



NEWS AND UPDATES

- **GETTING SMART VILLAGES RIGHT**
- **RURAL WOMEN IN EUROPE**
- **PROMOTING THE RURAL BIOECONOMY**

RURAL ISSUES, RURAL PERSPECTIVES

- **EMPOWERING RURAL YOUTH**
- **THE GREEN DANUBE**
- **RURAL POLAND AND THE EU**

FOCUS ON...

### networkX

<https://enrd.ec.europa.eu>

## European Network for Rural Development

The European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) is the hub that connects rural development stakeholders throughout the European Union (EU). The ENRD contributes to the effective implementation of Member States' Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) by generating and sharing knowledge, as well as through facilitating information exchange and cooperation across rural Europe.

Each Member State has established a National Rural Network (NRN) that brings together the organisations and administrations involved in rural development. At EU level, the ENRD supports the networking of these NRNs, national administrations and European organisations.

Find out more on the *ENRD website* (<https://enrd.ec.europa.eu>)

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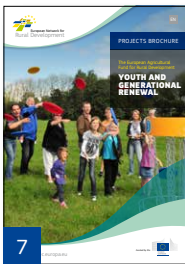
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## EDITORIAL



At the ENRD we have always believed that networking brings rural development policy to life. That's because networks are about people. The value of networking lies in its ability to make connections and deliver results that otherwise would not occur.

We had a memorable example of the magic that can happen when people get together on 11-12 April 2019. Over 400 rural development enthusiasts gathered in Brussels for 'networX', where European Commission Chief Spokesperson, Margaritis Schinas told the rural development practitioners present that they represented, "the positive agenda for Europe. You are our future!"

Our **Focus on... networX** (pp. 14-25) captures some of the highlights from that successful event. Read all about how the interactive format gave participants the time and space for both formal and informal discussion. About how the networX marketplace demonstrated the breadth of rural networking across the EU and in some neighbouring countries. And about the winners of the first-ever ENRD Rural Inspiration Awards, which were presented by Commissioner Hogan during networX.

The ENRD event was held to recognise the value of networking for rural development, to demonstrate the results of the past ten years of rural networking and to look proactively to the future of networking post 2020.

For more about the power of networks, be sure to check out EU Rural Review 27. Published to coincide with networX, the review explains how networking has grown to become a defining characteristic of rural development in Europe. Networking has not only matured as a policy tool, all types of rural stakeholders interact in today's diverse networking ecosystem. The future policy environment at European level will remain supportive, with the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) post 2020 expected to rely on networking to an even greater extent.

In our round-up of **News and updates** (pp. 4-13) we profile the latest from the ENRD's thematic work on Smart Villages and the Bioeconomy. Our EU news coverage includes a report on the post-2020 flexible eco-climate schemes and the CAP's role in providing answers to the challenges rural women face, among other stories.

In the **Rural Issues, Rural Perspectives** (pp. 26-39) section, we hear from members of the rural development community who are making a positive difference in rural areas. Such as great examples of social and digital communications – from Ireland and at European level – and transnational cooperation projects in the tourism sector targeting a new kind of tourist and a report detailing the positive impact of the CAP on rural development in Poland.

Do you have any comments on this magazine? Or might you like to contribute some ideas for future editions? If so, please do get in touch.

**Derek McGlynn**

Publications Manager, ENRD CP  
editor@enrd.eu

## NEWS &amp; UPDATES

## ENRD NEWS

European Network for  
Rural Development

## Getting Smart Villages right

The ENRD's thematic work on Smart Villages continues to generate new and insightful findings that Member States can apply to their own national and regional initiatives.

The lessons learned so far, taken from real-life projects, have been collated and presented in a new series of ENRD briefing documents. The papers have been designed to help inspire and provide support for Smart Village thinking within Rural Development Programmes (RDPs).

Four briefing papers have been published in the series. Together, the documents provide a very useful orientation on how to support Smart Villages – not only in the current programming period (2014-2020), but also in the future under the post-2020 Common Agricultural Policy (CAP):

- **How to support Smart Villages strategies which effectively empower rural communities?**

The briefing is targeted mainly at national and regional policy-makers and implementers to help them put in place both rural and regional policies which enable rural communities to respond to the challenges they face.

