



Assessment

European Village Renewal Award 2012

Winner: Vals, Graubünden, German-speaking region, Switzerland

Vals is a municipality located in the Canton Graubünden, region Surselva, in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. To this day the 1000 inhabitants speak and cultivate the local dialect, Walser-German. Vals is situated 1250 meters above sea level at the end of a hilly valley. The community members do not only understand to live in this habitat but also to flourish and take good care of this unique landscape which is the basis for economic activities.

In former times the community lived solely of agriculture, which to this day plays an important role, and today all the farmers produce organic products, which are mostly sold within the local valley. As an active member of the alliance in the Alps" Vals is part of many networking projects in order to foster sustainable development of the Alpine Convention. The municipality uses renewable energies exclusively, not least because of the construction of a hydroelectric plant. This pioneering achievement also bears fruits in an economic sense.

Tourism and broad opportunities for the economic life have created new sources of revenue for the population over the past decades and increased the attractiveness of the municipality for potential new community members and as a result the population size remained constant. Particularly the use of the mineral water in Vals and the extraction of quartzite have boosted the numerous small and medium-sized service, handicraft and other enterprises.

In regards to tourism Vals has taken a very special path by promoting quality rather than quantity. The construction of the famous thermal spa, designed by Peter Zumthor, proves the brave attitude towards modern architecture while using the typical local material – stone. Further examples of modern architecture followed and have been integrated in the municipality's identity. At the same time traditional buildings are being sustained and serve as an inspiration for the contemporary art and ultimately this well-balanced mix adds up to a homogeneous appearance.

Vals is characterised by its open and pluralistic society and on the one hand stands out through the active club life and on the other hand through numerous initiatives to involve all parts of the population – all generations and both genders. Migrants are invited to participate in a language course and actively integrated in the social, cultural and sportive life due to broad measures. The intense participation of community members in the local decision-making processes via requests and initiatives and the engagement in project-oriented working groups is welcomed and encouraged by the community.

Its local supply and health care services have a solid infrastructure and special attention is on the one hand paid to children and young adults and on the other hand to the elderly, in addition to projects across generations. A close cooperation between the kindergarten, school, community, and clubs are the basis for the broad leisure program and extra-curricular

education. Senior accommodations and comprehensive accessibility, as well as rich cultural and artistic offerings have improved the quality of life considerably. An extensive publishing activity of locals establishes a great sense of identity.

The series of measures taken by creative, open, and concrete actions is impressive and exemplary. Future generations will find a firm foundation due to a harmonized sensible use of special resources like water stone and grass. Thus, Vals is a shining example of a village that does justice to the motto of the European Village Renewal Award 2012 and finds itself "On the Track to the Future".

Therefore, Vals has been honoured with the European Village Renewal Award 2012.

European Village Renewal Award for sustainable, holistic and motto-adequate village development of excellent quality.

Allhartsberg is blessed with an impressive civic participation, which was maximized through professional handling of community concerns in regards to future development and renewal. As a result the numerous measurements grew together to ultimately take one giant leap towards greater public welfare. Furthermore, deliberate usage of ecological and natural space, impressive organizational work of community members in all age groups, mutual respect towards people with special needs, high-quality settlement development, as well as the consistent use of renewable energy sources, helped the community to become a place with exceptional quality of living. Therefore, Allhartsberg has been honoured with a European Village Renewal Award for sustainable, holistic and motto-adequate village development of excellent quality.

Fischbach and Ludwigswinkel impress with outstanding public participation that was especially helpful during moderations and discussions in the developmental phase and resulted in great togetherness when plans and projects, mostly concerning the main topic "Biosphere reserve", were realized. Prolific intercommunal work and future-oriented planning were the basis for a holistic approach that transformed several initiatives into an integrated and harmonic whole. Measurements to improve social conditions, the creation of high-quality recreational facilities, and the prioritization of renewable energies, should be highlighted because they strengthen the communities' sustainability and tourism. Therefore, Fischbach and Ludwigswinkel have been honoured with a European Village Renewal Award for sustainable, holistic and motto-adequate village development of excellent quality.

Kootwijkerbroek was able to overcome a catastrophe that endangered the economic and demographic existence of the village because community members were not willing to give up on their homes. Ultimately Kootwijkerbroek emerged as a modern and revitalized community based on their innovative projects, namely flagship projects like the installation of a multi-functional house of culture, the construction of the retirement home Schoobeck, a village extension with the focus on a dense form of housing and cost-effective joint building ventures, as well as an effective mixture of new living quarters and businesses. Therefore, Kootwijkerbroek has been honoured with a European Village Renewal Award for sustainable, holistic and motto-adequate village development of excellent quality.

