

Project number: 6785
Funding source: Northern Periphery & Arctic Programme

Date: September, 2020
Project dates: April 2015 - April 2018

Craft Reach



Key external stakeholders:

Rural micro and small enterprises, Fáilte Ireland, Bord Bia, Tourism Ireland, Design & Crafts Council of Ireland, Heritage Council, Local Development Network, SOLAS

Practical implications for stakeholders:

This rural enterprise support model, which builds the capability of artisan producers to diversify their businesses into the cultural tourism market by creating visitor learning destinations, was expanded with new members, tools, resources and local impact models.

- Business viability is increased through diversified income streams. Jobs are created or sustained.
- A proven replicable model of micro and small business diversification is available for mainstreaming by tourism, cultural and/or development support organisations in Ireland
- Tested, replicable models of how micro and small businesses can have a positive development impact on young, elderly and creative community members are available for use by other enterprises.
- A traineeship in Digital Sales & Marketing designed for micro and small enterprises during the project is available nationwide.

Main results:

- The Économusée network in Ireland was expanded from 4 to 6 members.
- Twenty-two jobs were sustained and one new job created in those 2 artisan businesses.
- A traineeship in Digital Sales & Marketing targeted at micro and small rural enterprises was developed and implemented and is available nationwide post project.
- Replicable models of local community impact were implemented and documented.

Opportunity / Benefit:

- All outputs from the project are publically available at <http://craftreach.interreg-npa.eu/outputs-and-results/>
- Other micro and small businesses can also learn about the support model and training opportunities through visiting/contacting any of the 6 existing network members.
- Members of the Steering Group for the project have already directly accessed the project findings.

Collaborating Institutions:

Teagasc project team:	Dr. Kevin Heanue (PI) Bridin McIntyre
External collaborators:	The Royal Norwegian Society for Development, Norway University of the Faroe Island Matis, Iceland Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust, Northern Ireland Économusée Network Society, Canada Region Jämtland Härjedalen, Sweden FORUM Connemara CLG Aquinas College, Michigan, USA National Museum of Ireland, (Folklife) Steering Group

1. Project background:

This enterprise support project was a direct follow-on from the Économusée Northern Europe (2009-2011) and Craft International (2011-2013) projects in which Teagasc was the Irish partner. The projects, targeted at economic development in peripheral rural areas, supported rural artisan producers to develop a cultural tourism aspect to their business by positioning their businesses as learning destinations, welcoming visitors to their premises and joining an international network of similar enterprises in 6 countries. On one level, the concept is simple: the Économusées form a tourism-based network, or trail, which, by bringing people to the premises, assists the businesses expand sales and sustain employment. On another level, the concept is very sophisticated as it attempts to help artisan producers develop their capabilities and infrastructure to tap into the burgeoning number of tourists who wish to 'experience' local culture and produce.

The Craft Reach project (2015-2018) supported the businesses by providing business advice, mentoring and funding for promotional and interpretive material to artisan producers who wish to diversify in this way and join an expanding national and international network of 80 similar businesses. The project also sought to build capacity through training and devising replicable models of local community impact for enterprises.

2. Questions addressed by the project:

- Could 2 additional artisan businesses be identified, converted to Économusées and join the existing Irish Économusée network?
- Is it possible to develop replicable models of local community impact for artisan producers to implement?
- What future supports do the network members need?
- What capability building/training do Irish Économusées need?

3. The experimental studies:

- A public campaign to recruit 2 new artisan business to join the Irish Économusée network was held in counties Mayo and Galway.
- Three models of local community impact were co-designed with new and existing Économusées and stakeholders.
- A survey of the international network of 80 artisans on future support needs was designed, implemented and analysed by Teagasc for the project consortium.
- A training needs analysis of the Irish Économusées was conducted.

4. Main results:

- 2 artisan food producers (one in Mayo and one in Galway) were badged as Économusées and launched in 2017 and 2018.
- Three models of how artisan producers could impact their communities through youth placements, engaging with senior community members and cultural integration were developed and documented. These models are replicable in other Irish locations for other artisan producers.
- A traineeship in Digital Sales & Marketing developed during the project by GRETB and SOLAS is now available for other micro and small rural businesses throughout Ireland. In total, 8 Education and Training Boards around Ireland are implementing the Traineeship and 26 SME's with 24

trainees participated in the initial roll out in 2018.

- Brand, merchandising, social media and visitor enhancement material was developed during the project.
- 1,000 individual artisan brochures and 5,000 network brochures were designed, produced and disseminated to the artisans and Fáilte Ireland offices along the Wild Atlantic Way.
- The 2nd International Économusée network conference in Bergen in October 2017, which was a key project knowledge exchange mechanism, had 80 participants (including all 6 Irish Économusées) and all partner countries represented.

5. Opportunity/Benefit:

A traineeship in Digital Sales & Marketing developed during the project by GRETB and SOLAS is now available for other micro businesses throughout Ireland to engage with.

From a policy perspective, the approach and activities of Craft Reach (and the Économusée model) present a proven model to help sustain small and micro rural enterprises and increase their impact on local communities that could be mainstreamed by other organisations in Ireland.

6. Dissemination:

Project outputs are available at <http://craftreach.interreg-npa.eu/outputs-and-results/>

7. Compiled by: Kevin Heanue