- **How can LEADER/CLLD support Smart Villages?**

The briefing assesses the current LEADER/Community-led local development (CLLD) implementation barriers identified by Local Action Groups (LAGs) and presents recommendations on how they can be overcome to fully exploit the potential of Smart Villages at the local level.

- **Using non-LEADER/CLLD cooperation to support Smart Villages**

The potential role of non-LEADER/CLLD support for Smart Villages is explored. Guidance and experiences from previous programming periods has been reviewed in the context of the European Commission's proposal for a Regulation on 'CAP Strategic Plans' for the 2021-2027 period.

- **How to ensure that digital strategies benefit rural communities**

This briefing sets out how digitisation can be a powerful force for change – as long as it is adapted to the rural context and implemented with the involvement of rural communities themselves.



© Samuel Pettersson, European Union, 2015

The briefing papers highlight the steps that can be taken to set-up and implement effective Smart Village strategies. They acknowledge that LEADER can act as a pioneer for Smart Villages. Cooperation is underlined as a fundamental success factor for policies and strategies that foster Smart Village concepts. Attention is also drawn to the wide variety of financial aid sources and advisory services available in rural Europe.

The ENRD Thematic Group (TG) on Smart Villages continues to generate valuable new information. The seventh TG meeting, held in March 2019, focused on how to design effective packages of support for Smart Villages in the future CAP Strategic Plans as well as how to build synergy with other funds and policies. The eighth meeting, held in France in June, focused on approaches to developing local digital ecosystems.

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Four Smart Village briefing papers

- [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/publications\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/publications_en)
- <https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/publications/search>

TG on Smart Villages

[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/enrd-thematic-work/smart-and-competitive-rural-areas/smart-villages\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/enrd-thematic-work/smart-and-competitive-rural-areas/smart-villages_en)

The Smart Villages Portal provides links to the many inspiring initiatives and networks across Europe that are exploring new ways of revitalising rural areas through social and digital innovation.

[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/smart-and-competitive-rural-areas/smart-villages/smart-villages-portal\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/smart-and-competitive-rural-areas/smart-villages/smart-villages-portal_en)

## NEWS &amp; UPDATES

## European Rural Networks governance

The state of play of the CAP post 2020 discussions featured prominently during the latest meetings of the European Rural Networks' Assembly, the Steering Group and the Sub-group on LEADER and Community-Led Local Development (CLLD). Topics discussed during these governance meetings included the contributions that both the EU-level and Member States' rural networks and LEADER/ CLLD bodies can make to support good practices during preparations for the post 2020 CAP Strategic Plans. The importance of networking and innovation were signalled as being useful for peer learning and building common capacities in the next programming period.

European Commission speakers opening the 5<sup>th</sup> Rural Network's Assembly reminded members that the CAP post-2020 proposals reflected an assessment that the current policy framework is not sufficiently performance-oriented. Future EU rules foresee more subsidiarity and flexibility allowing Managing Authorities to better tailor interventions to address their rural area's specific needs. The importance of networking in this new context was underlined.

The 11<sup>th</sup> Rural Networks' Steering Group meeting agreed to launch a 2<sup>nd</sup> Rural Networks self-assessment exercise in 2019. LEADER and CLLD representatives further

developed their post 2020 priorities and preparations as part of the 6<sup>th</sup> Sub-group on LEADER/CLLD meeting. Other subjects under the spotlight included LAG self-assessment and communicating LEADER achievements. More information about these discussions are available online in the official meeting reports. For news about the Subgroup on Innovation see page 9.

 FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

European Rural Networks' Governance  
[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/about/european-rural-networks-governance\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/about/european-rural-networks-governance_en)

## ENRD Workshop on Biodiversity

Ecosystems management is the EAFRD priority with both the highest planned and realised public expenditure. The ENRD workshop on Biodiversity and the CAP, held in January 2019, discussed how the CAP and RDPs can best contribute to conservation goals and EU biodiversity policy.

