



Strategic Recommendations to Rural Development European Policies: Methodology and Good Practices exchanged



RURALAND

Rural development players

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Methodology and Good Practices exchanged



THE RURALAND EXPERIENCE

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS TO RURAL DEVELOPMENT EUROPEAN POLICIES

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RURALAND PROJECT: INTRODUCTION

Within the past decades, rural European territories are undergoing deep changes to correct their imbalances, avoid further territorial disarticulation and try to maintain, at the same time, their social and economic cohesion.

RURALAND, included in the INTERREG IVC Program, aims at strengthening the efficacy and innovation of regional rural development policies at diversifying economically European rural areas through the promotion of relations and exchange of experiences among regional institutions carrying out equivalent functions.

To achieve this, partner regions defined a methodology dividing their strategy in four thematic lines:

- Economic competitiveness,
- New technologies and renewable energies,
- Services, ICTs and employment for population,
- Natural and cultural heritage.

Within these thematic lines, a series of activities were carried out, such as discussion and reflection seminars on the issues mentioned above, site visits to learn more about the best practices in the partner regions and feasibility studies to assess the potential for the transfer of the good practice to a different territory.

Currently, the methodology developed in the project is being tested through the implementation of pilot actions on each thematic line.

RURALAND partners regions share a common vision of the opportunities and needs of European rural areas: we think there is a need to improve European rural territories and rural development policies through the transfer of good practices.

Ruraland partner regions: Andalucía (SPAIN), Algarve (Portugal), Corsica (France), Jämtland (Sweden), Kainuu (Finland), Limousin (France), Pazardzhik (Bulgaria), Sălaj (Romania), Sicily (Italy) and Wallonia (Belgium) are a representative sample of the diversity of European rural territories. We have promoted the reflection and debate about the direction of future European rural development policies so that they would address the challenges faced by the citizens of European rural areas. In this way, we have developed this document containing the main recommendations from the project aiming at influencing European policies for rural development. These recommendations are supported by the experiences exchanged in the first phase of the project. All best practices exchanged are available in the annexe to this publication.

Ruraland, with a total budget of 2.117.553,00 Euro, started in January 2010 and is due to end in December 2012.

WORK METHODOLOGY

The work to obtain the strategic recommendations to European policies for Rural Development, has been carried out on the basis of a methodology based on the participation of all the partner regions in all stages of the work and which has been a key factor for the success of its procurement and consensus.

In addition to the continuous work and communication via email and phone, partners have met three times to discuss and exchange their views in order to improve the final result.

The first meeting took place in Paris the 20 September 2011. The responsible partners of the organization of further workshops (Corsica and Wallonia), the Lead Partner (Andalusia) and the partner coordinator of the component which integrates the strategic recommendations (Limousin) attended this meeting together with an expert on issues relating to regulation and European strategies (Mr Michel Dubost). During the meeting, the methodology and the distribution of work in the two subsequent workshops was defined.

On October 4 - 5 2011, RURALAND project partners met in Bastia (Corsica), invited by the ODARC, representative of Corsica in the project, for the execution of the first workshop, in whose agenda was included the development of recommendations to improve public policies, and above all, of Community policies related to rural development.

On November 22 - 23 2011 the second workshop took place in Marche en Famenne (Wallonia); a workshop organised by the Rural Foundation of Wallonia, partner of the project. The objective of this meeting was to

reach consensus on a formulation of the final recommendations of the regions members of the RURALAND project.

First workshop:

The workshop was attended by representatives from all RURALAND partner regions except Algarve, which, exceptionally, was unable to attend this meeting.

The first workshop took place on 4 and 5 October 2011 and it was divided into four sessions:

- First session:
 - Presentation of the workshop objectives and methodology.
 - Presentation of the synthesis by those responsible for the thematic lines:
 - ✓ Theme 1: competitiveness and investment.
 - ✓ Theme 2: new technologies and renewable energies.
 - ✓ Theme 3: promotion of natural and cultural heritage.
 - ✓ Theme 4: new services to society and ICT.
- Second session: identification of success factors of rural development regarding RURALAND experience, distinguishing those particularly relating to the development and implementation of policies:
 - Economic dynamism (competitiveness of the territories, public-private collaboration, innovation, technical advice, training, etc.)
 - Territorial dynamism (promotion, networking, diversification-specialisation, actors creativity, urban - rural interaction, territorial strategy, evolution of services, critical mass, etc.)
 - Cross-regional dynamism (cooperation, etc.)
- Third session: presentation and discussion of the conclusions of the previous meeting to clarify the meaning of the recommendations with respect to public policies.

- Fourth session: conclusions on several points:
 - Identification of the good practices exchanged in the project related to the recommendations.
 - Prioritisation of the recommendations agreed by means of a questionnaire to partners in order to give an order to the recommendations that responds to the wishes and intentions of all partners.
 - Establishment of the timetable and tasks to be accomplished before the next workshop in Wallonia.
 - First debate on the strategy to follow to capitalise RURALAND recommendations.

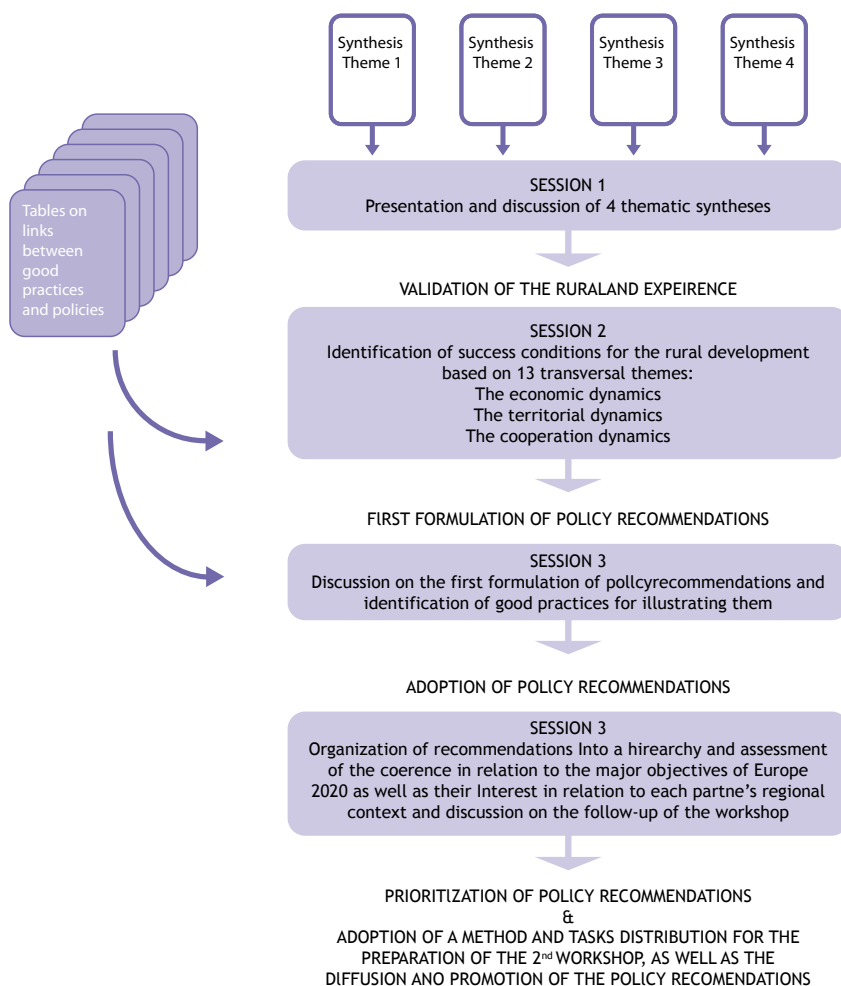
The success of the work methodology used in this first workshop lies in the participation of all the partner regions in the debates, as well as the appropriation of each partner of the results obtained. The key elements that have favoured this fact have been:

- The prior preparation of the debates: the responsible of each thematic line supplied prior information using tables which related the good practices and the public policies in each partner region.
- The participation in the debates: all partner regions have made contributions during the discussions and, thus, have expressed their points of view in each session and on each of the key points in order to achieve the necessary consensus to give solid recommendations issued by the group.
- The provision of interim results in real time.
- The distribution of tasks among the partners to obtain the final result.
- Obtaining policy recommendations from the experience in the development of good practices of RURALAND partners regions.

The result of the first workshop was a first proposal with 10 strategic recommendations to European rural development policies, based on the experience of the partnership (all of them public bodies with political responsibility in their territories) and the work carried out within the framework of Ruraland project. This

was done through the identification of the good practices exchanged that served as an inspiration and that illustrate the recommendations.

Development of the first workshop (Bastia, 4, 5 October 2011)



Since then, and until the next workshop, the document was disseminated among all the partner regions so that they could check and validate it in the framework of their regional policy. Simultaneously, the drafting of each recommendation work was distributed among the partners, working in pairs, so that the

text of each recommendation was developed by a partner in collaboration with another and according to the amendments proposed by all. The goal was to have a nearly final document, elaborated with the collaboration of all, in the second workshop.

Second workshop:

The second workshop in marche en Famenne was attended by all partners, some accompanied by their political representatives.

As in the 1st workshop, there were four sessions:

○ First session:

- Presentation of the workshop objectives and methodology.
- Discussion, debate and amendments to the text of 10 recommendations drafted by the partners.

As a result of this first session, partners decided to “compress” the 10 recommendations into 8, in order to give greater clarity and consistency to the final text.

○ Second session:

- Presentation and validation of the final document with the amendments made at the preceding session.
- As agreed, the final text should be validated and signed by the political authorities of each partner region. The text to be disseminated, is therefore, accompanied by the signatures of all partners.

