



**ACTION PLAN**

**DEVELOPMENT OF SERVICE POINTS**

**MUNICIPALITY OF SÖDERHAMN**

**SWEDEN**



## Part I – General information

**Project:** SARURE – Save Rural Retail

**Partner organisation(s) concerned:** Municipality of Söderhamn, Sweden

**Country:** Sweden

**NUTS2 region:** Sweden

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## Part II – Policy context

The Action Plan aims to impact:	€	Investment for Growth and Jobs programme
	€	European Territorial Cooperation programme
	X	<u>Other regional development policy instrument</u>

**Name of the policy instrument addressed:**

Service Plan for the Municipality of Söderhamn

**Further details on the policy context and the way the action plan should contribute to improve the policy instruments:**

The structure and content of the Service Plan is to ensure that the inhabitants in the municipalities rural areas has a secure access to consumables and fuel in a close enough proximity from where they are living. It also states in which areas the rural support system for regional and national funding and grants refers to, as well as the aim to make sure to keep the infrastructure that already exists in rural areas today. Another aspect is how to develop infrastructure in areas where it doesn't exist at the moment. It's an important document to create and ensure prerequisites for SME's in the rural areas of the municipality and ensure their survival.

In preparation for the Service Plan, an already existing policy has been improved, the Goods and Services Plan. This is the basis for the improved Service Plan and is basically the backbone in the new document. During the development of the policy, there's close collaboration with the Swedish Agency for Economic Growth, as they are partly the provider of the grants paid out connected to the policy and are regulated through the policy itself.

It was clear that the existing document had flaws in terms of the number of businesses that had possibility to use the benefits. Also, the amount paid out was not in full, from what was available from the government funds. These two things were mainly the trigger to look in to and evaluate the document and what improvements could be made. The first step was to do a thorough evaluation where pros and cons were compared. What would the effect be in an economical aspect if the area where the grant was paid out got enlarged and the amount got elevated? Careful calculations were made, and the result was clear that the positive aspects exceeded the negatives.

The grants stated in the policy instrument are available for the local grocery stores in the rural areas that provides home delivery service of groceries to the households in proximity that is close to the store. This can be done in two ways, either by home delivery or that the store arranges transportation for the customers from home to the store. Both ways are a very big help for the local community, especially for the elderly citizen, but also in areas with low availability of public transportation.

The policy change that has been done so far is the following:

1. The amount of the grant has been increased from SEK 120 to SEK 200 per delivery.
2. To be qualified as a recipient of this grant, the business must be located within a certain distance from the city. This area has now been extended so more businesses are qualified. This is a big upgrade of the previous policy and opens greater opportunity to more businesses.

A part of the Service Plan is the development of six Service Points in the Municipality of Söderhamn. If a business is an appointed Service Point by the Municipality, they also get access to funding that they would not have been qualified to apply for if not been appointed. At this point we have three already established and another three is going to be instated within the time frame by end of 2022. This is funding that helps the business to develop and grow and improve their facilities. The Service Point also have a very important role in the community to function as the natural meeting point where you can sit down for a coffee while doing other errands. It also connects several services in the same location which makes it convenient and an efficient for the customer.

These changes would have been very difficult to fulfil without the existence of the SARURE project that includes the production of the Service Plan. Through this we got the possibility to upgrade the Goods and Services Plan to a much more useful and complete document and through the project we can continue to develop it in to a whole new and more complete policy where the work from our Action Plan with the implementation of the six Service Points is a big part of. The project provides needed inspiration coming mostly from the exchange between project partners. The partners meetings show new ideas and possibilities that can be useful and helpful to create a much better policy instrument.



## Part III – Details of the actions envisaged

### **ACTION 1:**

**Name of the action:**

#### **DEVELOPMENT OF SERVICE POINTS**

- 1. Relevance to the project (please describe how this action derives from the project and in particular from the interregional exchange of experience. Where does the inspiration for this action come from?)**

During the development of Service Points, we have got a lot of inspiration from our partner meetings and the study visits, especially from the study visit in Teruel, Spain. There we had the possibility to see a similar set up that has been developed during many years and proven very successful.

It showed the importance of having a social hub in the villages as well as other services and groceries and the difference it makes to keep the rural areas alive.

