

SAGA Project

IO3 Guides - Experiences & Case Studies Guide

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1. Introduction

The trend of rural depopulation faced by many European countries and regions, is generating areas considered “Empty Europe”, who upfront specific and related demographic and economic challenges and a lack of public services. At the same time, these territories have a rich culinary heritage, gastronomy and/or food production, which at the same time can generate opportunities.

SAGA contributes to reducing inequalities, ensure economic recovery and inclusive and sustainable long-term growth through a co-creation and collaborative focus, engaging all relevant stakeholders, develop and validate a training programme for populations living in “Empty Europe”, but who at the same time have a rich culinary heritage and/or food production. The project develops and evaluates an innovative training programme for those living in these types of rural areas, addressing their pressing issues such as unemployment and economic and social revitalisation, giving them the knowledge, competences and skills to develop social enterprises in gastronomic, food and culinary heritage fields.

SAGA has developed a set of guides to facilitate take-up by the stakeholders in alignment with the philosophy and objectives of the SAGA learning programme, and underpin, support and enhance the skills and competences of the participants and their effort to ideate, create and manage a social enterprise a specific field/sector, i.e. related to food, gastronomy and culinary heritage.

These guides complement the main project results.

2. SAGA Learning Guides

The present guide is part of this effort and a wider set of guides developed for each of the SAGA stakeholders.

SAGA Experiences and case studies: provides a compilation of case studies included in the SAGA learning program and other (social) entrepreneurship experiences in Europe that can be used as a tool for inspiration and innovation to raise awareness of the role of social entrepreneurship as a vehicle to alleviate the demographic challenges of Empty Europe. This guide can also be used as a motivation for trainers/students and potential social entrepreneurs, and includes some feedback points from those who have already tested the training program.

SAGA Trainers guide: aimed at trainers who would use the SAGA training programme formally or informally. It includes an overview of the training programme, its content and structures and provides a guide for teachers, trainers and training centres who want to take advantage of the resources and contents of the project to boost the entrepreneurial skills of their students, or include these training materials as additional resources to their existing training offerings.

SAGA NGO guide: for civil society organisations, NGOs, national and regional institutions, working with/for disadvantaged groups in empty Europe, who are interested in using the SAGA learning programme and the results to generate their own (collaborative) social enterprise in the identified sector (food, gastronomy and culinary heritage) or to support its beneficiaries in the creation of its companies. The guide provides inspiration and ideas on how these organizations can use and adopt the SAGA training program and outcomes.

SAGA Policy Brief: set of recommendations for policy makers related to support the creation of social (collaborative) enterprises, as a way to generate economic activity in the "empty Europe". It focuses specifically on the importance of a legal framework that protects the actions of social enterprises and provides a guide on how to contribute to the SAGA project to promote social entrepreneurship in rural areas as a sustainable strategy for the future.

3. TARGET GROUP

This SAGA Guide of Experiences and Case Studies aims to inspire and inform about best practices in collaborative (social) entrepreneurship related to gastronomic production and culinary heritage in the rural regions of the so-called Empty Europe. As such, it is primarily aimed at the following target groups, although it can be used as a tool for inspiration and consultation by anyone interested in exploring business or entrepreneurial opportunities in the sector:

- Are you a (potential) social entrepreneur? Then this guide is to inspire you with examples and cases. You can transfer the ideas to your own specific context and background. The guide is targeted to spark your interest in creating a business related to gastronomy, food and cultural heritage
- If you are an already existing entrepreneur, business owner and/or working in sectors such as tourism, hospitality, gastronomy or food production, then the examples and cases within this guide can help you to consider new approaches to apply in your daily activities.
- Are you a teacher or do you belong to a vocational and education training centre? Then this guide can help you to arouse interest among your students on (social) entrepreneurship related to gastronomy, food and culinary heritage. If you are providing training in the tourism, hospitality and agricultural areas it can help you to raise awareness of the opportunities for professional development.
- If you belong to a civil organisation and/or NGO, the inspiring stories of (social) entrepreneurship in rural areas can help your efforts for developing rural areas, and support the local community. It can spark ideas for social entrepreneurship by your own organisation or for your beneficiaries.

4. SAGA - Case Studies

The SAGA training programme provides a wide array of examples and case studies which are an integral part of the learning materials. However, we are aware that before someone considers entering a learning path such as the one offered by SAGA, they need to know in advance, and be motivated to engage and commit with the training.