○ Third session:

- Presentation of the dissemination plan of the strategic recommendations. This plan consists in an event to deliver the final document, adopted and signed by the political representatives of the 10 partner regions, to the Commissioners of Agriculture and Rural Development (Dacian Cioloș) and Regional Policy (Johannes Hand). A representation of

the political authorities of each partner regions is invited to participate in this event that will take place in Brussels. On the same date, a meeting with the members of the European Parliament will be organised to give them the same document. Similarly, it will be sent to the offices of the partner regions located in Brussels and, it is scheduled for publication in various European magazines. Finally, the strategic recommendations to European policies for rural development of the Ruraland project can be found on the website www.ruraland.eu

○ Fourth session:

- Round table attended by Rural development experts of the European Commission (DG Agri and DG Regio):
 - ✓ Mrs. Virve Vimpari (DG Regio),
 - ✓ Mr. De Fotso (Public Service of Wallonie DGO3),
 - ✓ Mr. José Manuel Hernandez Luque (EU DG AGRI)
 - ✓ Mr. Nivelin Noev (EU DG AGRI)

After a brief presentation of Ruraland project, part of the text agreed by all at the previous session was read. The round table members contributed with their knowledge and opinions about our recommendations and gave us clues about their guidance and dissemination. In general, the conclusion drawn from this debate is that Ruraland strategic recommendations are relevant to the debate currently taking place in the Commission on the future of Europe's rural development policy.

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS TO EUROPEAN POLICIES

The rural territory, understood as the area where social and economic activities and the political organization are developed, goes beyond a simple geographical definition because, ‘territory’ also includes people, culture and activities.

The rural areas represent a real potential for opportunities in Europe: providing secure, healthy food and environmental and cultural amenities; preserving identity and traditions while offering opportunities to explore and promote innovative routes for sustainable European development, including strategic sectors for the future, such as renewable energies, climate change mitigation, new relationships between citizens, between man and nature, new ways of living, producing and exchanging.

For rural development to become more sustainable, there is a need to keep strategic equilibriums and to ensure well balanced and mutually benefiting relationships between the regions and their territories, and also:

- between urban and rural areas,
- between agriculture and other activities,
- between actors: in particular, public and private actors, including enterprises and associations.

The partners of Ruraland project consider that the fundamental characteristics of the rural life and its population must be based on a permanent assessment in order to better discern, the opportunities and needs of these territories through statistics and research tools and that it is essential to recognize and

enhance the participation of women in economy, society and policy making, through the application of gender mainstreaming measures, as a public policy enhancer in rural territories.

To last, Ruraland partner consider that, based on this shared vision of the development needs and opportunities of rural territories, vision that has been evidenced during the life of our project, taking into account the experience of the European entities that shape the RURALAND partnership, and taking into account that the EU has an active influence in rural areas by designing and implementing development policies focused on a more sustainable approach, the regions partners of RURALAND, feel we are entitled to make the following recommendations to the European authorities as well as national and regional authorities.

Recommendation 1.

RURAL MAINSTREAMING: INTEGRATING THE RURAL DIMENSION IN ALL COMMON POLICIES

Background - The Europe 2020 Strategy identifies inclusive growth and territorial balance as key priorities. Inclusive growth should not be limited to urban development, but also take into account and encourage the innovation capacities of rural stakeholders in connection with the comparative advantages and specific assets of these territories.

Although rural areas are an important and immanent part of the EU territory (91%), they are undergoing severe problems, such as depopulation, ageing, high unemployment, low business activity, low incomes, worsened access to social and health services, etc. While common policies and funds have offered possibilities for rural areas to develop, many rural actors still encounter difficulties to obtain these funds. This means that policies have to be re-thought and simplified.

There is a real imbalance between rural and urban territories in Europe, with continuing and increasing social and economic problems, including loss of population and competences, growing isolation, exclusion and even poverty.

The future of rural areas must therefore be recognized as a real priority challenge for European social, economic and territorial cohesion. It is an actual equal opportunity issue at the EU level, and as such should be mainstreamed in all common policies.

The RURALAND experience - From Kainuu in Finland to Algarve in Portugal or Sicily in Italy, through Pazardzhik in Bulgaria, or Salaj in Romania, the RURALAND partners can give evidence of increasing social and economic problems in many rural areas, which are more and more difficult to address, although significant progress have been made in some areas, but rarely sufficient to reverse the overall trend.

In order to overcome this alarming situation, and strengthen rural development as a whole, the RURALAND partners have come to the conclusion that rural development should be mainstreamed into all EU Common Policies, i.e. not only in the Common Agricultural Policy, or the Cohesion Policy, but also in other sector policies, in particular for the Employment, Environment, Education, Research and Development.

The rural dimension, i.e. the specific needs and opportunities of rural areas must be taken into account while designing new EU policies and programmes, with a view to ensure optimal synergies between Funds and unlock the development potential of rural areas.

In order to achieve this Rural Mainstreaming, i.e. the integration of the Rural dimension in all EU policies (and on the national and regional level), the RURALAND partners recommend:

- *a specific strategy for rural areas in all common strategic frameworks, at national and regional level;*
- *in accordance with this strategy, an explicit formulation of rural development priorities in all EU Common Strategic Funds and policies;*
- *financial incentives through for example a minimum percentage of funds allocated to rural areas in all Operational Programmes, or financial bonuses;*
- *identification of priority rural areas, in terms of needs and opportunities for focused targeting and coordination of funds in each specified context;*
- *indicative targets for rural areas in Operational Programmes, in terms of areas, beneficiaries, outputs to be reached through different measures and instruments;*
- *common output, result and impact indicators for the evaluation of the efficiency of Operational Programmes in relation to the sustainable development of rural areas.*

Recommendation 2.

MAINTAINING AND PROMOTING COOPERATION IN ALL FUNDS, based on the transfer of good practices

Background - Europe is facing dramatic challenges and changes, requesting appropriate solutions to even more complex problems, in particular in rural regions.

European territorial cooperation in its different forms (cross-border, transnational, interregional) has proved to be useful to help local actors and European regions to find and develop common solutions to similar problems. It can support the thematic priorities of the Europe 2020 Strategy, for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and is a key success factor for dissemination of innovation through cooperation (*see recommendations 5 & 7*)

In rural areas in particular, there is a need for the EU to move a step forward and make the European cooperation dimension accessible to all potential beneficiaries in all funds: not only the ERDF, but also the EAFRD, ESF, Cohesion Fund or EMFF, in order to better address the EU 2020 priorities. Therefore, cooperation needs to be maintained and extended in the future programming period.

Cooperation objectives must be based on the *transfer* of good practices. The transfer of good practices means going beyond the mere observation of experiences from other regions and needs an adequate methodological framework and tools as well as a sustained partnership between importing and exporting regions in a longer-term perspective. Currently, the transfer of good practices is possible mainly in inter-regional cooperation (INTERREG IVC projects), partially in transnational and cross-border cooperation and not possible at all in some EU programmes outside Cohesion Policy.

The RURALAND experience - The experience and results from RURALAND identify cooperation as both a need and an opportunity in terms of rural economic diversification and innovation (be it technological or non-technological) through the transfer of good practices and the methodology agreed in the project.

Within the RURALAND project cooperation is a means to find solutions to actual needs that could not be answered at local or regional level. Focusing on the transfer of good practices, the RURALAND project has provided a valuable experience for inter-regional cooperation, especially with the use of a methodology for transfer, and the support of the RUR@CT network ensuring the projects' continuity, with the creation of an EGTC in view (see example).

The RUR@CT network - A specific methodology has been designed by the RUR@CT network (www.ruract.eu) for the transfer of good practices. All 20 good practices imported by RURALAND partners show the relevance, coherence and efficiency of this methodology, evidenced by the 30 action plans set up and their successful perspectives of implementation.

Methodology for the transfer: The transfer process is targeted at the actual needs of regional stakeholders and starts with a benchmarking for selecting the best practice. Then, the importing region has to hold a preparatory meeting for analysing the specific context of the best practice and preparing the site visit. Finally, a transferability study defines the detailed structure of the action plan that has to be validated by all partners before beginning the implementation. Once the action plan is achieved, the mentoring relation between the exporting and importing region should not stop and it is recommended that the good practice be mainstreamed into Regional Operational Programmes.

In order to capitalize the experience between regions importing the same best practice, a mutual learning platform is recommended within a legal body (EGTC or association, depending on the type of activities to be managed). Such a platform is in process in the RUR@CT network, which is a good opportunity for RURALAND partners to maintain the mentoring of the exporting regions within a sustainable cooperation network. Furthermore, the future legal structure will strengthen the sharing of technical assistance for launching new capitalisation and transfer activities.

The RURALAND partners recommend that all types of cooperation, as a means to increase EU policy performance, be maintained and promoted in all EU Funds, as:

- *Coherent and effective*: cooperation must be supported by all Funds (going beyond the current possibilities of INTERREG), in addition to specific funds and instruments for territorial cooperation (European Territorial Cooperation/ European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation).
- *Uniform*: management and implementation rules for cooperation should be as uniform as possible across Funds, Programmes, Member States and Regions so that cooperation becomes a reality in all aspects of rural development, accessible to all public and private stakeholders, and an efficient tool for innovation and balanced territorial development at EU level.
- *Integrated and strategic*: the possibility to integrate a priority axis for cooperation within ERDF Regional Operational Programmes (through Article 37 6-B of Regulation no. 1083/2006 that could be replaced by article 87 2-c/v in the Common Strategic Framework) must be maintained and the information about such a possibility must be better disseminated.

To achieve this, we recommend in particular:

- to focus inter-regional cooperation specifically on the **transfer of good practices** (including the follow-up);
- to enable or strengthen the transfer of good practices in all kind of territorial cooperation (also cross-border and transnational) and all other EU funds;
- to ensure the sustainability of cooperation in order to consolidate and transform the mutual learning and transfer process into concrete and long term results within adapted legal structures;
- to support the current effort to simplify the EGTC so that it is better adapted to inter-regional cooperation, as stated in the European Commission's proposal 2011/0272 (COD) amending Regulation (EC) n°1082/2006;
- to provide a streamlined framework for inter-regional cooperation, including technical assistance to local actors (*see also recommendation 6*).

Recommendation 3.

