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SAGA Project

SAGA NGO guide

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TABLE OF CONTENT

1. Introduction	3
2. SAGA Learning Guides	3
3. TARGET GROUP	4
4. IMPROVING WITH SAGA	4
4.1 What is Social (Collaborative) enterprise?	5
4.2 How this could work in the SAGA framework?	7
4.3 Taking action, informing decision makers as an NGO	8
5. CONCLUDING REMARKS	10

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 the case studies and testimonials and practical experiences of learners and trainers who participated in the activities and from stakeholders who have supported these. It highlights the ideas and social enterprises envisaged/created during the pilot activities, and includes lessons learned to help in the development of further experiences in partner and the take-up of the SAGA programme in other countries. Special attention is paid to the knowledge sharing and mutual learning between all involved on local level, but also with others

SAGA trainers guide & experiences: aimed at the trainers who use the SAGA training programme and implement the related face-to-face activities. Apart from the instructions for the face-to-face activities of the SAGA blended learning approach and the assessment methods to be used in these activities to evaluate the acquisition of skills and competences by the learner, it also includes testimonials, tips and tricks, lessons learned and examples from trainers that participated in the activities and ideas on how SAGA can be integrated into the formal and informal education and training of VET institutions.

SAGA NGO guide: for civil society organization, NGOs, national and regional institutions, working with/for the disadvantaged groups in empty Europe, who are interested in using the SAGA learning programme and results to generate their own (collaborative) social enterprise in the identified sector (food, gastronomy & culinary heritage) or to support their beneficiaries in the creation of their enterprises. The guide gives inspiration, ideas and examples on how these organisations can use and take up the SAGA training programme and results do so. It includes the practical experiences of the NGO staff and testimonials of NGOs that have been involved directly or indirectly in the project activities.

SAGA Policy brief: set of recommendations for policy makers related to support the creation of (collaborative) social enterprises in the food, gastronomic and culinary field, as a way to generate economic activity in “empty Europe”. It includes examples and testimonials considered relevant for policy making from participants and also from policy makers that have been involved or interacted with the project.

3. TARGET GROUP

The present guide it has been especially developed for all those NGO representatives who work with disadvantaged target groups within the rural areas of Europe. These regions, due to the lack of developed infrastructure and opportunities for assuring reasonable life conditions for their population, are getting depopulated and face many demographic challenges. Therefore, one of the main roles of these NGOs within these regions is to provide educational opportunities which can ensure skills and competences development of all those who are willing to make a change in these regions.

Should you be an NGO representative who is providing educational possibilities within your region, the SAGA learning materials are supporting you in creating a good basis for using your regions culinary heritage and food production tradition for offering training and self-development possibilities for establishing collaborative enterprises.

Being an entrepreneur, one who has and carries all the responsibilities a business might have, can offer a personal challenge that many individuals prefer over being an employee working for someone else. Entrepreneurship, is often viewed as an aversive career choice where one is faced with everyday life and work situations which carry uncertainty, impediments, failures and frustrations associated with the process of new firm creation Nevertheless, this should not be like this. You, as an NGO representative, most probably know your region, its heritage and customs as well as your community better than other actors from your region. This is why, you as an NGO, can make a difference through providing educational possibilities which can enhance the skills and competences of those with fewer opportunities. Within the SAGA project the consortium has been concentrating on giving a helping hand and providing support by using the available gastronomy heritage of the regions the partners are coming from, to all those who would like to make a change in their communities. Having this in mind, the SAGA learning programme has been developed to be a great asset to train adult learners and inspire them to establish their own enterprises, consequently enhancing not only their personal development but also their regions’ improvement.

4. IMPROVING WITH SAGA

Within this chapter we would like to present the possibilities the SAGA learning materials can offer to an NGO active in the rural regions of Europe.

First of all, we will try to answer the question what exactly a social (collaborative) enterprise is? After clearing those concepts, we are going to see what the SAGA learning materials can offer you and how you could benefit from their use. And finally, we mention briefly how you could act as a catalyst in your regions to offer support and opportunities to all those who

might have a brilliant idea which they would like to materialise through the establishment of a social enterprise.



4.1 What is Social (Collaborative) enterprise?

Have you ever asked your neighbour for some help and managed to do something extraordinary together?

Have you ever got in contact with those who are also active in your region and willing to change something?

In case you already experienced any of the above you are most probably one of those who is aware of the powerful impact of collaboration, and who would like to act for change.

Within this guide we will present you how the SAGA learning materials can help you as an NGO representative to do good in your area and take action to support others in their possible ambitions of making a change.

For this reason, we should start at the beginning and think about what actually a social enterprise is?

Generally speaking, a “social enterprise” means using business tools to address a social need.

It is also said, that a social enterprise’s objective is to have a social impact rather than make a profit for their owners or stakeholders.

A social enterprise can achieve a transformative social, cultural and/or environmental change through the application of innovative and practical approaches to benefit the society in general, with an emphasis on vulnerable groups.

Social enterprises are an integral and important part of the business sector and produce products and provide services for profit in the same way as any other business. However, an important difference between them and traditional businesses is that social enterprises use the profits they make to address a social challenge.