For this purpose we have selected the most representative case studies from the programme and summarised them for you. These are complemented with additional examples (experiences) which we have detected throughout the lifetime of the project and we found equally inspiring.

Below is a summary of some case studies on (social entrepreneurship), food innovation and/or collaboration and co-creation processes selected by the partners in their countries, but you can access the complete collection of Case Studies in SAGA's online training programme, or by visiting the training platform [here](#).

4.1. BULGARIA

THE SOCIAL TEAHOUSE



Established in Varna, The Social TeaHouse was inspired by the previous experiences of its owners in organising workshops and activities with children and young people from nearby orphanages. Thus, this establishment, which functions as a bistro, event hall and shared workspace, gives its first job to young people over 16 who come from local orphanages, dysfunctional families or difficult backgrounds. In the case of under-16s, who are not yet employable, various training and volunteer programmes are organised to provide them with experience and tools to ensure better future prospects.

In order to develop its different initiatives and projects, The Social TeaHouse has established partnerships with local authorities and institutions. The building in which the Tea Room is located is a shared property between the Municipality of Varna and the District Administration while at the same time also has free access to various family-type accommodation centres and enjoy a full and fruitful cooperation on their behalf. Moreover, the Tea Room often implements activities in cooperation with other NGOs and social enterprises - cultural events, volunteer initiatives, activities organised under the mentoring program and others. In recent years the Tea Room also emphasises on business partnerships to which corporate products and services are being directed.

Find out more info on this initiative here: [The Social Teahouse - food, drinks, events... and a wonderful cause!](#)

SUNFARM CAMP



As a results of its founders' previous experiences and aims, the SunFarm Camp is a micro non-governmental organisation located in the small village of Tankovo, operating in the fields of agri-food and tourism, accommodation and food services, culinary art, as well as entertainment and recreation, providing to customers a variety of accommodation and culinary services.

The SunFarm Camp is a project and mission of the association "New Perspectives for Development" and exists and develops with the belief that the young people are the future of Bulgaria. Non-formal education, outdoor sports and volunteering are among the initiatives with which the team of the

enterprise turns young people into ambassadors of the future. Each activity aims to turn the wheel in the direction of sustainable development, responsible business and environmentally friendly lifestyle.

The SunFarm Camp would not have been successful without the contacts and support of dozens of colleagues working in the field of nature protection, natural farming and mountaineering. On that note, SunFarm Camp cooperates with the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds, as well as with two other foundations whose instructors are responsible for the teaching in sports and environmental protection. The enterprise also manages to cooperate with the Municipality of Stambolovo, and with several schools from Kardzhali district, whose students participate in joint volunteer actions.

Find out more info on this initiative here: [SunFarm Camp](#)

4.2. HUNGARY

MAGYARHERTELEND



Fructus Start Dairy Product Social Cooperative was founded in 2015, with the aim of offering jobs to people in local difficulty. Magyarhertelend is located in the northern part of Baranya County, which is a popular tourist destination due to its thermal baths and its proximity to the holiday village of Orfű and Abaliget.

The aim of the cooperative is to gain profit, but it focuses mainly on the employment of local people and to produce a product that is marketable. They try to unite local/regional organisations and establish cooperative synergies, since they are all involved in the production of different product groups, so they complement each other well.

The production of dairy products - a sector in which there was no previous social cooperative with such a profile - started in 2017. Until then, employees participated in training, where they learned the profession, experimented with the product range and improved recipes. Currently, Magyarhertelend employs 5-6 people, and the goal is to create more job opportunities within the area as a way to reduce the unemployment rate. However, the biggest challenge of the cooperative from the business perspective remains the price sensitivity, because as a cooperative they produce handicrafts and negotiate the price of the product to be purchased.

Find out more info on this initiative here: [Magyarhertelend](#)

KERECSENDI MALOMPARK Guest House & Event Centre



Kerecsendi Malompark Guest House and Event Centre is run by Kerecsend Tourism and Tourist Social Cooperative. This co-operative is part of a larger tourism complex that seeks to expand its offer of services and events to improve the employment and social situation of the families involved (whom it employs) in the project, but also of other disadvantaged members of the community. The main aim is to motivate and encourage people who live in small villages in order to take action in improving their equal opportunities and quality of life competencies.