Krimml presents itself as an extraordinary example of community development. Projects that stand out are the construction of a biomass heating plant with 70 installations and connections, the establishment of a modern service- and local supplies centre in the heart of the village, the revival of the town centre fuelled by design measures as well as the organisation of an open air cinema and village markets. In addition, two projects really stand out: the peace initiative “APC – Alpine Peace crossing” and the future oriented “HTH – Hohe Tauern Health” project, which certainly does justice to the motto of this competition. The program makes use of the healing effects of waterfall-mists for asthma patients and allergy sufferers. Thereby, Krimml was able to position itself well for the future with these unique selling propositions as the main argument for the municipality and its summer tourism, which is the main source of revenue. Therefore, Krimml has been honoured with a European Village Renewal Award for sustainable, holistic and motto-adequate village development of excellent quality.

Ratmerice is distinguished by the high quality of living and the activity within the community. Even though there are no larger cities in the surroundings, Ratmerice stands out as a great place to live due to the sustainable development, proper future planning, engagement of community members, innovative social, cultural, and business activities, as well as a modern spatial arrangement. Furthermore, the promotion of equal opportunities for handicapped people, teenagers, and senior citizens stands out. In addition, the great use of national and European funding, as well as revival of village squares with modern artwork have helped this municipality to improve living standards within the community. Therefore, Ratmerice has been honoured with a European Village Renewal Award for sustainable, holistic and motto-adequate village development of excellent quality.

St. Ulrich am Pillersee demonstrates excellence with a holistic and sustainable approach to development that was the base for the implementation of many outstanding activities and measures. Special mention must be made of the economical use of natural resources, the close mash of agriculture and tourism, as well as the raise of awareness and consciousness about the mission statement due to innovative methods. Furthermore, the high community engagement, the exemplary social interaction and life, and the creation of regional value chains while increasing the population should be noted. St. Ulrich am Pillersee is undoubtedly "on track to the future" and therefore, has been honoured with a European Village Renewal Award for sustainable, holistic and motto-adequate village development of excellent quality.

Schleching is convincing in each and every section of village renewal. An efficient agriculture which at the same time is kind to nature, the conservation and expansion of environmentally compatible craftsmanship and tourism, the responsible use of resources, and the sustainable utilization of renewable raw materials are some of the main features. In addition, the restrictive settlement development, the social cohesion encouraged by various activities and initiatives to strengthen the representation, identity, confidence, and motivation of all generations within the community, as well as the forward-looking intercommunal cooperation and networks should be emphasized. Therefore, Schleching has been honoured with a European Village Renewal Award for sustainable, holistic and motto-adequate village development of excellent quality.

In a relatively short space of time, **Ujszilvas** was able to realize its potential and resources, make use of renewable energies, and create a social network, that have improved the quality of living within the community and have led to a degree of prosperity. The professional entrepreneurial culture of local family businesses enabled them to assert themselves, some even across the border of Hungary. The community's rapid success and economic upturn are largely due to an excellent cooperation between these operations and the future-oriented municipal administration. Therefore, Ujszilvas has been honoured with a European Village Renewal Award for sustainable, holistic and motto-adequate village development of excellent quality.

Even though **Waffensen** has lost its autonomy as a municipality, it successfully faces up to the challenges of the future thanks to a constructive partnership with Rothenburg ob der Wümme, a prudent political authority, and an extra ordinarily engaged population. Outstanding socio-cultural projects like the "return" of the elementary school to the village, the creation of a multigenerational house, the planned construction of flats designed to senior needs, impress just as much as the active integration of local businesses, the sensitive handling of the grown settlement structure, the use of villagescape-defining materials, and the fostering of the traditional landscapes in order to proclaim identity. Moreover, due to a solar initiative and the construction of wind turbines the community has given an exemplary local answer to a global issue. Therefore, Waffensen has been honoured with a European Village Renewal Award for sustainable, holistic and motto-adequate village development of excellent quality.

Its consequent care and conservation of natural space and the conscious restriction of constructional development while at the same time promoting energy-efficient architecture best characterize **Weißensee**. Land use, soft mobility, and tourism merge into an impressive symbiosis, which has ultimately induced the establishment of sustainable regional value chains. Special mention should also be made of activities to increase awareness, process-related work towards the mission statement, the remarkable community identity and social life. Therefore, Weißensee has been honoured with a European Village Renewal Award for sustainable, holistic and motto-adequate village development of excellent quality.

