

# Folkungaland

The story of how we work



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## Quick facts

Name of Leader Area	Folkungaland
Country	Sweden
Region	Östergötland
Municipalities	Finspång, Linköping, Mjölby, Motala, western part of Norrköping, Vadstena, Åtvidaberg
Total population	288 923 Includes two major cities Linköping and Norrköping and a smaller one Motala
Rural population	131 780
Area	6 165 km <sup>2</sup> including the major and smaller cities
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## This is Folkungaland

Folkungaland is a non-profit organization located at the heart of Östergötland, Sweden. We are part of a family of 48 Leader areas in Sweden and about 2 000 similar groups in Europe. We are passionate about rural development and are committed to creating opportunities where people can live the good life in the Swedish countryside and making it accessible to all. We do this by providing funding for feasible projects that tackle at least one of five key issues:

- Strengthening the spirit of entrepreneurship to stimulate job creation
- Improving the quality of life and increasing the attractiveness of rural areas
- Enhancing awareness and responsibility for environment conservation and protection
- Improving physical and digital communications
- Promoting diversity

We give particular priority to projects working with gender equity, the youth, strengthening cooperations, sustainable development and diversity. These priorities are established with input from the rural developers, policymakers as well as individuals, local rural businesses and community organizations. They also form the basis of Folkungalands Local Development Strategy (LDS) for 2014-2020.

Folkungaland is jointly funded by the Swedish Board of Agriculture, the municipal governments and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. We operate in the following areas: Finspång, Linköping, Mjölby, Motala, Vadstena, Åtvidaberg and the western part of Norrköping.

## Our organisation

Folkungaland is governed by a group of representatives from the public sector, the private sector and the civic and voluntary sector, known in Folkungaland as the Local Action Group (LAG). It is a unique partnership bringing together a wide range of experience and knowledge of local rural issues.

LAG is responsible for the overall governance, management and strategic direction of Folkungaland and for delivering accountable performance in accordance with its local development strategy for 2014-2020. LAG meets formally four times each year, as well as between the regular meetings as needed to conduct Folkungalands business operations.

## Our vision

Folkungaland's vision is **to create opportunities where people can live the good life in the Swedish countryside and making it accessible to all**. Our vision is made possible by harnessing the differing and complementary resources of LAG, by uniting local players around joint projects and common, cross-sectoral actions in order to achieve the critical mass or threshold needed to improve our area's economic competitiveness and by envisaging development through a multisectoral approach.

## How we work

The key function of Folkungaland is to establish or support project ideas or initiatives directed towards community-led local development through the LEADER approach. LEADER is a French acronym which stands for **'links between actions of rural development'**. As its name suggests, it is a method of mobilising and delivering rural development in local rural communities, rather than a fixed set of measures to be implemented. LEADER encourages rural territories to explore new ways to become or to remain competitive, to make the most of their assets and to overcome the challenges they may face.

## Our history

Folkungaland is a relatively young LEADER area which was founded in 2007. It covered the municipalities of Linköping, Mjölby, south of Motala and the western part of Norrköping. For the program period 2007-2013, approximately 196 projects were completed to improve the quality of life and attractiveness of its territory.

## Transnational projects and cooperations

Below is a list of transnational projects and cooperations that Folkungaland has been involved with.

Year	Project name and year	Partner	Target group	Description
2011	Amaze me Leader	Finnish Rural Network (Finland)	Youth	Amaze Me Leader is an international adventure seminar aimed to youngsters aged 18 to 29. In 2011, approximately 80 youngsters from 17 European countries participated in the event for the purpose of increasing knowledge about LEADER and how it works and engaging them in rural development and entrepreneurship.
2011	Feasibility study Flevoland	LAG Flevoland (the Netherlands)	LAG members	The purpose of the project was to encourage the exchange of ideas, knowledge and experience among LAG members in the implementation of the LEADER approach and the local development strategies.
2013	Youth Drive	LEADER VVG (Lithuania)	Youth	The purpose of the project was to develop young people's knowledge in rural issues and entrepreneurship. The project aimed to promote livelihood/ traineeship opportunities for rural youth and cultural exchange.
2014	ELARD Staff Exchange Program	LAG Aljarafe Donana (Spain)	Staff	The purpose of the project was to prompt cross-cultural relationships. The project aimed to give participants insights into how LEADER offices work, gain new skills, motivation, new perspectives and expand network.
2018	Ny på landet (New in the countryside)	European Network for Rural Development (Belgium)	Young refugees	The lifestyle in Sweden highly values active outdoor recreation and living closer to nature. Allemansrätten or the right of public access is ingrained in the Swedish culture and it is part of the Swedish cultural identity. However, this may not be the case for immigrants.  Ny på landet is a diversity project that Folkungaland created to instill this cultural identity among young immigrants and to make nature a pleasant, comprehensible and accessible experience. The project has been successful and has received recognition as well as awards both in Sweden and abroad.