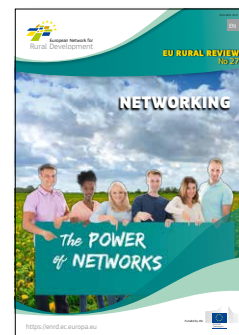
The workshop explored how to ensure the most effective contribution of current RDPs and future CAP Strategic Plans. Agricultural and environmental authorities, farmers' organisations and environmental NGOs took part in a wide-ranging discussion. Within the context of deteriorating biodiversity quality across Europe the workshop took stock of current biodiversity-related initiatives and reviewed the coordination with other policy instruments and good practice examples from Belgium and Ireland were shared.

Dialogue and exchange among the agriculture and environmental actors involved in biodiversity conservation in rural Europe needs to be facilitated. Well-designed performance indicators and more involvement of Monitoring Committees in promoting biodiversity under the future CAP Strategic Plans were seen as being useful for protecting wildlife. Ecotourism and other socio-economic spin-offs from farm nature conservation were other opportunities advocated.

 FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

ENRD Workshop on Biodiversity and event report:  
[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/enrd-workshop-biodiversity\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/enrd-workshop-biodiversity_en)

## The story of networking



The 27<sup>th</sup> edition of the EU Rural Review examines networking's role in rural development policy.

Launched to coincide with this year's flagship ENRD event, networkX

(see page 14), the publication includes practical case studies explaining networking in action and also looks ahead to rural networking post 2020.

 FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

EU Rural Review 27  
[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/sites/enrd/files/enrd\\_publications/publi-enrd-rr-27-2019-en\\_0.pdf](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/sites/enrd/files/enrd_publications/publi-enrd-rr-27-2019-en_0.pdf)

## NEWS &amp; UPDATES

## Promoting the rural bioeconomy



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The ENRD's Thematic Group (TG) on 'Mainstreaming the Bioeconomy' has been very active during 2019. Its work is encouraging the development of sustainable bioeconomy value chains in rural areas.

Building on the work begun in September 2018, this year has already seen two successful TG meetings, a video conference and a Twitter chat. The ENRD provides opportunities to expand knowhow about how to use RDPs to support a sustainable bioeconomy that benefits rural areas.

In January, the 2<sup>nd</sup> TG meeting assessed territorial and local approaches to developing the bioeconomy in rural areas. The enabling elements for small and middle-sized rural bioeconomy enterprises in terms of services, infrastructure and support were identified, in particular, existing models to encourage rural bioeconomy platforms or clusters. The discussion underlined the importance of reflecting local-level needs and priorities in bioeconomy strategies and the potential of bottom-up approaches.

A videoconference was organised in February to allow for a specific discussion on the sustainability aspects of the bioeconomy. The focus was on sharing current thinking around the systems required to monitor the sustainability of bio-based value chains.

The bioeconomy is about promoting economic growth and employment whilst preserving ecosystems. The 3<sup>rd</sup> TG meeting, in May, discussed awareness raising and knowledge transfer approaches. It is important to reach rural stakeholders, increase understanding and increase their capacity to benefit from the bioeconomy at all levels.

The next milestone in the TG's work will be the seminar 'Bioeconomy: Seizing the opportunity for rural Europe' to be held on 3 July 2019 in Brussels. A series of ENRD recommendations that have been prepared by the TG will be presented at the event. The recommendations advise on how best to use CAP support for sustainable bioeconomy value chains in rural areas. Stay tuned to the ENRD's social media channels and the Rural Bioeconomy Portal for all the latest news.

**GET INSPIRED**

The ENRD's online survey of bioeconomy initiatives resulted in more than 30 new case studies being published on the 'get inspired' pages of ENRD's Rural Bioeconomy Portal. Both EAFRD and non-EAFRD project examples are highlighted. The information is boosting awareness about the potential of the sustainable bioeconomy. Food and feed, bioenergy, innovative bio-based products and enhanced environmental performance are just some of the potential benefits the bioeconomy offers rural areas.

