes will stimulate, but may also hinder, the communication in the group.

We have tried to design the teaching team's input according to these ideas. Each theme begins with an **introduction**, rather than a lecture. This introduction is seen as an input to your own discussions on the themes. **The facilitators**, who will facilitate these discussions, will see to the group process rather than to the content of your discussion.

Introducers

Sustainable rural development:

Michael Dower, Professor of European Rural Development at the University of Gloucestershire in England; and Vice-President of ECOVAST, the European Council for the Village and Small Town. He has 40 years of experience in countryside planning, rural development and rural tourism. Michael will also take part in the re-writing of the Thematic Guide, and will therefore be an observer of what goes on in the groups.

Sustainable rural tourism:

Fouli Papageorgiou is the Managing Director and Partner of PRISMA Centre for Development Studies, based in Athens. She is a qualified architect since 1969, and holds a PhD in Urban and Regional Studies from the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, University of Birmingham, U.K. She has been a University teacher and researcher from 1972 to 1985 in the Technical University of Athens, School of Architecture and in the Universities of Aston in Birmingham, Leeds and Edinburgh in the UK. Through her current position she has accumulated substantive experience on management and evaluation of EU Programmes and Initiatives' transnational coordination of EU projects; and conduct of studies and research in the field of local and regional development.

Creating the tourism product.

Tomas Bergfeldt is an entrepreneur who started selling off-shore canoeing trips in the Stockholm archipelago 18 years ago. Successively he developed a business idea and company called "Adventure travel" focusing on adventures and nature experiences: hiking in the Himalayas,

canoeing in the Archtics, boating in the Antarcthics etc. At the time, this was a new concept and received a lot of attention. Thomas has developed many products, which have been sold to adventurers and nature lovers alike. Thomas is now a member of the national Ecotourism committee who has developed criteria for, and appoints certificates to, eco-tourism products sold by different companies.

Thomas Norrby is a Continuing Education specialist at SLU (Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences) with a background as researcher on SME development, specifically in marketing. Thomas runs projects and CE courses in rural development. Thomas is a true "Gotlander" by birth, heart and soul, a father of four. Thomas works on establishing new innovative arenas for exchange of passion, vision and action. Thomas is also one of the main organisers of this summer school.

Protecting and managing the heritage, with tourism:

Dan Carlsson, PhD and Associate Professor at Gotland University College. Project Director of Viking Heritage and Frojel Discovery Programme projects, working in the field of combining research, regional development and businesses in the field of culture heritage.

Synergies: how tourism can benefit other parts of the rural economy

Ulf Brangefeldt is head of the Rural Development Program at SLU, He focuses on entrepreneurship and business development in rural areas, tourism and agro industry development as well as rural development issues in Eastern as well as Western Europe. Ulf is deeply involved in pan-european projects and networks, recently president of ECOVAST (European Council for the Village and Small Town.

Entrepreneurship: how to encourage enterprises related to rural tourism

Antti Haahti is Doctor of Economics and Business Administration, and professor at the University of Lapland in Rovaniemi, Finland. His main areas of interest are tourism marketing, tourism business, strategic management.

The local community: how to involve and sustain the local people through tourism:

Andrzej Anszperge.

Strategic planning: a formal approach to the long view

Iren Kukorelli is senior researcher fellow, responsible for rural development projects at the West Hungarian Research Institute, Centre for Regional Studies, Hungarian Academy of Sciences. She has a PhD in Geography, and her main areas of interest are in the Regional Siences, such as regional and urban economics, methods of regional economics, Rural development and management, developing strategies of rural areas. Iren is active in ECOVAST, and is vice president in the Hungarian ECOVAST Group.

Facilitators

Anders Tivell is a forester by education, and is connected to SLU. Anders is interested in institutional changes of state forest land, national parks and nature reserves, which would allow rural communities to carry out their own local development, like rural tourism or small scale forest operations, and at the same time easier and cheaper for the state. Anders has been working with these things in Africa, and work now with local communities in Sweden. He has also been trying to find ways of supporting the linking of local communities in the South and the North for joint learning.

Cecilia Waldenstöm works at SLU with continuing education for rural developers in Sweden. She is an agronomist with a PhD in Education and with special interest in adult learning and learning in work contexts. Her teaching experiences are apart from in rural development, mainly in communication and agricultural extension. Cecilia will be organising the team of facilitators during the Summer School.