SUPPORTING INTEGRATED PROJECTS THROUGH JOINT PROGRAMMING AND MULTI-MEASURES

Background - Rural development needs a holistic approach, not restricted to agriculture and related activities, but exploring all needs and enhancing all opportunities for multi-dimensional, balanced and sustainable rural development, including the relations between urban and rural areas. In particular, we believe that a social and inclusive growth goes hand in hand with the economic development of a region and vice versa. Thus, the ERDF, EAFRD and ESF are complementing each other in developing the potential of rural regions; the integration of actions and the complementarity of funds are the key-concepts.

The synergy and complementarity between measures and funds are considered as key conditions for more efficient public policies in all sectors. This is particularly true in rural areas, where many projects are multi-dimensional in character and dynamics, and thus need to be developed as a part of a space or time chain linking different projects, actors or areas. These links among actions are essential, in particular to initiate and support dynamic development processes at territorial level.

There are different ways of improving synergies and complementarity at both programme and projects level: During the 2000-2006 period, the Single Programming document approach made it possible to manage different Funds altogether. In spite of difficulties, this programming method allowed to take into account the development of rural areas through a comprehensive vision, including all sectors, needs and opportunities, and making possible for operations to be supported by different funds.

At project level, potential beneficiaries should be allowed to submit operations integrating several projects, or integrated projects including several actions, in one single request, even if the actions are related to different measures.

In both cases, the integrated character of projects was facilitated by possibilities offered to submit proposals likely to be supported by different measures, from one or several funds. This possibility was

partly offered during the 2000-2006 period, but no longer in the current 2007-2013 period, which needs to be reconsidered.

The RURALAND experience - The RURALAND partners have experienced a number of situations in which good practices would deserve the use of several measures, in particular the transfer of good practices, when the importing region wants to adapt the good practice to its specific context, as illustrated by the Educational dairy experience between Jämtland (Sweden) and Corsica (France) (*see example*).

EDUCATIONAL DAIRY - The Region of Jämtland has a leading position in Sweden regarding small-scale food production, especially cheese production. The purpose of the educational dairy is that farmers can attend courses and get advising services regarding the dairy production. The educational dairy was established as a project with public and private stakeholders (see also Recommendation 5). An educational dairy plant and a mobile dairy have been set up. It turned out to be a good model of supporting rural population entrepreneurship with targeted support for small-scale dairy production and at the same time linking it with the provision of tourism services within the same rural area. The mobile dairy is a good tool replacing a cheese production unit for young farmers (trial period, less costs) and even for seniors who meet problems with land property.

Corsica Office for Rural Development is interested to transfer the good practice, as it could consolidate its pool of competencies for innovation established in its experimental farm in cooperation with professional associations in different sectors (see also Recommendations 4, and 6), and facilitate the setting up of young farmers, which is a critical problem for Corsica region. However, the whole project would need the mobilization of several measures of the RDP for Corsica (Plan de développement rural de la Corse, PRDC, managed by the Region: see also Recommendation 5): measures 111A for training, 111B for information of home made cheese producers, 124 for cooperation, 121 for farms modernisation, in particular for young farmers. As it is currently not possible to combine several measures in the same project, the whole transfer process will be managed under the form of several projects, which will result in a loss of consistency and visibility towards stakeholders in Corsica, who will not easily perceive the coherence of actions, although their active involvement is needed to achieve satisfactory and sustainable results.

The Common Strategic Framework (CSF) has been introduced in the new Commission's proposals as an integrated development strategy at national level for the CSF Funds (ERDF, CF, ESF EAFRD and EMFF), going in the right direction. In this regard, the RURALAND partners recommend:

- that the CSF, as well as common policies, be *conceived for a territorial approach*, rather than for a sectorial one;
- that this synergy among all funds be *adopted at the level of operational programmes* as well;
- that a *joint drafting, designing and implementation, monitoring and evaluation of a single "multi-fund" programme* take place at the regional level of implementation, which could be tailored for the regional specific circumstances;
- that *integrated projects can be supported in a single request whatever fund, programme or measure involved*, in order to improve synergy among actions, stimulate cooperation among public and private actors and foster the rural development dynamics.

Recommendation 4.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMING AT LEAST AT REGIONAL LEVEL OR SUB-REGIONAL LEVEL, INVOLVING LOCAL ACTORS IN EACH PHASE (considering the specific local context in each member state and region)

Background - Rural development programming requires a territorial approach that needs governance relations from EU level to local level involving a larger number of local stakeholders (economic operators, civil society, etc.). This, in order to ensure consistency between policies and promote integrated local development strategy with priorities and context-specific solutions. Thus, rural development needs to be planned and managed as close as possible to ground realities, while keeping the necessary distance from too local considerations. In many cases the Regional level, or NUTS 2 level, is the most appropriate one.

This approach needs to take into account the sub-regional diversity of territories from a geographical, historical, social, environmental and economic point of view, with sufficient critical mass to adopt and implement development strategies. According to the national or regional context, programming may even take place at sub-regional, i.e. provincial, or NUTS 3 level.

Another complementary option to make programming more efficient and capable of delivering appropriate answers to needs and opportunities for the development of rural areas and territories is to involve local stakeholders in more participative processes, at all stages, from the inception to the evaluation phase of a programme, through design, implementation and monitoring.

This bottom-up approach implies to identify methods and work practices that enable to guide actions, reduce conflicts between institutional and socio-economic categories of the territory, and to understand the specific objectives that tools must achieve and how they must operate. This becomes easier, and more efficient as far as programming is well decentralized, allowing representative and knowledgeable local partners involved to provide a real added value at all stages of the programme life cycle.

Thus, decentralization and the participation of local partners are two key concepts for an improved efficiency of rural development programming, both being interlinked.

Based on the potential of rural local actors, the RURALAND partners recommend that:

- *rural development programming be as much decentralized as possible*, at least at regional, or even sub-regional level, taking into account specific situations in each Member State;
- the *National Rural Networks* open to all rural actors (public, private and associative) be promoted, strengthened, and widened to all local actors;
- an *institutional platform be created to support local governments in rural development programming at regional level*, in harmony with the priorities identified by the National Strategy Plans for Rural Development;
- *local stakeholders be better involved* through more consultative and participatory processes, in *all programming stages*, in order to develop a sense of belonging and responsibility inside local communities towards rural development programmes;
- *local stakeholders be in particular involved in monitoring and evaluation*, thus critically improving the quality of governance, and rural development policy quality management as a whole, This also implies the training of local actors to be able to intervene at all levels.

Recommendation 5.

REINFORCING COOPERATION BETWEEN PUBLIC AUTHORITIES AND LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS, for improved territorial governance and project development in a long-term perspective

Background - At programme and project level, shared responsibilities between public authorities and local stakeholders on a given territory are a key for successful rural development. It requires an actual bottom-up approach that provides strength, legitimacy and effectiveness to European policies.

The role that rural actors and population play for innovation, entrepreneurship and adaptability to change, should be fostered. In particular, the next EU framework should promote projects having capacity to attract the private sector funding, as it is important to steer Europe towards sustainable growth and create lasting jobs.

Many strategic projects for rural development require a longer-term perspective for reaching sustainable results and return on investments: to get involved in longer-term projects, private economic actors need support and cooperation from public authorities.

The RURALAND experience - The RURALAND partners have experienced a number of good practices in which the cooperation between public authorities and local stakeholders has been crucial to promote innovation and competitiveness, build long-term development processes, and reinforce territorial governance. More than 80% of the projects which RURALAND is based upon are based on Local Action Groups (LAGs). This means that the Leader approach is good and could be adapted to other policies. The LAGs have demonstrated that they know how to set up a strategy and use different funds to finance it. It would be interesting that this kind of partnerships can also emerge outside Leader LAGs.

The DIVA good practice developed by the Region of Limousin (France) provides a good example of such cooperation between public authorities and economic actors (*see example below as well as the Educational dairy in Recommendation 3*).

DIVA - The Limousin Regional Council (France) wanted the DIVA network to bring added value to innovative agricultural and agri-rural projects. This network brings together around thirty partners from the field of agricultural and rural development, under the coordination of the Region. The project involves, in particular, using an extranet to liaise with the member organisations and identify all project sponsors concerned by the DIVA network. The Regional Council has also mobilised external service providers to provide training to the technicians of the network's partner organisations on specific subjects. The first training course has led to the joint production by all partners of guidelines for conducting the initial interview with project sponsors. The second was about short-distance delivery chains.

The DIVA network's main characteristics are:

- a collective interface system, liable to encourage coalitions between actors sharing similar concerns in order to give added momentum to projects registered in the territory.
- a technical and human support for agricultural and agri-rural projects, in other words an offer of quality advice,
- a system that supplements the regional offer of assistance and services to the promoters of activities and new businesses.

The RURALAND partners recommend that partnerships between public and private local stakeholders (including NGOs) be considered as a key-factor in territorial governance to achieve the innovation, competitiveness, and sustainability of rural development projects.

This partnership could be based on structures such as clusters, and should make the best from new opportunities offered:

- by the *CSF Funds to develop strategic approaches*, joint action plans, community-led local development, and local action groups;
- by the *EARDF to develop cooperation*, partnership, local development strategies involving public and private partners inside and outside Leader, and operational groups for European Innovation Partnership.

Recommendation 6.

SUPPORTING LOCAL ACTORS AND LOCAL ACTORS PLATFORMS to unlock the development potential of rural areas through capacity building

Background - A key for successful rural development is the support to local actors to conceive, submit and implement projects, to develop networking and move from individual small-scale to more collective larger-scale projects. Also, to allow local actors to share experiences at regional or sub-regional level, to transfer good practices or develop common projects, know-how and innovation within the frame of soft networking systems. Innovation platforms are also important to disseminate progress from micro-scale and individual project levels to territorial collective projects and development processes. However, this kind of networking also needs support from skilled persons to help local actors transform ideas and projects into longer-term concrete achievements. Although financial support for such animation and individual and collective support to local actors is eligible at programme level for Leader beneficiaries, and was possible in the 2000-2006 RDPs for New Member States, it is no more eligible at programme level, but only at project level outside Leader, in the current period.