With special emphasis on environmental awareness, this cooperative organises a multitude of events, activities, workshops, etc. To do this, collaborate with other local actors and relevant stakeholders. They also cooperate with local, supra-local, regional, national and international partners to develop the service, and their suppliers to create a tourism product are local and regional companies (e.g. wineries, craftsmen, cheese makers, bicycle rental). Plus, in order to reach the target group (disadvantaged groups of children), contacts were also established with educational institutions in Northern Hungary, Slovakia, Ukraine and even Canada.

Find out more info on this initiative here: [Kerecsendi Malompark és Rendezvényközpont](#)

4.3. NETHERLANDS

BLOOMING BAKERY



Fier's bakery is a social enterprise that helps victims of violence on their way to independence. At Blooming Bakery, girls - who are coached by mentors in their learning goals - gain work experience and learn all about both the business and craft side of baking.

The patisserie is managed by Hank Markus, a seasonal chef with extensive experience in both the hotel and catering industry and in teaching, who focuses on the quality training of future professionals in this Dutch region, and on the importance of using local products and producers.

In that sense, local products have always been important to him, and that's why the bakery only works with local suppliers and uses local products. *"As Frisians, we should be proud of our products. I*

always put myself in the consumer's shoes. If I'm on holiday in Italy and I order a cheese platter, I expect original local cheeses. And the same applies to Friesland".

Find out more info on this initiative here: [Blooming Bakery](#) / [Henk Markus - Dutch Cuisine](#)

GREEN HOUSE



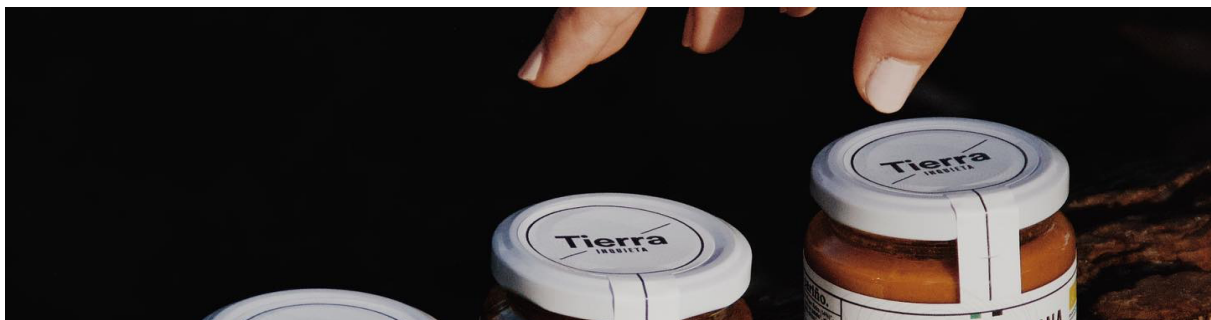
The Green House in Utrecht is a circular restaurant where all ingredients come from a radius of 50 kilometres from the restaurant. For example, a quarter of the seasonal vegetables and herbs come from a greenhouse of HRBS (of herbs, yes), which works as circularly as possible. In this way, two essential objectives are achieved: to minimise the environmental impact of its activity and, in addition, to support and strengthen food production in the region.

With a strong commitment to boosting local employment, the Green House partners with The Colour Kitchen whose commitment is to fight against the waste of talent by giving a new chance to "unused talent that is now sitting at home on the couch". At The Green House, they believe in this message and aim for 20% of the team to consist of people with a distance to the labour market.

Find out more info on this initiative here: [The Green House](#)

4.4. SPAIN

TIERRA INQUIETA



Tierra Inquieta is the result of founder Manuel Gil Luna's interest in combining local and regional products grown organically in Extremadura with his studies in gastronomy and business. The main motivation for launching this new business, according to its founder, was to do something new, in order to offer a new product to the organic and healthy food market, with vegan pâtés that are accessible to all types of customers.

The chosen business model promotes local/regional production and collaboration, so working with other entities and companies based in Extremadura is at the core of Tierra Quieta and has a positive impact on the community as a whole. On that note, Manuel has collaborated/cooperated with other companies or social organisations throughout his entrepreneur adventure. [As Pontis](#) is involved as its olive oil provider, and the manufacturing and marketing of Tierra Inquieta are managed regionally,

drawing on the experience of a pâté factory in Santa Amalia (Indalitos). Furthermore, Manuel has also received assistance from CTAEX, a regional innovation centre, in his collaborative journey to the final development and implementation of Tierra Inquieta.