[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/greening-rural-economy/bioeconomy/rural-bioeconomy-portal/get-inspired\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/greening-rural-economy/bioeconomy/rural-bioeconomy-portal/get-inspired_en)

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

Thematic Group on 'Mainstreaming the Bioeconomy'

[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/enrd-thematic-work/greening-rural-economy/bioeconomy\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/enrd-thematic-work/greening-rural-economy/bioeconomy_en)

ENRD Seminar – 'Bioeconomy: Seizing the opportunity for rural Europe'

[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/enrd-seminar-bioeconomy\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/enrd-seminar-bioeconomy_en)

Rural Bioeconomy Portal

[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/greening-rural-economy/bioeconomy/rural-bioeconomy-portal/get-inspired\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/greening-rural-economy/bioeconomy/rural-bioeconomy-portal/get-inspired_en)



## NEWS &amp; UPDATES

## Rural depopulation

In May, a new initiative was launched by the ENRD centred on tackling rural depopulation. 'Social Inclusion' is one of the main working themes of the ENRD and it links directly to Priority 6 of current EU Rural Development policy on, "promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas."

Many parts of rural Europe experience declining populations and in some cases the problem is extremely acute. Challenges relate to low birth rates, outward migration and a loss or lack of employment opportunities. Depopulation can often be exacerbated by inadequate or declining local services.

The ENRD workshop on rural depopulation discussed the key drivers of population decline and their effects. It explored the role of RDPs and other EU policies in creating an enabling environment to counter demographic decline, contributing to more vibrant rural areas. A number of national and local initiatives were presented and lessons drawn on how to address rural depopulation. Many good examples already exist of how to tackle rural depopulation. They show that positive impacts can be achieved by helping rural people, with particular attention on younger generations, to stay in their local areas, as well as by attracting and integrating newcomers to settle in rural communities.

### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

ENRD Workshop on Combatting Rural Depopulation  
[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/enrd-workshop-combatting-rural-depopulation-creating-new-opportunities-vibrant\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/enrd-workshop-combatting-rural-depopulation-creating-new-opportunities-vibrant_en)

## NRN meetings

The 13<sup>th</sup> National Rural Networks' meeting took place in Athlone (Ireland) in February and was co-organised with the Irish Network Support Unit (NSU). The meeting brought together participants from 24 Member States. It explored ways of reinforcing stakeholder engagement and enhancing collaboration among network members, including on the topics of post-2020 Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), Smart Villages and Generational Renewal.

The 14<sup>th</sup> NRNs' meeting – co-organised with the Romanian NSU – took place in Bucharest (Romania). The discussion focused on methodologies for working with local project beneficiaries and Local Action Groups and developing joint activities and clusters.

### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

13<sup>th</sup> NRNs' Meeting  
[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/13th-nrns-meeting\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/13th-nrns-meeting_en)  
14<sup>th</sup> NRN Meeting  
[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/14th-nrns-meeting\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/14th-nrns-meeting_en)

## Supporting generational renewal

Tackling rural depopulation remains a major challenge for most Member States. It is also a particular challenge for the farming sector (see Rural Connections - spring/summer 2018). This is the rationale behind the ENRD's emphasis on encouraging generational renewal in Europe's countryside.

In February 2019 a workshop on generational renewal was held in Ireland, to coincide with the 13<sup>th</sup> NRN's meeting. Building on the past work carried out by the ENRD on supporting generational renewal to foster vibrant rural areas and in response to stakeholders' demand, the workshop looked further into how to make rural areas more attractive for young farmers and new entrants and how young entrepreneurs can contribute to rural prosperity through their work.

The latest edition of the EAFRD Projects Brochure complements the ongoing ENRD work. Focusing on youth and generational renewal, the publication presents case studies from around Europe. The 12 featured EAFRD supported projects show how Rural Development policy is helping to make rural areas more attractive places for young people to live and work, in agriculture and beyond.

### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

ENRD work on generational renewal  
[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/enrd-thematic-work/generational-renewal\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/enrd-thematic-work/generational-renewal_en)



EAFRD Projects Brochure 'Youth and Generational Renewal'  
[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/publications\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/publications_en)

## NEWS &amp; UPDATES

# UPDATE FROM THE EVALUATION HELPDESK

EUROPEAN  
EVALUATION  
HELPDESK  
FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

## CAP Strategic Plans: ex ante evaluation

The legal proposal on the support for the CAP Strategic Plans<sup>(1)</sup> post 2020 marks a shift from a compliance-oriented to a more performance-based approach. This will be achieved through the establishment of the new Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (PMEF), which will allow the European Commission and the Member States to assess and monitor the performance of the policy in the next programming period more effectively.