The RURALAND experience - The development of human capital in rural areas contributes to the economic and social growth of a territory. The leverage effect of training in innovation, competitiveness and entrepreneurship is already proven; all of them being essential elements for the sustainable social and economic development of an area. Therefore, supporting capacity building for territorial stakeholders, to help them develop their businesses in a sustainable way that preserves the environment and natural and cultural heritage, is recommended. In addition to individual and collective support for capacity building and advisory assistance to develop projects, the development of innovation platforms based on networking, or other tools for communication and marketing, are all critical tools for business and territorial development. The RURALAND partners have exchanged and transferred several good practices in which the support to local actors and to innovation networks has proved to be critical for their successful development (*see the GASTUR example, and also Educational dairy, in Recommendation 3, or DIVA in Recommendation 5 as good examples of networking for innovation*).

GASTUR - This project from Jamtland region, has supported small producers in the food industry to facilitate their access to new markets and promote traditional food-products tourism. The training of farmers, as a key phase of the project, contributed greatly to its success.

The RURALAND partners recommend that:

- in each programme related to rural development, a specific part of the budget be dedicated to facilitating the programme as a whole (technical assistance);
- the support to local actors to submit and develop individual and collective projects (through coordination, information, communication, training, capacity building actions...) should be reinforced and generalised in all programmes. Local actors should be trained to increase their capacity to intervene at all these levels;
- innovation platforms providing networking opportunities for stakeholders sharing similar problems or perspectives to develop altogether new solutions for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth must also be supported. These platforms would encompass activities such as training, technological organisational and social innovation, as well as support to entrepreneurship.

Recommendation 7.

PROMOTING AND SUPPORTING LOCAL NON-TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION AND CREATIVENESS FOR TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT

Background - The capacity of Europe, and particularly in rural areas, to respond effectively to the challenges and issues of globalization depends, in large part, on its capacity for creativity and innovation. The European Commission strategic guidelines for rural development encourage these innovative approaches. Innovation requires new alliances that break patterns and increase efficiency.

However, this approach should be widened to include the non-technological as well as the rural dimension (non-agricultural), which leads to overlook the diversity of sources and components of innovation, including human capital.

For instance, the support included in the range of 2007-2013 rural development measures was restricted to “the development of new products, processes and technologies in agriculture and food”.

Other strategic fields must be considered at the centre of innovation, e.g. capacity building for the organization of economic actors, for the cooperation among themselves and with public authorities, i.e. the so-called organizational innovation; creativity in design, marketing products, goods and services; integration and anticipation of the needs of a changing society by providing new responses to new needs of users and local people.

Common policies for rural development should therefore also focus, in terms of objectives and measures, on non-technological innovation, as a powerful factor to unlock the potential of rural areas in favour of a smart growth using the creativity and development of human capital: basic resources of rural areas and of its development.

The RURALAND experience - The RURALAND partners have altogether selected, tested and transferred a number of good practices in which non-technological innovation and creativity are squarely at the centre

of the development process. The Seniorpolis experience in Kainuu (Finland) is one good example of such a development process. By looking for answers to new basic needs of senior citizens in their daily life, the project has resulted in turning a problem into a resource in the vision of the municipality itself.

SENIORPOLIS - The SENIORPOLIS expertise centre develops business operations that promote well-being and lifestyle opportunities for senior citizens in the Ristijärvi municipality (Kainuu Region). SENIORPOLIS, in cooperation with research institutes and agencies promotes know-how and business concepts regarding different fields of senior citizen services such as housing, education and care, for instance. This is a good example of service innovation.

The primary innovation related to the SENIORPOLIS centre has been the renewed way of thinking of Ristijärvi municipality in the Kainuu Region. Instead of seeing senior citizens as a challenge, the municipality has long acknowledged ageing population as a remarkable opportunity. This mindset has been therefore incorporated into the main strategic frameworks for the community development.

The Route of the authentic flavours in Corsica (France) is another example of non-technological innovation based on cooperation among stakeholders at territorial level.

ROUTE DES SENS - The “Route des Sens Authentiques” constitutes a tourist product and a local development instrument in the form of an agro-tourist itinerary built around a valley, an area or a region. Each route enables a micro-region’s economic stakeholders to focus on a certain theme developed around five components: farming, tourism, crafts, culture and commerce This network represents the products of a partnership conceived by the main stakeholders involved in a valley’s development and committed to providing quality services and authentic products. These “Routes des Sens” have been possible thanks to a new way of thinking the promotion of the products through the territories they belong to and based on a new approach of cooperation between local actors.

The RURALAND partners recommend that non-technological innovation, creativity and development of human capital be considered as key for innovative, competitive and sustainable development of rural Europe, and as such, be given the appropriate consideration, weight and place in all Common Strategic Framework Funds and Programmes.

Recommendation 8.

ALLEVIATING THE BUREAUCRATIC AND FINANCIAL BURDEN by providing opportunities both for advance payment and support to project for financial management

Background - Although the administrative and financial management of projects must remain feasible for local actors, including local authorities, there is widespread evidence that it has become today a real, excessive, counter-productive “burden”, lowering the efficiency and impacts of many rural development programmes.

The complexity of the current programming period hinders or restricts its results. It eliminates some players from the start, either because of a complicated procedure (complex application procedure, long time lag before acceptance...) or a too high co-financing requested. This complexity makes the management of projects and even programmes really difficult.

The RURALAND experience - A critical issue raised by RURALAND partners is the financial difficulty encountered in many projects, as a major obstacle to move towards satisfactory achievements, in particular by the lack of advance payment, or too much delay to get the co-financing back. In addition, rural development is often a matter of small-scale projects initiated by small-size business or organisations, with limited co-financing capacity, for which the current ineligibility in kind of contribution under the form of provision of works, goods or services is a real obstacle to even submit an application.

Since development is a step-by-step growing process, these difficulties encountered by small-scale projects are a real concern, but more solid projects and organizations are also considering the administrative and financial framework as too much time-consuming, to the detriment of the real development work. In contrast with this overall picture, the successful implementation of solutions to alleviate the administrative and financial burden for beneficiaries deserves particular consideration for improved programming in the coming period (see example from Wallonie).

Solutions for Leader Local Action Groups in Wallonie - The Walloon Region (Belgium) has developed solutions to address some administrative, technical or financial difficulties encountered by its Local action groups (LAGs):

- a recoverable advance payment is pre-financed by the Region on its own share of 45% of the budget for selected projects. A part of this advance is deducted from each quarterly claim, so that it is automatically reimbursed at the end of the project;
- in addition to the essential support to stakeholders for the design of their project, the “Leader interface” provides training and customized assistance to the LAGs’ coordinators in their administrative procedures (including checking the statements of claim before they are sent). This considerably alleviates the administrative burden for both the LAG and the regional administration;
- in the current programming, Wallonie authorizes spending up to 30 September 2014. This prevents breakdown the dynamic of a project during the evaluation of its possible extension to new projects.

The RURALAND partners calls for a REAL administrative simplification, and recommend in particular:

- that a part of technical assistance allowed to programmes be dedicated to provide support for administrative management to project applicants and managers of selected projects (from the inception phase to the final financial justification);
- the establishment of a pro-active financial support system based on a recoverable advance payment, to help local stakeholders solve difficulties in co-financing projects;
- the generalization of the “one year after eligibility” principle for projects coming to satisfactory completion, in order to support the sustainability of their dynamics;
- simplified, adapted and scalable procedures for small-scale projects, including eligibility of in kind contributions in works, to facilitate their start-up and allow them to grow and be strengthened step-by-step according to their results and potential for development;
- *facilitated public funding for rural areas* in terms of higher aid intensities, access to the advance payment without bank guarantee, eligibility of in kind contribution in provision of works, goods and services.

DESCRIPTION OF GOOD PRACTICES EXCHANGED



DESCRIPTION OF GOOD PRACTICE

Nº 1

TITLE: DEVELOPMENT OF ANDALUSIAN RESERVOIRS FOR TOURISM

COUNTRY: SPAIN

REGION: ANDALUSIA

PRESENTATION OF THE PROJECT AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

The project responded to the need to generate new economic activities in areas around reservoirs. These areas are characterised by their strong dependency on the primary sector (agriculture) and low-qualified labour force, high rates of unemployment, ageing populations and low levels of modernisation of their economic structures, with the exception of specific areas such as the Lucena business hub in the province of Cordoba.

The review of resources in these territories revealed that there were many natural and heritage resources in the proximity of the reservoirs in these regions, making these important potential areas for economic diversification, normally linked to tourism, but also to other sectors such as sustainable development and environmental activities. Therefore, the main actions consisted in dissemination and promotional activities organised in all the territories. Social and economic stakeholders were invited to participate in these activities to be informed of the wide variety of resources in their territories and their development potential. This activity was supported by the presentation of projects from other regions that had produced positive results.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

- Encourage citizen participation and raise awareness of the value of having a reservoir in their territory.
- Promote potential tourism business opportunities in these areas.
- Launch a pilot experience in each territory to serve as example and motivation to the rest of the population in relation to the economic potential of the reservoirs

RESULTS:

- Execution of a travelling exhibition on the resources and potential of the area with great attendance and high participation of young people.
- Creating a joint image as a tourist resource under the motto “Reservoirs tourism”, with a common logo for all areas.
- Creation of audiovisual and digital promotional products that have been disseminated for tourism promotion of the regions with reservoirs
- Creation of new infrastructures (River docks, accesses)
- Launch of new business activities on tourism relating to the reservoirs (tourist routes with canoeing, water sports, bird-watching, etc.)

DATES OF THE SITE VISIT: November 2010

PARTNERS PARTICIPANTS OF STUDY VISIT: Salaj and Sicily

DESCRIPTION OF GOOD PRACTICE

Nº 2

TITLE: THERMALAND: DEVELOPMENT OF SPA POTENTIAL IN ANDALUSIA

COUNTRY: SPAIN

REGION: ANDALUSIA

PRESENTATION OF THE PROJECT AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

Thermaland project was created as a Joint Cooperation Action to enhance spa and mineral/medicinal water resources, developing the necessary lines of action for the localization of related tourism activities and, thus, be able to generate innovative and job creating enterprises in thermal tourism. In addition, the project aims at increasing associations since the future of spa industry depends on the ability to assume the leadership of health tourism.