The study visits that's been done during the project meeting in Teruel, Spain, where we visited two of the Multiservicio Rural, Rural Multiservice, developed in the areas of Corbalán and Olba, has been a great inspiration. Also, the different multiservice formulas learnt from the presentation done by Cámara Teruel on the PAED (Programme for Direct Support for Businesses) during the project meeting in Freyburg, Germany, has given us inspiration to make this policy change.

- 2. Nature of the action (please describe precisely the content of action 1. What are the specific activities to be implemented?)**

The Service Point is functioning as a hub in the area where the local community can do their errands, meet for a cup of coffee, use the public computer, take part in activities and get general information. The shop also becomes the natural meeting point in the village as well as for the tourists and visitors in the area. It is the place you go to find what you need in terms of information and services.

The main aim is to expand the service level and collect several services in one location. The Service Point is mainly located in the local shop where the locals do their grocery shopping. The Municipality is appointing the Service point to do several services on behalf of the Municipality for a recompense.

The problem addressed is the need of a local shop in the rural areas, the difficulties for them to make profit and survive with a small customer base.

When a shop becomes appointed to be a Service Point, they receive a contribution for executing several services on behalf of the Municipality.

These services are agreed on together with the municipality and a contract is established for a three-year period to start. This to really give the business owner a chance to develop the business over time. After that the contract is renewed one year at the time.

The Service Point receives an amount between Euro 3000 to 5000 per year to function as a hub for the local community. The amount paid depends on the number of services the Service Point have possibility to execute.

It also creates opportunities for the business owner to apply for special grants from the government to develop their business. When a shop is appointed as a Service Point it opens doors for the business owner to apply for regional funding that would not been accessible otherwise. This funding will help to develop the business, upgrade equipment and help the business to expand.

Our appointed Service Point in Trönö has received SEK 1,5 million (Euro 150 000) from our government development fund for rural areas to expand the shop and upgrade the interior. They are also able to expand their business and offer more services due to more space in the shop.

Also, both Service Points in Stråtjärä and Sandarne has received money for development from the regional funding. They have received SEK 2 million (Euro 200 000) each to upgrade and modernize the shop.

This Action Plan is going to be implemented over a three-year period with the aim to instate six Service Points in the Municipality of Söderhamn and three is already up and running.

The main beneficiaries are the locals in the area due to the fact that this action can help the local shop to survive and develop its services, but it is also good for tourists and visitors in the area as it becomes the natural place to go and get information and help.

### **3. Stakeholders involved (please indicate the organisations in the region who are involved in the implementation of the action1 and explain their role)**

The stakeholders involved in the process of implementing the Action Plan is the following:

**ALLIS** – The rural development group for the Municipality of Söderhamn which are very much involved in the planning of the locations of the Service Points.

**The rural community groups in the villages** – They are contributing and has a very big role when a shop is appointed as Service Point. They are helping the business owners in various ways, especially to give very valuable information about what the local community needs and what they can contribute with. Also, to use the Service Point for arranging various activities.

**Business owners for rural shops:** It needs to be a collaboration between the Municipality and the local business owner when a shop gets appointed as a Service Point. The Municipality can never appoint a business without its consent and willingness to do the services.

**4. Timeframe (please specify the timing envisaged for action 1)**

Ongoing until 2022.

**5. Costs (please estimate the costs related to the implementation of action 1)**

SEK 300 000 (Euro 30 000) per year.

**6. Funding sources (please describe how action 1 will be financed. Is it through the policy instrument(s))**

Funding is granted and calculated in our Municipalities yearly budget. The importance of having a secure budget allowed for this action to continue also after the period of implementation which assures the survival of the practice in the long run. The business owners then get a chance to develop their business over time that is needed.

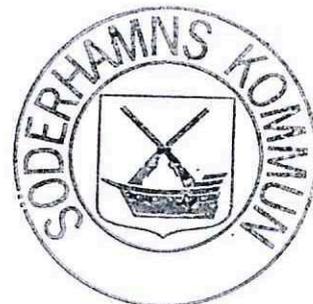
**Date: 2021 01 05**

**Name of the organisation(s): Municipality of Söderhamn, Sweden**

**Signatures of the relevant organisation(s):**



**Mr. John- Erik Jansson**  
**Mayor of the Municipality of Söderhamn**



**Stamp**