The ex ante evaluation will play a crucial role in setting the frame for this policy shift. It will be carried out in each Member State by the authority responsible for the preparation of the CAP Strategic Plan and will help to improve its quality and design<sup>(2)</sup>.

The ex ante evaluation will appraise, among other aspects, the needs assessment (including SWOT), the intervention strategy, targets and milestones, as well as the monitoring, data collection and implementation system.

The European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development (Evaluation Helpdesk) has launched its 7<sup>th</sup> Thematic Working Group to support evaluation stakeholders in preparing for the ex ante evaluation and Strategic Environmental Assessment of their CAP Strategic Plan.

The Thematic Working Group aims to: collaboratively draw lessons from the experiences and challenges in implementing the Common Monitoring and Evaluation System (CMES) of the current programming period; and to develop tools and practical solutions which will support Member States to set up the PMEF of the next programming period, specifically, the preparation of the ex ante evaluation.



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The Thematic Working Group will consist of four working packages: 1) preparing the ex ante evaluation; 2) appraisal of the needs assessment; 3) appraisal of the intervention logic and, targets of the CAP Strategic Plan; and 4) appraisal of the planned monitoring, data collection and implementation of the CAP Strategic Plan.

Each working package will focus on the development of practical tools that will be aimed at supporting Managing Authorities and evaluators to prepare a robust ex ante evaluation.

The outcomes will be published on the Evaluation Helpdesk's Thematic Working Groups section of the ENRD website.

To ensure that each working package meets the objectives of the Thematic Working Group, ongoing consultations will take place with evaluation stakeholders from the Member States through periodic Sounding Boards and other means of written feedback.



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### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

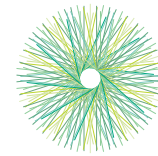
Evaluation Helpdesk's Thematic Working Groups  
[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/evaluation/thematic-working-groups\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/evaluation/thematic-working-groups_en)

(1) COM (2018) 392 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2018%3A392%3AFIN>

(2) Article 125 of the proposal COM (2018) 392 final

## NEWS &amp; UPDATES

## UPDATE FROM EIP-AGRI

eip-agri  
AGRICULTURE & INNOVATION


## Multi-level digital strategies

Digital technologies can increase European farmers' profitability, improve their working conditions and reduce the environmental impact of agriculture. The EIP-AGRI network is committed to supporting farmers in developing digital technologies adapted to their needs. By improving the knowledge and use of such technologies and by assessing their benefits and impact on society, the network supports the agricultural community in realising the full potential of digitisation for their sector across Europe.

The current proposal for the Common Agricultural Policy post-2020 recognises the importance of national strategies to develop digital technologies in agriculture and rural areas. In this context, the EIP-AGRI network organised – with the contribution of the European Network for Rural Development and of the Broadband Competence Offices Network – the seminar on 'Multi-level strategies for digitising agriculture and rural areas' in December 2018.

The event was intended to prepare national, regional and local authorities to (further) set up their strategy to support the farming community in implementing digital technologies. It stimulated public authorities to kick-start their strategies with European colleagues and with farmers, researchers and business representatives.

The seminar participants identified barriers and opportunities for setting up digital strategies. These include the availability of proper technology and infrastructure, especially in remote and less developed areas. Most challenges fall into social and institutional domains, such as communication difficulties between people having diverse profiles, interests and levels of digital skills. During an 'open space' session, the participants focused on key issues to foster the development of multi-level strategies. They highlighted the role of demonstration farms and other peer-to-peer activities, of existing networks, multipliers or public-private partnerships. In addition, they stressed the importance



“ We consider the interaction between people with different backgrounds and expertise crucial to the success of the EIP-AGRI. The possibility to share ideas and experiences, and interactive sessions to identify opportunities and barriers at our events are essential to come up with innovative solutions and to develop ready-to-use research results. The outcomes of our events have already provided essential input for participants and for the European Commission to help target the Rural Development and research agendas. ”

Pacôme Elouna,  
Team leader with the EIP-AGRI Service Point.