The project has been developed in 10 districts of Andalusia that are coincident at the geological level with the areas of greater outcrops of thermal and mineral resources of the region, where the existence of these springs and their use date back to Roman times.

Most of spas and thermal centres closed in the first half of the 20th century, overlapping the crisis of this tourism and services. The aim of this project was to enhance this resource to generate economic wealth, creation of jobs in municipalities whose economy is based on an agricultural sector in decline and low industrialisation and diversification.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

- Diagnose the initial situation, both from the tourist point of view of future thermal centres and the hydro-geological potential, by assessing the hydrological viability of springs and polls.
- Select those municipalities and areas of greatest tourist potential thermal conducting Declaration water and perimeters of protection records.

- Promote the creation of a legal and financial instrument to facilitate the development of investment projects for the construction of a network of new spa resorts and hotels in Andalusia.

RESULTS:

- A lot of studies on evaluation and diagnosis of thermal waters have been conducted as well as the determination of viable polls and new declarations of waters and perimeter protection.
- Support to the creation of new thermal and mineral-medicinal centres.
- Creation of the Spa Tourism Association of Andalusia as the new legal promotion entity.
- Execution of dissemination activities for local actors, as well as active participation in forums of the spa tourism sector at national and international levels.

DATES OF THE SITE VISIT: January 2011

PARTNERS PARTICIPANTS OF STUDY VISIT: Pazardhzik and Jämtland

DESCRIPTION OF GOOD PRACTICE

N° 3

TITLE: ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SOURCES. A FUTURE FOR RURAL AREAS

COUNTRY: SPAIN

REGION: ANDALUSIA

PRESENTATION OF THE PROJECT AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

Alternative energies, energy efficiency and climate change are the pillars of this project that aims at training and informing local actors and public bodies on the negative effects of some rural practices on “global warming” or “climate change” stressing on the use and promotion of alternative energies, improving energy efficiency in rural areas.

The project also includes a diagnostic study on natural resources potentially transformable into renewable energies.

Participating regions are eminently agricultural and countryside that wish to make use of their crops, many of which are currently unprofitable, in the creation of biomass for power generation, as well as the use of photovoltaic energy versus other types of energy that cause a higher environmental impact.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

- To analyse and assess energy supply infrastructures taking into account their future evolution and improvement.
- Identification of potential sources of renewable energies available in the municipality or area.
- To conduct a study on the implementation of bio fuels producing facilities or thermal energy plants that will reduce the dependence on fossil fuels.
- To improve electricity supply of isolated agro-industrial holdings.
- To promote the use and social and environmental advantages of renewable in order to help activate local economies through the use of existing but hitherto untapped resources.

RESULTS:

- Energy supply infrastructures have been analysed by drawing up a report later on disseminated between the public administrations and stakeholders.
- Renewable energy sources have been identified in the districts involved by creating a business plan and a methodological scheme for the effective use of resources.
- For the dissemination and aware rising on the use of renewable energies, various audio and video materials have been together with several educational campaigns in schools, as well as thematic workshops in the project areas.
- A course entitled Managers of Alternative Energies in Projects in Rural Areas and a renewable energies library have been created.

DATES OF THE SITE VISIT: January 2011

PARTNERS PARTICIPANTS OF STUDY VISIT: Odiana, Wallonia and Jämtland

DESCRIPTION OF GOOD PRACTICE

Nº 4

TITLE: OPTIMAE. ENERGY OPTIMIZATION, TERRITORIAL DISTRIBUTED GENERATION SYSTEMS

COUNTRY: SPAIN

REGION: ANDALUSIA

PRESENTATION OF THE PROJECT AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

The OPTIMAE project stem from the result of extrapolate to Andalusia the renewable energy promotion strategy developed by the Sierra de Cazorla RDG (Andalusian LAG) in its area of action, following the policies to promote renewable energies and energy saving and efficiency. The philosophy behind this is the creation of a rural territory as autonomous as possible in terms of energy dependency.

The aim of this project is to obtain detailed knowledge of the current situation in the participating rural areas in terms of energy use, consumption and dependency for the supply and good use of renewable sources of energy.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

- To achieve an Energy Mix, using different natural resources as sources of renewable energy in the involved territories, in order to develop territorial distributed generation systems, where the territory generates and consumes its own energy or, at least, reduces its dependency on external energy supply.
- To contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and contribute to the achievement of the objectives set out in the Andalusian Energy Plan (PLEAN - Plan Energético de Andalucía).
- To strengthen the image of territories committed to the environment, reducing the environmental impact associated with energy use.
- To reduce the energy consumption and bills of economic and social stakeholders.
- To strengthen the energy sector as an emerging sector and opportunity for business creation and job creation.
- To incorporate sustainability variables in the development of the energy system and the energy variable in Territorial Strategic Plans.

RESULTS:

- Conduction of a study on the energy potential in the OPTIMAE territory, with a wide distribution.
- Implementation of different conferences, courses and travelling exhibitions on energy saving and use of renewable energy sources.
- Conduction of energy audits and energy observatories at district level.
- Creation of the catalogue of good practices of renewable energies in the OPTIMAE territory, which has been distributed throughout the territory.
- Strong territorial cooperation and exchange of experiences among other territories and countries

DATES OF THE SITE VISIT: January 2011

PARTNERS PARTICIPANTS OF STUDY VISIT: Wallonia and Jämtland

DESCRIPTION OF GOOD PRACTICE

Nº 5

TITLE: GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICIES IN ANDALUSIA

COUNTRY: SPAIN

REGION: ANDALUSIA

PRESENTATION OF THE PROJECT AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

The Directorate General for the Sustainable Development of Rural Areas has laid down the objective of the full incorporation of gender mainstreaming in the rural development policy and, therefore, supports the idea of managing public funds with a gender approach.

Rural areas represent in Andalusia 90% of the total territory of the region and 50% of the population. About two million women live there and there are still situations of inequalities despite the significant improvements and changes experienced in recent years. This project wants to go a step forward in rural gender equality policies and in the elimination of inequalities.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

- To promote the economic empowerment and the improvement of the employability of women in Andalusian rural areas as a basis for their autonomy and economic independence.
- To increase the knowledge on the situation and economic independence.
- To raise awareness on the role of women in rural areas
- To promote the Rural Development Groups as stable structures working for equal opportunities between women and men in rural areas.
- To promote the appropriate institutional and administrative cohesion to work for equal opportunities.

RESULTS:

An important work of training and awareness-raising on gender has been carried out both for technical and management staff within the Directorate-General and LAGs. This has been the beginning of an important process of change that has affected working procedures, the design of the programmes and actions in general, the management process and the composition of the working groups concerned.

The gender mainstreaming strategy will be neither easy nor quick. Tools and resources are required together with willingness and explicit political, professional and individual commitment.

These are mid-term and long-term strategies, so there are no empirical results in the short term. Therefore, measures have been established to have a comprehensive qualitative and quantitative analysis of the results achieved in the medium and long term with the implementation of gender mainstreaming in Rural development policies.

DATES OF THE SITE VISIT: November 2010

PARTNERS PARTICIPANTS OF STUDY VISIT: Limousin and Kainuu

DESCRIPTION OF GOOD PRACTICE

Nº 6

TITLE: PAISAGUA - EXCEPTIONAL WATER-RELATED AGRICULTURAL LANDSCAPES. TRADITIONAL IRRIGATED LANDS AND ORCHARDS

COUNTRY: SPAIN

REGION: ANDALUSIA

PRESENTATION OF THE PROJECT AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

Traditional irrigated lands and orchards form a wide variety of landscapes which include important water-related heritage sites (waterwheels, water mills, fountains, irrigation channels, irrigation dams, bridges, water troughs, wells, dams or windmills, etc). Currently, many of these areas and their heritage have fallen into disuse and are at great risk of disappearing due to their scarce economic profitability as an agricultural system.

The project, thus, was created to protect, conserve, recover and promote the values of traditional orchard and irrigated landscapes in eight regions of Andalusia. To achieve this, the Paisagua network of Agricultural Water Landscapes has been created. This Network must channel the development of these areas by promoting the agricultural models applied in these areas, promoting traditional irrigated lands and orchards as a resource for rural and nature tourism, or identifying and proposing solutions to maintain profitable fruit and vegetable agricultural production to guarantee the future of these systems.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

- Identify the main types of exceptional water-related agricultural landscapes in the territories
- Disseminate the special characteristics of the areas for their promotion as an endogenous development resource for these territories.
- Promote environmentally-friendly agricultural models and promote the culture of good water management from the traditional standpoint.
- Promote traditional irrigated lands and orchards as a resource for rural and nature tourism and to carry out actions to improve environmental education.

RESULTS:

- The main agricultural water-related landscapes in these territories have been identified and mapped, creating a catalogue which forms part of the Paisagua network.
- Creation of the Paisagua network to channel the development of these areas. It has a continuity vision and must be understood as a long-term project.
- This inventory work in the eight districts produced a database with records of the exceptional landscapes finally included in the network. This database includes basic information on the landscape, location, coordinates, photographs, typology, assessments, threats and future proposals, among other information.
- Joint signposting or signalling of these special areas.
- Global Communication Plan aimed at disseminating the Network through conferences, travelling exhibitions, web and specific publications.

DATES OF THE SITE VISIT: February 2011

PARTNERS PARTICIPANTS OF STUDY VISIT: Wallonia and Corsica

DESCRIPTION OF GOOD PRACTICE

Nº 7

TITLE: DEVELOPMENT OF HERITAGE RELATED TO TRADITIONAL USES AND PRACTICES IN AREAS WITH EXCEPTIONAL LANDSCAPES

COUNTRY: SPAIN

REGION: ANDALUSIA

PRESENTATION OF THE PROJECT AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

Rural heritage is an essential element of the territorial identity of all rural areas, as well as a key aspect for studying and understanding the evolution, history and specific characteristics of these areas.