As early as in the 1980s, **Wiesenburg** realized that its castle, the existing structure, the nature park, and its committed population are the most important assets in order to be "on track to the future". The engagement of community members and experts in local development initiatives is the basis for widely supported resolutions. Consistent efforts towards internal development and the high functionality of the village centre have led to an outstanding local habitat. A cooperative society for the local train station initiated by the population does not only provide a great connection to Berlin, but due to exhibition spaces and regional shops also stands out as a point of crystallization for regional identity. In addition, the valorisation of natural- and cultural spaces and the development of a creative milieu prove that the community is a true inventor in regards to sustainable development. Therefore, Wiesenburg has been honoured with a European Village Renewal Award for sustainable, holistic and motto-adequate village development of excellent quality.

European Village Renewal Award for special achievements in multiple fields of village development

Balow is best characterized by its prudent support for local families. The existing landmarks were not only sustained but also converted in a meaningful way. As a result, the school, once a restaurant, and the culture and communications centre (KuK), former horse stables are the main attractions of the vivid local centre. The municipality also handles the challenge of a changing demographic landscape very well with the Kuk providing care for the elderly and in addition, a park for older community members was designed as well. Therefore, Balow has been honoured with a European Village Renewal Award for special achievements in multiple fields of village development.

Beaufort is distinguished by the sustainable handling of its rich natural and cultural heritage. Environmentally sustainable forms of agriculture and forest-management stand out, as does the creation of up to date social infrastructure like the new school centre. Additionally, the

broad range of support and care services and the great community engagement, which has helped increase the socio-cultural quality and identification within the municipality. Therefore, Beaufort has been honoured with a European Village Renewal Award for special achievements in multiple fields of village development.

Gniewino was able to overcome a bad initial situation, and initiate exemplary economic development while at the same time making clever use of the given resources in order to improve the quality of living. The projects regarding the promotion of renewable energies and the integration of different population groups certainly stand out. The Kashubian eye, a 44 meter high panoramic tower in midst of a leisure park, and the newly created sports infrastructure underline the main goal, namely to foster tourism and recreation. Therefore, Gniewino has been honoured with a European Village Renewal Award for special achievements in multiple fields of village development.

Hainrode impresses with exceptional measures and activities regarding renovation and use of existing structures, which are possible due to high engagement of the population. In addition, the initiatives towards a high quality of living in an active community; the preservation of traditions, typical settlement structures, and the unique landscape must be mentioned. Therefore, Hainrode has been honoured with a European Village Renewal Award for special achievements in multiple fields of village development.

Komna was able to create an attractive habitat by focusing on the younger generation and thereby, securing an active and vivid community. The population has great sense for its identity, takes good care of the local environment, and cultivates the rich traditions. The valuable existing structures and surrounding landscape are being preserved and protected due to public and private investment and projects. Thanks to responsible economic processes, a focus on organic farming, and sustainable management of the community's forests, the municipality has improved economic strength and the quality of life. Therefore, Komna has been honoured with a European Village Renewal Award for special achievements in multiple fields of village development.

A future-oriented model and a broad development process form the important and impressive basis of the target-oriented community development in **Marling**. The projects, which have already been realized, have helped to secure tourism as a source of illicit revenue and the planned projects will foster a sustainable development within the community. It must also be underlined that all the measures are balanced very well and have helped to further improve the togetherness among community members, as well as the living standards. Therefore, Marling has been honoured with a European Village Renewal Award for special achievements in multiple fields of village development.

Niederhelden impresses due to the successful transition from a village mostly marked by agriculture to vivid and economically profitable municipality with a great sense of belonging within the community. Today Niederhelden is a living, economic, and recreation area of great quality, which is distinguished by the unity of half-timbered buildings within the village, the carefully balanced use of natural resources, as well as constructional development to strengthen tourism. Moreover, the community members' high engagement in the local clubs and the preservation of the identity of the small municipality situated in a large district is characteristic. Therefore, Niederhelden has been honoured with a European Village Renewal Award for special achievements in multiple fields of village development.

Polsnik launched several initiatives in order to educate and its population about entrepreneurship and encourage it, and as a result several businesses were successfully founded and ultimately a "wood-cluster" was created out of the new ventures. Additionally, the strengthening of the municipality as a pilgrimage- and event location and the fostering of active female engagement in the community life both proved to be important measures towards the

future. Therefore, Polsnik has been honoured with a European Village Renewal Award for special achievements in multiple fields of village development.