The SAGA project is also concentrating on the collaborative aspect of the social enterprises which is also very important. The collaboration and cooperation with others from the local and regional communities can enhance the impetus and self-confidence of those who venture in the social enterprises adventure. Therefore, the focus of the SAGA learning programme is to improve the skills needed for the creation of socially innovative and impactful

The SAGA learning programme in Module 1 is introducing in detail what a social enterprise means and how it can operate. As an NGO representative you are most likely already familiar with these concepts, as in many cases NGOs are operating for providing support and lend a helping hand to all those interested and needy.

Social enterprises are active in a very wide spectrum in many different fields. The SAGA learning materials are focusing on the culinary heritage of the regions involved in the project, namely the rural areas of Europe which got depopulated. To learn from the best, the SAGA partnership has gathered information about already successful social enterprises which you can consult [here](#).



As an NGO representative who is willing to support all those interested to start on their social entrepreneurial paths, you could set up an information point within your organization and/or appoint a person to get familiar with the SAGA content in order to make sure that you, as an NGO can use the developed SAGA materials to their maximum in assisting all those interested.

The case studies which the learning materials are laid upon can give you a good base for planning a possible training course in your area. In this way you can assure not only to facilitate new knowledge and skills development, but also a networking possibility to future social entrepreneurs who would be interested in setting up their own businesses.

4.2 How this could work in the SAGA framework?

The SAGA learning materials and platform are building on good examples which have been gathered at the beginning of the project by the project partners in their countries.

The SAGA approach, competence matrix, curriculum and assessment method can be transferred to any other training or educational setting in which the identified topics and the need for (collaborative) social enterprise is apparent. It can be transferred to more formal educational settings, where the topics concerned are relevant, e.g. the co-creation, co-sharing and collaborative skills could be offered as part of the education and training for future staff or entrepreneurs in the targeted sectors, e.g. hospitality, gastronomy, food production, tourism etc. This can be both on VET as well as Higher Education levels.

Social enterprises are an integral and important part of the business sector and produce products and provide services for gaining profit in the same way as any other enterprise. However, an important difference between them and traditional businesses is that social enterprises use the profits generated to solve a social challenge. In the field of food, gastronomy and culinary heritage sector we can find good examples of successful social enterprises in project partner countries that combine their social mission with providing goods and services on the market:

The SAGA learning programme is structured in four modules, as follows:



MODULE 1 – Inspiration for Social Entrepreneurship

[Module 1 – Inspiration for Social Entrepreneurship](#) – within which you can find interesting information about what exactly a social enterprise is, how your possible target audience could start one.

[Module 2 – Defining your Social Business](#) – is concentrating on how to set up a Business Model Canvas, how finances work in this context. It also provides country specific legislation as well as basic marketing concepts on how to create visibility for the newly established enterprise.



MODULE 2 – Defining your Social Business



MODULE 3 – Functional Competencies

Module 3 – Functional Competencies – which covers Organisational and cooperation skills, project management, self-management and risk management.

Module 4 – Social Competencies – which offer insight into Co-Creation, leadership, self-confidence, determination, openness for taking initiative and also towards applying a change.



MODULE 4 – Social Competencies

Consulting these and having them in mind, we suggest that you think of your regional situation and act as a catalyst for implementing a change within your region. As an NGO you may already have a deeper insight into the local/regional situation in many respects as the individuals who would like to start on their entrepreneurial way. Therefore, you could create information campaigns or you may have persistent assistance, alongside organising informational events about the possibilities offered by the SAGA learning materials.

4.3 Taking action, informing decision makers as an NGO

At the previous point we have been concentrating on how you as an NGO could help future social entrepreneurs to develop their skills and competences. Nevertheless, as an NGO you may have considerably more connections and wider networks of local/rural decision makers who are also key partners on this entrepreneurial path.

It is therefore extremely important for entrepreneurs to be able to identify the right opportunities through which people will be able to get a real sense of a destination's heritage, culture and traditions. The opportunity to showcase local traditions and engage local communities provides more opportunities for local entrepreneurs to develop products, services and experiences unique to their destination.

In these rural areas we are referring to the fact that, development opportunities are usually lower than in the rest of Europe, due to the already mentioned trend of rural depopulation faced by many European countries.

Other specific and related challenges in empty Europe include:

- Demographic (ageing population, migration to urban areas, low birth rate);
- Economic (high unemployment rates, low activity rates, high share of primary sector in GDP) and
- Lack of public services.

Youngsters are seeking better life conditions in regions where multinational capital is more concentrated and possibilities are more numerous, but with joint efforts we might be able to offer them possibilities and resources they could benefit from.

Having these in mind, as an NGO you could organise meetings where you could invite already existing social entrepreneurs to talk about their experiences, alongside local/rural decision makers who could come and present the specific legislation and solutions which are needed for establishing such enterprises. You, as an NGO, should be the motor of your region and be the connection between decision makers and entrepreneurs.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

According to globalpeacecareers.com, *NGOs are civil society organizations that operate independently from governments and business interests. They are usually formed to advocate for a specific cause or group of people, and they use a variety of strategies to achieve their goals.*

As you could see this is what we have built this guide upon. We are advising you to implement the changes the SAGA learning programme can bring to the lives of those who are just before starting to identify their goals for making a change within the region they live in.

Be sure to be there to assist while questions arise, be there when support is needed from decision makers side, be there and act while they think that they hit a stumbling block.