Find out more info on this initiative here: [TIERRA INQUIETA -](#)

CÁCERES PARA COMÉRSELO



Cáceres para ComérseLO is a micro-enterprise that emerges as a cooperative, collaborative, self-managed and non-profit project of the ACTYVA Cooperative, which focuses on the need to unite producers (farmers, livestock farmers, cheese makers, beekeepers, etc) from Extremadura in a collaborative network that also allows them to offer their products in a single e-commerce from which they can reach a greater number of potential customers, being more efficient in the marketing and distribution of their small productions

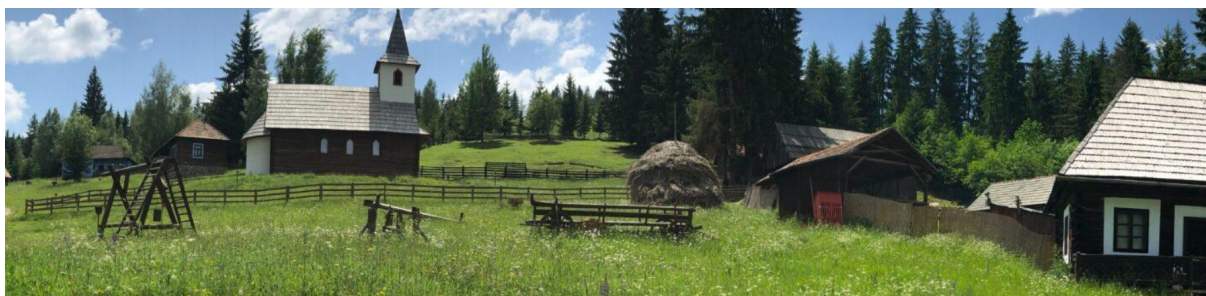
All the products come directly from those who produce or elaborate them and from areas as close as possible to Cáceres, with exceptions or alliances with related initiatives that allow the range of products to be wider and satisfy the needs of all consumers.

The fundamental mission of this cooperative is based on two essential pillars: to consolidate and open up new business opportunities for regional companies and producers, based on values such as sustainability and responsibility, and to nurture the relationship of trust and closeness with local consumers, so as to generate a positive long-term impact between producers and customers.

Find out more info on this initiative here: [Cáceres para Comerselo](#)

4.5. ROMANIA

GYIMESI SKANZEN PENSION



This open-air ethnographic museum has been welcoming guests since 2008 and allows visitors to explore 14 old farm houses that have been preserved from dilapidation. The village museum provides accommodation for tourists and also functions as an event venue for weddings, camps and various corporate events. Visitors can also have the opportunity to experience the past through gastronomy in a traditional environment.

The driving force for setting up this tourism business was the desire of running a thriving rural tourism business with the main goal of promoting preservation of local cultural values, traditions and resources. The social side of the enterprise is mainly based on supporting the local economy through the employment of local people, use of local resources and suppliers. Moreover, involving the local community in the programmes, events they offer as well as establishing networks with them and the visiting guests for future collaboration makes the business popular.

Find out more info on this initiative here: [Gyimesi Skanzen Panzió](#)

ZSIGMOND MALOM PENSION



The Zsigmond Malom Pension has been operating for more than 10 years as a family business in the local tourism sector of Harghita county. Its main aim is to preserve and promote the values of Szeklerland and its culture by offering its clientele high quality (tourism, leisure, culinary) services and providing them enriching experiences.

The social mission of the enterprise is given by the fact that the processes through which the value proposition is achieved, is being implemented with the help of locals who are providing services, raw materials and also different traditional, cultural experiences to those visiting the establishment.

The existing resources in the area, as well as the owners' previous experience, knowledge and skills, all contributed beneficially to the establishment of the family enterprise. In addition to that, the constant mobilisation and involvement of the appropriate local stakeholders, members of the community alongside of knowing exactly the needs of the potential target group who the enterprise is ought to serve made possible to focus on a particular customer's segment, designing and offering the products and services and directing these offers towards the clients were all aspects taken into consideration while planning the enterprises activities.