When observing this heritage, we can understand the experience of each territory in different stages of history, the main economic activities, the main features of their cultures, traditions and customs, etc. In short, the factors that have influenced and determined their current state.

This project brought together 15 Andalusian LAGs that are very different from the territorial perspective but which share a great rural heritage linked to traditional uses and practices. In fact, the specific heritage resources of each territory are an important component of the endogenous development strategy adopted in each area due to the enormous potential for exploiting all local resources (natural, ethnographic and architectonic).

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

- Enhancement of the heritage resources of the participating territories that were previously unknown and undervalued.
- Implementation of new and innovative channels for endogenous development in line with the development strategy adopted in each territory.
- Seek new channels to maintain and conserve these exceptional resources in order to prevent their disappearance and/or irreversible deterioration.

- Promote and disseminate this rural heritage as an exceptional and endogenous resource of the participating territories.

RESULTS:

- Identification and characterisation of singular heritage elements related to traditional and cultural activities in the territories, through the publication of a broad catalogue and a GIS location.
- Publication of a heritage guide aimed at young people in all Andalusia.
- Creation of a computer application for the management of information and its continuity with virtual representations of some of the unique assets catalogued.
- Training courses aimed at the cultural managers of rural territories. These courses had a broad participation.

DATES OF THE SITE VISIT: February 2011

PARTNERS PARTICIPANTS OF STUDY VISIT: Wallonia and Corsica

DESCRIPTION OF GOOD PRACTICE

Nº 8

TITLE: “ANDALUCÍA INTERACTIVA”: INVOLVEMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH THE GENERAL KNOWLEDGE GAME

COUNTRY: SPAIN

REGION: ANDALUSIA

PRESENTATION OF THE PROJECT AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

The project aimed to encourage young people in Andalusia to play an active role in the development of rural territories by improving their knowledge of their territories.

The project foresees a series of activities of revitalization that are developed around a game of knowledge about Andalusia, created within the project itself.

This has involved a series of actions:

- Creation of knowledge games.
- Promotion and dissemination campaigns in Andalusian secondary schools.
- Local and regional competitions. The students of said secondary schools participated in these contests of knowledge games about rural areas in the region and rural development.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

- Promote the area of our community and highlight the opportunities it offers.
- Exchange experiences among collectives of young people from all Andalusian districts.
- Promote relations between young people from different Andalusian areas.
- Promote the participation of young people in Rural Development.
- Provide young people with more information on their local culture.
- Collaborate with schools in providing education for young people.
- Promote the use of new technologies as a learning tool.

RESULTS:

The success of the proposal within institutes of secondary education and the high number of participants in the contests with interactive games can be highlighted. More than twenty-five thousand students have participated in several editions.

In addition, a large number of board games have been distributed among the entire student population getting very good acceptance and reviews within students, teachers and the educational community.

Problems such as the continuity and maintenance of interest in the interactive game should also be mentioned because, after carrying out several editions and being known by a large number of students, it is necessary to produce new versions of the game and competitions to keep the interest of young people.

DATES OF THE SITE VISIT: November 2010

PARTNERS PARTICIPANTS OF STUDY VISIT: Salaj

DESCRIPTION OF GOOD PRACTICE

Nº 9

TITLE: ANDARURAL.ES

COUNTRY: SPAIN

REGION: ANDALUSIA

PRESENTATION OF THE PROJECT AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

Anda Rural is a 2.0 web designed to help travellers organise and plan their trips around inland Andalusia. This portal allows visitors to discover the diversity of tourist resources available in 22 Andalusian rural districts, offering tools to allow visitors to prepare their itinerary more easily.

The information can be printed or downloaded to any portable device such as mobile phone, PDA or mp3player, guiding tourists through the itineraries by GPS, including walking itineraries and natural hiking trails.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

- The main objective of the project is to enhance the tourist resources of the rural territories of Andalusia through the use of new technologies and innovation.
- Another objective is to standardise the tourist information within the different regions because each LAG involved had gradually designed its own database in accordance with its specific needs but there were no contacts between the different groups.
- Use of the possibilities that new technologies offer for the development of travel and tourist routes and become the most attractive and innovative option within the competitive and difficult rural tourism market.
- Joint promotion of rural territories.

RESULTS:

Three great actions have been developed during the project:

1. Creation of the routes guided by GPS, including the positioning of the special signs and posters inside the routes.
2. The communication strategy and promotion of *Andarural*, including the organisation of events and other promotional activities.
3. The collection, entry and storage of content in the geographical database.

Among the difficulties encountered, some are: the high costs of the product, related to the use of new technologies of information and the difficulty of its promotion. Despite the novelty of the project and the high cost, no reliably improvement in the number of tourists that visit those territories can be observed.

DATES OF THE SITE VISIT: February 2011

PARTNERS PARTICIPANTS OF STUDY VISIT: Sicily, Corsica and Wallonia

DESCRIPTION OF GOOD PRACTICE

N° 10

TITLE: GASTUR PROMOTION OF LOCAL GASTRONOMY

COUNTRY: SWEDEN

REGION: JÄMTLAND

PRESENTATION OF THE PROJECT AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

Jämtland is an example of a Nordic region whose potential and profile lies in a clean environment, clean raw materials and locally produced products. Tourism and an extended event industry together with small-scale food production and locally produced handicrafts are part of the region's marketing profile.

GASTUR aims to give Jämtland's small-scale food producers an access to new markets and to enable visitors to experience the local cuisine on the farms where the food is produced. The purpose of the project is to increase regional tourist products around locally produced food and culture. This should improve the conditions for a successful development of Jämtland as a tourist destination.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

The project was based on a vision that in 2018:

Jämtland will be northern Europe's leading gastronomic destination, with clear tourist products of high quality and great variety.

Products must be environmentally, socially and financially sustainable.

GASTUR would be a national centre for the development of artisan food tourism. Within one year, the project, with the help of five reference firms (RF), created a method in a structured, effective and user-friendly manner for artisan food producers who want to develop tourism as part of their business.

The principle of RF was that each company developed two functional tourism products that meet the criteria of a sustainable and distinct product of high quality.

GASTUR had also the objective to develop an accessible location for the exposure of this type of products.

RESULTS:

- The project fulfilled its objective of making an inventory of currently existing small-scale food producers in the county, and a review of their potential as tourism entrepreneurs. The project also fulfilled its objectives of training.
- By developing a sound methodology and using new resources in the tourist industry, the project aims to create conditions that are favourable for an increase of travellers to Jämtland.
- The project has already gained an international focus. A travel agency will now start “Food and Culture Theme Travels” to three regions in Europe: Tuscany, Piedmont and Jämtland.

The results show that the objectives have been reached to a satisfactory level. The goal aimed to improve conditions for destination development, by increasing the number of tourism products, is partially met. The project has generated 12 products which can be further developed over time. This is important because the overall development process is strengthened by the number of products reaching the market.

DATES OF STUDY VISIT: September 2010

PARTNERS PARTICIPANTS OF STUDY VISIT: Andalusia, Kainuu, Salaj, Pazardzhik.

DESCRIPTION OF GOOD PRACTICE

N° 11

TITLE: ULLFORUM, LOCAL ADDED VALUE FOR QUALITY WOOL

COUNTRY: SWEDEN

REGION: JÄMTLAND

PRESENTATION OF THE PROJECT AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

Jämtland has a well-preserved environment and produces high-quality agricultural products. Sheep farming is a long-established regional activity, traditionally geared towards meat production. Since 2002, however, the region is also seeking to exploit the wool by developing products based on this raw material.

The purpose of the “Ullforum” (Wool Forum) project was to create a platform for exchange between all the actors of the wool sector and to use the knowledge so gained to gain a better understanding of market expectations and the products to be developed. As a result of the lessons learned, the project became a lever for creating a sustainable wool sector that is respectful of the environment of the region. The process led to the creation of a regional resource centre for wool and a strong network including breeders, producers, product creators and processors.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

The project has grown out of a dual concern: to meet the demand of local producers and craftspeople who require a fine, high quality wool having a small ecological footprint and to realise the wish of the regional public authorities to strengthen sheep farming.

The project was based around three strategic objectives:

- To improve the quality of the raw material.
- To strengthen cooperation between the producers and the processors.
- To develop and market wool-based products.

RESULTS:

- The project succeeded both in improving the quality of the raw material offer and meeting market expectations.
- The quality of the wool has indeed markedly improved as a result of the breeds and breeding techniques used, as well as improved processing of the wool.
- Original, innovatively shaped wool products have been created with the help of renowned designers.
- Local independent craftspeople pooled their resources to joint companies to develop and market the new products.
- Sheep farming is now considered a growth sector in the region and incentive measures have been taken to strengthen it.

DATES OF STUDY VISIT: September 2010

PARTNERS PARTICIPANTS OF STUDY VISIT: Limousin

DESCRIPTION OF GOOD PRACTICE

N° 12

TITLE: RESOURCE CENTRE FOR SMALL SCALE DAIRY PRODUCTION

COUNTRY: SWEDEN

REGION: JÄMTLAND

PRESENTATION OF THE PROJECT AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

Natural resources are Jämtland's base of economic activities. Agriculture, forestry, and tourism are important economic activities. Forestry is the most important source of income for the regional economy. Most farmers combine forestry and agriculture as part of a distinctive pattern of life and work in the rural settlements - people practice pluriactivity to make a living.

The regional strategic development plans foresee that in 2020, Jämtland, that has never been heavily industrialized, will attract and/or create a variety of businesses and will continue to focus on the entrepreneurial spirit that has made the county become one of the major destinations in the country, with a strong year-round tourism. The plans also include programs for further support to small scale food producers as an asset in the regional economic landscape.

