

## CRETHINK - Co-creative RETHINKing for sustainable cities

### IO2: Toolbox on democratic co-creation methods for sustainable development

#### VEJLE BEST PRACTICE 2

##### Definition of good/best practice

A good/best practice is defined as an initiative (e.g. technique, method, process etc.) which has already proved effective in delivering a given result with the potential to be transferred to different contexts and geographic areas. Proved effective is where the best practice has successfully established methods to engage all stakeholders throughout the course of the development process.

#### 1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Title of the practice	VEN out in the countryside
Name of the institution/organisation responsible for the implementation / hosting of the initiative using co-creation methods	GRØNT FORUM together with VEJLE EXPAT NETVÆRK - VEN
Country / Region / Municipality involved	VEJLE MUNICIPALITY
Geographical coverage	VEJLE MUNICIPALITY
Timescale: when did it take place and for how long	2017-2018

#### 2. DESCRIPTION (no more than 1000 - 3000 characters)

##### Sustainable thematic area

On June 20, 2016, Vejle Expat Network (VEN) became an official association. The "VEN out in the countryside" project, among other activities, aims to find ways and means of working together with Vejle municipality, other volunteer associations and other organizations in our region to co-develop social, cultural, leisure, and community-building activities and projects. VEN's goals include:

- building a grassroots community for internationals in the Vejle area by making them feel welcome
- facilitating social and professional interaction between internationals and Danes

- working towards more openness and diversity in our community
- engaging actively in the development of internationals in our community, and to embrace and realize the potential of internationals in Vejle making them contribute to a sustainable city.

### Objectives

The "VEN out in the countryside" project aimed to expand our self-understanding about what the communities outside of the city of Vejle have to offer in order to attract more new comers, and what members of VEN could potentially contribute with regarding settlement in local communities in the countryside.

"VEN out in the countryside" addressed two realities in our community:

- the need to ensure that countryside communities continue to thrive and develop, while retaining their uniqueness;
- the need for expats in Denmark to learn more about what these countryside communities potentially have to offer.

This project aimed as well to promote the good life that can be found in the rural areas within Vejle municipality, which include a variety of volunteer associations, nature, a unique cultural heritage, and the energy and commitment of the locals themselves.

### Actions carried out

"VEN out in the countryside" brings together countryside communities and expats to get to know one another at the grassroots level with a very little management from Vejle Municipality. Day trips to various communities including different activities in Vejle municipality's countryside had been arranged by VEN, working together with local councils and stakeholders. The project aimed to find out about both the communities' social and professional infrastructure and to consolidate VEN's position as a meaningful partner in a co-creation process.

### Methodologies used

This project aimed to develop new initiatives for co-creation between growing international communities includes many highly educated and talented individuals in close cooperation with local councils and other stakeholders. VEN as an organization was at the very beginning, and the project should show the members how rural community works, and how co-creation can contribute to the development of the association as well as the local communities. The pride of living in the countryside is based on trust and cooperation, pride in the local community, and commitment to ongoing community building. "VEN out on the countryside" aimed to introduce expats to those skills and to other possibilities of what countryside's life has to offer, both socially and professionally. Because of the project new relationships was established and VEN became an important partner in other projects initiated by the Vejle Municipality.

### Tools used or created

No tools has been developed

### 3. IMPACT (no more than 1000 - 3000 characters)

<p>Number of participants / co-creators and their background (e.g. professional, cultural, gender)</p>	<p>5 Co-creators from VEN, as members of the board, all of them were volunteers 5 different members from 5 different local councils (25 in total), all of them were volunteers Different staff from Vejle Municipality, fx. A Project developer for the countryside at Vejle Municipality, Newcomers Service, Job Center Vejle, etc. About 30-50 participants from VEN and local communities. The project was funded by the “Landdistriktspuljen” (a national fund rural development projects as part of the European Structure and Investment Fund, <a href="https://www.livogland.dk/ministeriets-egne-puljer-stoetteordninger/landdistriktspuljen">https://www.livogland.dk/ministeriets-egne-puljer-stoetteordninger/landdistriktspuljen</a>).</p>
<p>Difficulties founded</p>	<p>Language was a challenge. The local communities are still not used to expats. Considering that the presence of VEN and expats in Vejle Municipality is relatively recent, it is still a matter of time until VEN and the local communities can get closer, get to know each other and begin to work together. VEN was the first organized to attempt to establish a connection between the expat community and the local communities.</p>
<p>Success factors</p>	<p>Expats willing to do “learning by doing” and a dynamic expats team willing to be very open to all the challenges. A big wish for understanding and being a part of the society, knowing that expats have so much to give/contribute. The locals was very friendly and engaged from the very beginning The information shared in the project was helpful and interesting to learn more about ( schools, sports facilities, local businesses). The local communities was an inspiration for the expats because of how strong and unified they are.</p>
<p>Weak elements</p>	<p>The project was challenged not in the collaboration between the different stakeholders and VEN’s board, but more in the lack of making powerful relationships between the local Danes and expats after the end of activities. Some of the participants explained that the main reason that made it difficult to create relationships could be the lack of time from both parts.</p>
<p>Transferability</p>	<p>We believe that this approach can be used in different local communities.</p>
<p>Achievements/Tangible outputs (please include a link, if any)</p>	<p>-</p>

### 4. INNOVATION & OUTCOMES (no more than 1000 - 3000 characters)

<p>Degree of Innovation (governance, recruitment process, fundraising, financing instruments, marketing, processes, service, etc.)</p>	<p>VEN and Vejle Municipality was the first organization in Denmark ever, who tried to match the expats with the local communities at countryside and actually saw a potential in this matching.</p>
<p>What are the innovative points of the methodological approach used?</p>	<p>The activities in the project empowered VEN as an organization and as an equal partner in the co-creation process. The majority of VEN’s members moved to Denmark because of a dream job they have been offered at one of the big multinational companies in the area.</p>

However, it often can be particularly difficult for them or their accompanying partners to build both professional and social networks. At the same time, Danes who want to help can find it difficult to find a way to get in contact with foreign newcomers. Studies show that a large part of the expats who leave Denmark do so because their families cannot adapt well to the new living situation. Often, their partner cannot find work, or has difficulty building a social network and integrating into the new local community. By bridging those to partners we shown that, different skills and cultures create empowerment.

Evidence on the impact and  
outcomes achieved

## 5. FURTHER INFORMATION

Website	<a href="http://land.vejleexpatnetwork.dk/">http://land.vejleexpatnetwork.dk/</a>
Social media	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/vejleexpatnetwork/">https://www.facebook.com/vejleexpatnetwork/</a>
Dissemination actions	For different activities you can explore: <a href="http://land.vejleexpatnetwork.dk/">http://land.vejleexpatnetwork.dk/</a>
Network (if any were set up)	
Contact information of best practice: Name & Email address	Dana Laura Cernat, Grønt Forum: <a href="mailto:dalce@vejle.dk">dalce@vejle.dk</a> Nina Chatelain, VEN: <a href="mailto:nina.chatelain@gmail.com">nina.chatelain@gmail.com</a>