Find out more info on this initiative here: [Zsigmond Malom Panzió - Home | Facebook](#)

5. SAGA - European Experiences

Find more inspiration on non-partner countries' initiatives that we believe to be powerful stories about collaborative (social) entrepreneurship with a strong positive impact on their local/regional communities - either providing support and working opportunities for vulnerable groups and enhancing local (food) production - socially and economically-wise.

CONTROCORRENTE SOS COOPERATIVE (Italy)



Controcorrente SOS is an Italian cooperative that emerged as an inclusive cooking project to promote the integration of people with disabilities or special needs into the world of work, as well as to raise awareness and educate on how to approach the presence of this group in the workplace. Their ultimate mission is to contribute to creating a positive impact in their communities and to create local jobs.

This regionally funded project was born in Bisceglie (Puglia), one of the most depopulated rural regions of the Italian country, but thanks to the Food Truck system devised by its three founders, Controcorrente SOS moves around different Italian regions, providing visibility to the social and labour inclusion of the most vulnerable groups, and offering delicious food in different types of events. In addition, they organise play and sports activities for children with disabilities.

This project would not have been possible without the support of other local actors in the Puglia region and more and more families in the area who contact Controcorrente SOS to be able to involve their children in a truly inclusive reality, who at the end of school face all the drama of their disadvantaged condition.

To find out more about Controcorrente SOS and its many activities and events, you can take a look at: [Controcorrente SOS Cooperativa sociale | Trani | Facebook](#)

MOST JABLANICA (Bosnia & Herzegovina)



Merima Kukic Gego, an agricultural engineer and founder of the Most Jablanica company, launched a venture in the midst of the pandemic, with all the risk and uncertainty that goes with it, but also with the conviction that her business idea could create a positive impact on her community and position the region as a tourist destination of interest.

MOST Jablanica was born with the intention of producing healthy, locally and organically produced food products, giving work to women in the region who are in vulnerable situations. In order to generate a positive social impact in the region, MOST Jablanica prioritises the development of rural farms and facilitates networking between regional and local actors.

Today, its offer also extends to domestic and tourism services, collaborating with public organisations to put Jablanica on the radar.

To find out more about this initiative, take a look at the video: [Entrepreneur turns problems into profit - MOST Jablanica](#)

TERRIUS (Portugal)



Terrius is a company from Alentejo whose main mission is to preserve the culinary and gastronomic heritage of this rural region in the interior of Portugal (Alentejo) and to promote the gastronomic and touristic recognition of the region. With a clear commitment to corporate social responsibility, Terrius focuses on the sustainable production, conservation and marketing of wild products, fruits and vegetables of excellence originating from the region, claiming the value of local products and production. It also develops innovative plant-based food products from underexploited resources or by-products, all centred in sustainability and circular economy principles.

In recent years, Terrius has also collaborated with other local and regional actors (public and private entities) to implement tourism and gastronomic experiences that complement its offer, and also put the Alentejo on the radar of inland and international tourism.

Find out more info on this initiative here: [Terrius | Flavours with history](#)

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS - Get inspired!

As the reader will have had the opportunity to note, SAGA Case Studies are invaluable resources for learning about and devising new forms of business with social and economic impact on one's community.

That is the main reason why those who have already had the opportunity to explore and benefit from the training materials agreed on the Case Studies being among the most valued resources. Thanks to their practical approach, these examples can be used as a guide to devise new business or product/service development opportunities in collaboration with other actors and stakeholders.

In fact, when asked what three words came to mind when conceptualising the SAGA training programme, the Spanish participants in the pilot mostly agreed on ideas such as:

"Cooperation, co-creation, entrepreneurship, leadership, positive impact, social economy, ..."

We believe that all these ideas are as well reflected in the core of the present Guide, which reflects these values and can be used as really powerful inspirational resources to bring about change in your community.

Feel already inspired? So know it is your turn to put these insights into use:

- What is for you the relevance of collaborating/co-creating with others in terms of social/economical impact in my community?
- Which is the main connector among all these examples? What can you learn from that?
- How can I/my organisation put this gained knowledge into action?
- Did any great idea for a new business/product/service come up after reading the cases?
- Would you be able to use the case studies and experiences to inspire others?

7. REFERENCES

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[Henk Markus - Dutch Cuisine](#)

[The Green House](#)