Farmers can attend courses and get advising services regarding the dairy production. The region of Jämtland has a leading position in Sweden regarding small scale food production, especially cheese production. An educational dairy plant has been set up. A mobile dairy has also been set up.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

The initiative of a resource centre for small scale dairy production is based on tradition and includes hundreds of manufacturers within all kinds of food processing. The cheese processing is often based on goat's milk or from Swedish mountain cattle. 30% of Sweden's goats live in Jämtland region and many farms produce goats-cheese and other dairy-products. There is also a large scale dairy producer in the county, MILKO who has its seat in Östersund, making their products from the farms in the county.

Objectives:

- Through our expertise, promote rural development in Jämtland focusing on food processing.
- Support persons who live or want to live in rural areas, and there make a living on the farm's natural resources.

RESULTS:

The dairy has been operational in different phases during 16 years and during this time supported the development of small scale food production in Jämtland and also at national level, leading to a number of artisan cheese producers in the county. An average of 6 courses in cheese production has been held each year leading to not only new companies in the sector, but also a higher competence in existing companies.

The practice has been transmitted to groups of local entrepreneurs through seminars and study-visits. The results obtained can be used to inspire entrepreneurs and innovators and stimulate them to develop new processes and original local products in their own cheese factories. Having a functional plant to produce successful products important for the people in the region has been a major success for the project.

DATES OF STUDY VISIT: November/December 2010

PARTNERS PARTICIPANTS OF STUDY VISIT: Odarc, Pazardzhik.

DESCRIPTION OF GOOD PRACTICE

N° 13

TITLE: SENIORPOLIS

COUNTRY: FINLAND

REGION: KAINUU

PRESENTATION OF THE PROJECT AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

In Europe, half of the citizens are seniors. The excellence in senior housing, senior caring, senior learning and senior entertainment opens up many opportunities for businesses. Senior citizens are a growing, solvent group, which potential in markets is still unfound.

The Seniorpolis expertise centre develops business operations that promote well-being and lifestyle opportunities for senior citizens. Seniorpolis, in cooperation with universities, research institutes and technical high schools promotes know-how and business concepts within different senior citizen services. Seniorpolis offers Ristijärvi municipality as a pilot area to test new technology and different products to be offered to senior citizens. Seniorpolis is developing Living Alb concept to Kainuu region, together with different organizations. Living lab means real time and life testing. Instead of seeing senior citizens as a challenge, Ristijärvi municipality is shifting towards making ageing population as an opportunity. In the strategy of Ristijärvi municipality, senior citizens are seen as remarkable element.

Seniorpolis develops following areas: housing, learning, education, care and refreshment.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

To make Seniorpolis a profitable business, taking care of senior citizens needs.

- Housing
- Learning and Education
- Care
- Refreshment

RESULTS:

Seniorpolis has been active with Ristijärvi municipality to build infrastructure in Ristijärvi. Seniorpolis' 1st project (2004-2007) was concentrated in building infrastructure like accommodation, exercise center and care homes in Ristijärvi. Now we have 20 new apartments, exercise centers especially for seniors, two private care homes and a Good age park in Ristijärvi. The Park is especially planned for all age groups.

Seniorpolis concept has also been brought up as a good practice in OECD Rural Policy Review in Finland (2008).

DATES OF STUDY VISIT: September 2010

PARTNERS PARTICIPANTS OF STUDY VISIT: Limousin, Wallonia, Pazardzhik.

DESCRIPTION OF GOOD PRACTICE

N° 14

TITLE: “LES ROUTES DES SENS AUTHENTIQUES” AN APPROACH TO NETWORKING AND PROMOTING MICRO-REGIONS AND THEIR TERRITORY

COUNTRY: FRANCE

REGION: CORSICA

PRESENTATION OF THE PROJECT AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

In 1997, the Promotion Agency for Corsican Agricultural Products, Crafts and Territories (l’Outil de Promotion des Produits Agricoles et Agro-alimentaires, des Métiers et des Territoires Corses or OPAMTC) initiated a programme promoting the island’s micro-regions and the skills available through the use of synergies between the different business sectors and drivers of quality and identity in these areas: agriculture, crafts, culture and heritage, holiday cottages and B&B farm-houses.

The momentum established here led to the creation of tourist circuits called “les Routes des sens authentiques”, roughly translated as “the 5-senses routes”. These are helping to establish an overall quality image, extend the tourist season and foster economic development in the micro-regions concerned.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

The establishment of the “Routes des sens authentiques” aims to give a boost to these territories, helping farmers, craftsmen and accommodation providers to stay or move to the valleys and allowing them to gain a decent standard of living from their work. It is also a question of creating incentives to renovate old buildings, maintain farmland, and create business and cultural activities.

The development of synergies between farming, tourism, crafts, culture and commerce provides a concrete insight into the local development and how the region’s stakeholders are brought together.

Finally, the “Routes des sens authentiques” help the economic and social revival of the territories, constituting a pillar of major importance for their long-term development.

To achieve this, the project has the following goals:

- Extending the tourist season by attracting visitors outside the summer season to the “rhythm” of agricultural production;
- Developing short circuits where agricultural products and handicrafts are sold
- Leveraging this window on the outside world to position certain products

RESULTS:

6 “Routes des Sens Authentiques” have been established in Corsica, and another 3 currently being set up. They allow tourists to meet producers in situ, helping them to gain a better insight into the product and better appreciate its quality. The resultant tight customer-producer relationship enables a true product differentiation, a pre-requisite for marketing such products and for the business they generate. This leads to the “Routes des Sens Authentiques” becoming a major factor in the regions’ economic and social development, and constituting a pillar for their long-term development.

DATES OF STUDY VISIT: October 2010

PARTNERS PARTICIPANTS OF STUDY VISIT: Kainuu, Wallonia, Jämtland

DESCRIPTION OF GOOD PRACTICE

N° 15

TITLE: VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT WORK IN THE KAINUU REGION

COUNTRY: FINLAND

REGION: KAINUU

PRESENTATION OF THE PROJECT AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

The operation is implemented within the framework of a wider programme, the “Kainuu Village Action Programme”. The 2003-2007 and 2007-2013 Kainuu Village Action Programmes are village development plans defined by the local actors (residents and authorities), coordinated and assisted by devoted structures and co funded by the EU.

Inhabitants participate more and more often and take the responsibility for the areas they live in. Cooperation between authorities, policy makers and citizens is improved. Long term and systematic village development work has been amplified (systematic village development work means that we have implemented village development projects one after another and each new project has been based on the evaluation, on the experience learned from the old projects and on the expectations for the future). The amount of village development plans and projects has increased in quantity and in quality.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

The common objectives of the Village Action Programmes (VAP) are to improve the vitality of rural areas and the welfare of people, notably by:

- Improving conditions of entrepreneurship,
- Creating a positive atmosphere in development work by education,
- Improving services: transport, education and leisure,
- Enhancing social and health care services,
- Providing nature and environment conservation and care,
- Influencing decision making

RESULTS:

- 100 Village Development Plans
- A communication system for villages (www.kainuu.fi/kylat)
- Increased quantity and quality of the village development projects
- Good cooperation between different villages, between organisations doing village development work and between villages, authorities and politicians
- Activation of people living in rural areas has increased
- Young people have also become active when given the chance to plan and implement voluntary work in their own ways (IT-technology, net-TV, café...)

DATES OF STUDY VISIT: September 2010

PARTNERS PARTICIPANTS OF STUDY VISIT: Andalusia, Kainuu, Salaj, Pazardzhik

DESCRIPTION OF GOOD PRACTICE

N° 16

TITLE: BIOMASS, THE CORSICAN INTEGRATED WOOD-ENERGY SECTOR

COUNTRY: FRANCE

REGION: CORSICA

PRESENTATION OF THE PROJECT AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

Actions in favour of wood-energy were launched in Corsica at the beginning of the 1980s under the impetus of the Region and the ADEME. The ADEME is the French environment and energy management agency (*Agence de l'Environnement et de la Maîtrise de l'Energie*), an industrial and commercial public undertaking, under the joint authority of the Ministry for Ecology, Energy, Sustainable Development and Marine Affairs responsible for green technologies and Climate negotiations and the Ministry for Higher Education and Research.

The first component of this policy was the installation of wood boilers in public buildings (colleges, high schools, social housing, etc.) and an urban heating network in Corte. Around ten sites have been equipped in this way.

The other, more original, component was the creation of the Corsican Wood-Energy semi-public company, having as partner the Corsica Region and various private bodies. The role of this semi-public company was firstly to supply fuel to the boilers. It then took over the management of the Corte heating network.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

The objective is to obtain (through the creation of a wood-energy sector using local natural resources), a renewable and sustainable source of energy as an alternative to electricity, the generation of which is of an environmentally poor standard in Corsica.

RESULTS:

After having been ahead of its time by launching one of the first biomass-based heating networks, the wood-energy sector experienced a period of consolidation in Corsica that lasted for about ten years. It is now fully revitalised, with the installation or renewal of boilers, a notable increase in biomass consumption and, above all, an increasing number of customers connected to the Corte heating network, who benefit from a lower energy cost than that of other energy sources.

In addition to the jobs specific to the sector, the forestry work undertaken by the Territorial Authority of Corsica, that provides biomass as a by-product, has consolidated the forestry companies (jobs, investment in equipment, etc.).

The forests which are used inside this channel are public forests presenting a development plan thus having a sustainable management plan as stated in the Forest Code. Furthermore, the territorial forests should soon be certified PEFC (Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification).

DATES OF STUDY VISIT: March 2011

PARTNERS PARTICIPANTS OF STUDY VISIT: Odiana, Wallonia

DESCRIPTION OF GOOD PRACTICE

N° 17

TITLE: BIOGAS FROM MANURE IN SMALL FARMS

COUNTRY: SWEDEN

REGION: JÄMTLAND

PRESENTATION OF THE PROJECT AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

The region is almost fossil free as regards to energy consumption. Excluding transport, the figure reaches 95% and, including transport, 65% but the amount of “fossil free” cars is rapidly increasing. The long term strategic goal is to make the region 100% “fossil free” by 2030. Production and development of renewable energy provides jobs in the region, and knowledge and competitiveness in the “green” sector have for a long time been the trademark of Jämtland.