Its active and committed community members characterize **Popielow**. Measures and projects are based upon the vision of creating a habitat where everybody has the opportunity to feel home, plan a future, and realize their dreams. The engagement and initiatives that were taken after the flooding prove how connected the population is with the community and that they are all working towards one common goal. The municipality has developed a sustainable approach towards the given resources, and in addition created a functioning modern infrastructure, as well as invested into renewable energies. Therefore, Popielow has been honoured with a European Village Renewal Award for special achievements in multiple fields of village development.

Rieth had experienced a standstill for many years due to being located along the former inner-German border, but has managed to break through thanks to a sustainable and well-balanced development of the community. Rieth has positioned itself as an attractive destination for tourists which are mostly interested in the history, and moreover strengthened the identity of the community, as well as established a new important socio-cultural- and club infrastructure in order to further increase the quality of living within the community. Therefore, Rieth has been honoured with a European Village Renewal Award for special achievements in multiple fields of village development.

Rosenbach is an example for great community engagement and the systematic realization of future-oriented measures. Rosenbach has implemented many initiatives in order to sustain and develop its unique cultural landscape and the municipality's agriculture has been directed on a new path towards long-term success. Additionally the commitment to adjust to the needs of children and young families must be mentioned. Therefore, Rosenbach has been honoured with a European Village Renewal Award for special achievements in multiple fields of village development.

European Village Renewal Award for special achievements in individual fields of village development

Dietkirchen is a small hamlet of a district town and impresses with various community projects and a vivid local club life, which have helped the municipality to maintain its identity while simultaneously developing. The high community engagement of motivated community member stands out and evened the way for large projects like the creation of a sports- and village community centre. The well-considered decision not to zone new construction land in order to foster the rebuilding and compaction of the old town rounds off the initiatives towards promoting the own identity. Therefore, Dietkirchen has been honoured with a European Village Renewal Award for special achievements in individual fields of village development.

Jaszkowa Gorna offers dynamic and well-planned village renewal processes with great commitment from the community members. Examples are the systematic preservation of public spaces, as well as unique social, cultural, and business activities. The tight and successful cooperation with the town and other villages within the municipality is also noteworthy. The preservation and presentation of local culture, folk music, handicraft, as well as food service products are other fundamental pillars of the initiatives. Therefore, Jaszkowa Gorna has been honoured with a European Village Renewal Award for special achievements in individual fields of village development.

Kunziget was able to develop into a village with high quality of life and great possibilities for gainful employment and business thanks to cooperation with the traditionally minded population, active clubs, and modern entrepreneurs. The cultivated landscape on the Mosoni Donau has attracted a growing number of tourists and new community members due to many leisure activities, the existence of a kindergarten, elementary school, as well as establishments for the elderly. A carefully balanced settlement policy helps to improve traditional living standards while at the same time conserving the lovingly natural landscape. Therefore, Kunziget has been honoured with a European Village Renewal Award for special achievements in individual fields of village development.

Even though **Oravska Lesna** is facing difficult initial circumstances, the municipality understands how to optimally use its natural environment and integrate its population actively. Voluntary commitment and social cohesion are promoted and encouraged, as well as the future-oriented and visionary local administration is implementing specific measures to foster sustainable development regarding renewable energies and economic promotion. Therefore, Oravska Lesna has been honoured with a European Village Renewal Award for special achievements in individual fields of village development.

Poschiavo and its community members have implemented several innovative ideas in projects in order to revive the village famous for its Berninabahn, old town, and monastery. The establishment of a medicinal herbs cooperative and a cheese dairy are the basis for successful organic farming. In addition water is the centre of projects in the energy sector with the installation of drinking water turbines and a new 1000 MW pumped storage power plant. Therefore, Poschiavo has been honoured with a European Village Renewal Award for special achievements in individual fields of village development.

Walhorn convinces with a high-quality communal life. The highlight is the “Haus Harna”, an ambitious project which was successfully realized, in midst of the beautifully renovated local centre, which itself impresses with its old buildings. Moreover, the local school has become a meeting place for after-school activities due to a close tie with the clubs. In addition, the creation of natural pedestrian walks within the village stand out. Therefore, Walhorn has been honoured with a European Village Renewal Award for special achievements in individual fields of village development.