Ela Strelezcka, has a PhD in technical sciences and 19 years of professional experience as a faculty member and researcher at the Technical University Faculty of Łódź Building and Architecture and eight years of experience as an owner of a consultancy and training company, particularly in the areas of: Consultancy on personnel and marketing, Company organisation and management, Quality issues: TQM and ISO 9000, Customised staff improvement, Development and implementation of vocational training programmes prepared for courses for adults (preparatory and improvement), for the Post-Secondary Foreign Trade and Business School, and the Post-Secondary School of Journalism in Łódź co-operation with experts in Poland and abroad (ISO 9000, PHARE, seminars in the country, lectures, etc.).

Katerina Ntzioka has graduated from the University of Ioannina from the Department of Chemistry in 1996. During her MBA course in Leeds University business School in UK, 1996-1997, has gained a great amount of experience concerning Rural Tourism and dealing effectively with the marketing of the tourist product. She has teaching experience of chemistry and seminar lecturing related to Information Society subjects. Furthermore, she is currently responsible for disseminating and exploiting three European Projects (h-Life, CITATION, USBONE) in the Greek Market.

Leonidas Papakonstandinidis, is a Professor of Regional Development, since 1999, in the Local Development Department, School of Management and Economy, Technological Educational Institute of Kalamata, Greece. He has been a member, and a scientific consultant, of the Board of "AGROTOURISTIKI S.A" (the public sector Rural Tourism Organisation), during the period 2000-2001. He has a Ph.D in "Local Development" from "Pantion" University of Athens, Department of Political Sciences and International Economic Relations. He was Head of the "Local Development Office" of the Agricultural Bank of Greece (1991-2001), and has extensively worked with the LEADER Initiative in Greece. He has also been a general rapporteur of "Centre European pour les Enterprises Publiques" (C.E.E.P.) "Regional Affairs Committee" (consulting the EU Commission, on the regional policy of the European Public Enterprises, 1985-1990).

Mihaly Lados, Deputy director at the West Hungarian Research Institute, Centre for Regional Studies, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, has a PhD in Economics and Public Finance. His interests are in information technology, local government finance and management, local economies and SMEs development, cross-border co-operation, regional planning and strategies.

Nan Dower has a BA in Psychology and an MA in Counselling. She has lived in rural areas and been involved in running playgroups and developing counselling services.

Telle Lemetyinen, is a short, blond lady from Finland working at the moment as a researcher at the University of Helsinki Institute for Rural Research and Training in Seinäjoki. Her master's degree is in Cultural Geography and she has dealt with the issues of Rural Development and local action groups (Leader groups) for about four years. Telle has a good sense of humour, eye and mind for the aesthetics and she has artistic skills. Her passion is watching ice-hockey!!

Pia Katellus is a tall, brunette lady working at the same Institute as Telle. Pia has her master's degree in education and has previously worked with adults as a teacher and a counsellor. At the moment she is a planning officer of training and has an interest in e-learning. Rural Development issues are familiar to her mostly through the Euracademy project. She is a nice and easygoing gal with some well-hidden edge

Raúl Abeledo Sanchis has a Bachelor of Economics (University of Valencia) and a Master in Environmental Strategies and Management. He is responsible for European Projects Area of IMEDES, and works basically in three ways areas, all linked with Sustainable Development and Ecological Economics:

Teaching: Postgraduate, continuous and occupational

Research: in University of Valencia projects

Consultancy: for enterprises and local institutions (LA21)

Wojciech Kniec PhD in rural sociology. Currently employed at the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Torun, Poland, in the Institute of Sociology and works with problems of rural development with special attention for EU integration and rural renewal. Other field of study is social exclusion on rural areas. Second employment is related to agricultural advisory service.

The external evaluator

Astrid Berg is the founder and managing director of ABC dialog – a consultancy firm based in Hillerød, Denmark. The company is currently undertaking several European project evaluations for transnational partners and for the Danish support unit. The company works within the field of project development, project management and project evaluations. Astrid Berg is a MSc (econ.) from the Copenhagen Business School, Denmark. She has worked as an independent consultant for 5 years, with a variety of EU-funded projects such as: Interreg, LEONARDO, ADAPT and the European Social Fund initiatives in Denmark and Sweden. Her key qualifications are Analysis and evaluations of a diverse range of projects, with a special interest in education, vocational training, open and distance learning, workplace training, human resource management, business development, tourism and regional development, communication and dissemination of results and experiences. She is an experienced interviewer with good inter-personal skills.