The BIOGAS project aimed to stimulate the production of biogas on the dairy cattle farms in the region of Jämtland. Seven small farms (20-100 cows) were studied in depth, in cooperation with the farmers. A specific funding was allocated to each farm. One year later, one farm had built a biogas plant and at least two others will do it. Biogas is a double climate benefit energy. It makes a twofold contribution to environmental protection: it prevents uncontrolled emission of methane into the atmosphere and, by generating renewable energy, it reduces the use of fossil fuel. Biogas can be used for heat or electricity.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

The project consisted of an inventory aiming to provide basic data that a company or an individual can use when designing a biogas plant on the farm. The goal was to assist at least five farms to set up their own biogas plant. The project report is not a complete building instruction manual but can be used for procurement / design of a biogas plant. Biogas plants must process manure and selected parts of industrial residues, food waste, grass/silage and generate energy. The process consists of the following elements:

1. Collecting the material
2. Digestion

3. Processing
4. Gas handling with steering and control equipment
5. Electricity and heating, and possibly biogas as fuel

RESULTS:

The seven individual farms which were selected have all received a plan describing their biogas potential and the size of their biogas production. From this information, together with the farmers, we went through the physical facilities on the farm and designed a complete concept which can be used for project planning of the plant.

Furthermore, from 6 to 7 farms, we have developed a “standard farm” concept which was used to build a budget for the process, from reception to gas utilisation. This information can be used by entrepreneurs to decide how to proceed with their biogas plans.

DATES OF STUDY VISIT: December 2010

PARTNERS PARTICIPANTS OF STUDY VISIT: Limousin, Wallonia

DESCRIPTION OF GOOD PRACTICE

N° 18

TITLE: DIVA NETWORK (SUPPORT SCHEME FOR AGRICULTURAL AND AGRI-RURAL PROJECT SPONSORS)

COUNTRY: FRANCE

REGION: LIMOUSIN

PRESENTATION OF THE PROJECT AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

At the beginning of 2008, the Limousin Regional Council set up a regional network to assist agricultural and agri-rural project sponsors called the “DIVA network”.

This network comprises a number of partner organisations that have undertaken to combine their know-how and offer their services to the project sponsors.

The Regional Council provides financial assistance to these partner organisations on behalf of those project sponsors that seek assistance.

The ambition is to promote the attractiveness of the rural territories, the long-term viability of farms and the value of local resources.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

The purpose of the DIVA network is to increase the attractiveness of the rural territories and to cope with changes in the agricultural world:

- assisting the integration and the installation of new farmers and new residents in rural areas
- encouraging and promoting local initiatives, employment, the creation or development of agricultural and agri-rural activities,
- promoting the long term viability of farms that may be multi-functional or seeking to diversify,
- supporting the emergence of new agri-rural projects based on local resources (agro-climatic, ecological, human, geographic, etc.)

RESULTS:

The partners of the Diva network set themselves the target of supporting 50 projects per year, but this target has been greatly exceeded.

In total, 350 project sponsors have been identified since the launch. In 2008, 58 projects were assisted by this scheme, and a further 75 in 2009. The difference between the number of project sponsors identified and the number of projects supported is explained by the time of reflection that is sometimes necessary before the project sponsor contacts the network for targeted assistance. Other reasons are the large number of joint projects involving several project sponsors and, in some cases, the lack of follow-up by the project sponsors following initial contact.

Overall, one third of the project sponsors are farmers wishing to diversify, one third are people changing occupations or with dual occupations and one third are job seekers or people on minimum allowances wishing to create their own activity. Their average age is between 35 and 45 years old.

The majority of project sponsors supported are seeking to set up an agricultural activity or develop a pluriactivity. Many of the supported projects concern fruit and vegetable production (bio vegetables, fruit) and incorporate a direct sales segment.

DATES OF STUDY VISIT: March 2011

PARTNERS PARTICIPANTS OF STUDY VISIT: Andalusia

DESCRIPTION OF GOOD PRACTICE

N° 19

TITLE: SICILIAN AGROMETEOROLOGICAL INFORMATION SERVICE (SIAS)

COUNTRY: ITALY

REGION: SICILY

PRESENTATION OF THE PROJECT AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

Sicily has a wide diversity of agricultural productions especially Mediterranean crops. The agricultural activities in Sicily still play a very important role in rural areas. These are affected, as elsewhere in Europe, by a significant exodus towards cities and coast. But even if there has been a significant development of the agricultural/forestry sector in the last decades, Sicily is still facing high production costs, a large consumption of water for irrigation and frequent forest fires. Furthermore, despite a mild climate, some winter/spring crops may be affected by frost problems, especially in the inland areas, and there are a lot of crops for which it is still possible to reduce the use of pesticides to improve the quality of products and reduce the environmental impact of the agricultural processes.

The main aim of the project is the use of new technologies in agricultural processes management and rural areas exploitation. Some important applications have already been developed in several fields, like different agrometeorological applications (irrigation, frost and fire forecasting and alerting, pest and disease integrated and guided control), and topo-climatological and other small scale suitability studies using GIS and new communication technologies. A particular recent interesting extension of applications is the one regarding the traceability processes on agri-food chains, from the farm to the consumer, especially for olive, orchards and horticulture productions.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

Improvement of knowledge in the agrometeorological and agroclimatological characteristics of Sicily in order to improve the applications and the management skills of agricultural and rural operators, to increase quality productions and to reduce the agricultural costs and the environmental impact.

RESULTS:

A significant and growing number of visitors (about 700 access/day and 7 000 individual visitors per month) of SIAS web site (www.sias.regione.sicilia.it), since the start-up considered the most important media for the dissemination of information to the users.

About 2.000 direct data users, who frequently have access to SIAS data for their professional uses.

More than 10.000 users for AGROSERVIZI: the web portal of SIAS operational applications.

A large number of applications for regional administration in the field of agricultural, rural and environmental policies and meteo-climatological study to support financial procedures for damages in agricultural sector.

DATES OF STUDY VISIT: November 2010

PARTNERS PARTICIPANTS OF STUDY VISIT: Odarc, Pazardzhik

DESCRIPTION OF GOOD PRACTICE

N° 20

TITLE: WELCOME LOCAL AREA: REGIONAL POLICY AIMED AT ATTRACTING NEW RESIDENTS AND DEVELOPING NEW BUSINESSES

COUNTRY: FRANCE

REGION: LIMOUSIN

PRESENTATION OF THE PROJECT AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

The Limousin Region experienced a significant demographic decline up to the 1990s, which has resulted in a considerable aging of the population i.e. four years older than the national average). Estimates for 2030 were pessimistic. Since 1999, the major national trends for reversal of the migration balance in rural areas have also affected Limousin. The Limousin Region has therefore decided to use this trend as a basis for growth. The Region's stated political and policy focus is to stem the demographic decline through the introduction of a regional policy aimed at attracting new immigrants.

The regional policy developed by the Limousin Region is based on four key areas:

1. Attracting new residents and facilitating their integration
2. Promoting the emergence and structuring of areas for accommodating new arrivals on an infra-regional basis
3. Promoting Limousin outside the Region
4. Being aware of and analysing migration dynamics, initially within the region and then beyond

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

The purpose of the project is to attract and integrate new residents and to develop new businesses.

RESULTS:

There are three **principal results**:

1. Between 1999 and 2005, out of 1,440 potential candidates who contacted the Region, 639 have actually moved to the Region (i.e. a success rate of 44.5%);
2. In 2005 Limousin became the 6th most “attractive” region in France: an average of 10,000 people move to the region each year (50% between 20 and 45 years, 1/3 from Ile-de-France), resulting in an overall population gain of 13,000 inhabitants between 1999 and 2005. XXX Region must verify that these figures are consistent
3. Support is provided according to a quality-based approach, with the objective of ensuring a safe and easy transition for people wishing to move to the Region, which will then ensure that these new residents choose to remain

DATES OF STUDY VISIT: March 2011

PARTNERS PARTICIPANTS OF STUDY VISIT: Andalusia, Sicily, Jämtland

DESCRIPTION OF GOOD PRACTICE

Nº 21

TITLE: LOCAL CONTRACT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

COUNTRY: PORTUGAL

REGION: ALGARVE

PRESENTATION OF THE PROJECT AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

The Local Contracts for Social Development were created by the Portuguese Social Security Institute to face some weaknesses detected in Portugal. In order to better distribute funding available, some depressed zones / regions were identified previously as areas of priority intervention.

This project is developed in an aged and dispersed territory of Alcoutim and Castro Marim. The activities contribute to reduce social isolation of older people who live in rural areas and in small villages far from others.

The different activities are: development of social, parental and civic competences; creation of mobile units for social intervention in the rural areas; promoting and sensitizing for oral health, deafness of older people and leisure travels for seniors; Implementation of courses in different fields at Leisure Time University; participation of local associations; providing children, adults and seniors with a better access to the new technologies.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

Promote social inclusion of the citizens, especially of older population, through measures and actions that contribute to increase the acquisition of basic competences, reduce social isolation, promote social relations, improve active partnerships and correct disadvantages in the access to the new technologies.

RESULTS:

The real and added value of the intervention is the involvement of older people in the activities and the number of people already covered. For example, the Mobil Unit for social intervention covered 800 persons in its first year whereas only 100 people were expected to be covered.

Another example of success in this project is the campaign for fighting deafness, that even helped the eldest one. Three hundred people were helped to buy hearing implants, with some funding from the municipalities of Castro Marim and Alcoutim.

The Leisure time University also had a large success with 132 persons attending the educative courses.

These results may seem low, but considering the number of inhabitants, the dispersed territory and the reduced number of activities available for these people and the access to services, this project turns out to be a big step to reduce social isolation and correct disadvantages and inequalities between rural territories and the most touristic and populated coast of Algarve.

DATES OF STUDY VISIT: February 2011

PARTNERS PARTICIPANTS OF STUDY VISIT: Limousin, Odarc, Kainuu

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