© EIP-AGRI Service Point

of planning the communication for digitisation, using the right language to address each community member and enriching it through a bottom-up approach.

 GOVERNANCE
**The European Rural Networks' Assembly permanent Subgroup on Innovation**

Discussions on the CAP post 2020 were at the centre of the agenda of the 13<sup>th</sup> Subgroup on Innovation in March. Delegates debated the role of the future CAP networks in bridging the EU agricultural (CAP) and research and innovation (Horizon Europe) policies, in particular building on EIP-AGRI Focus Groups' work at both EU and national level.

<https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/about/permanent-subgroup-innovation-agricultural>

 FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

The EIP-AGRI 'digitising agriculture' website profiles the latest digital technologies, including projects on precision farming, robotics, digital marketing and digital innovation hubs  
<https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/digitising-agriculture>

EIP-AGRI seminar on 'Multi-level strategies for digitising agriculture and rural areas'

<https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/event/eip-agri-seminar-multi-level-strategies-digitising>

## NEWS &amp; UPDATES

## EU NEWS

## CAP Strategic Plans and eco-climate schemes

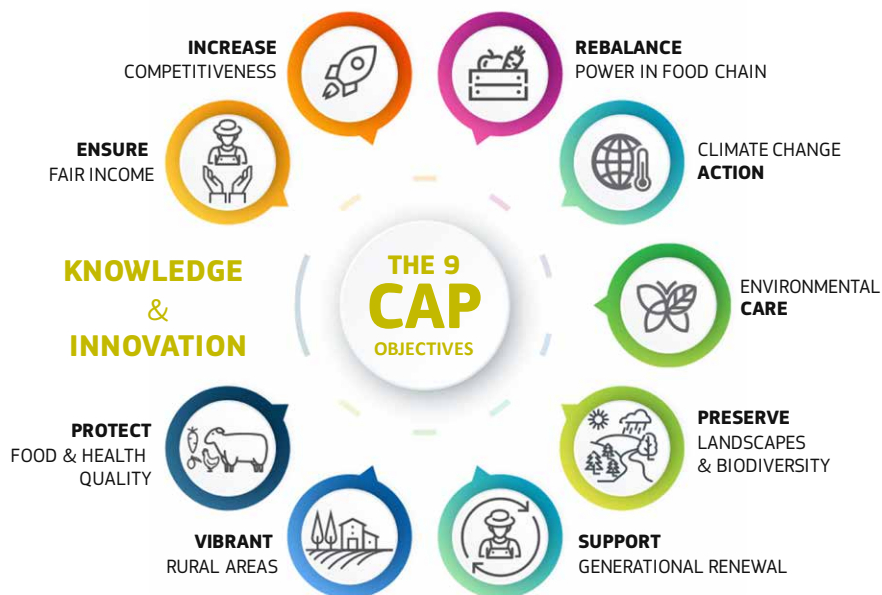
A high-profile CAP Congress took place on 6-8 February. The event highlighted how the new CAP Strategic Plans could be designed to protect and strengthen biodiversity, resource efficiency and address climate action priorities.

Organised by the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality and titled 'CAP Strategic Plans: Exploring Eco-climate schemes', this European congress concentrated on the green architecture of the post-2020 CAP. It was well attended by representatives of relevant national and regional authorities, EU institutions and organisations, farmers' associations, environmental NGOs and research institutes.

The cross-section of CAP stakeholders from different Member States provided a balanced set of perspectives during debates and presentations about designing flexible eco-climate schemes – tailored to different territorial needs – within the future CAP Strategic Plans. The ENRD provided expertise during the workshops and field visits, which helped to raise awareness about some of the pioneering results-based policies that have become operational throughout the Netherlands.

Topics under scrutiny during the workshop sessions included: area and result-based schemes; conditionality related to eco-schemes, agri-environment-climate measures, green infrastructure and indicators; translating environment and climate ambition into a CAP Strategic Plan; and a European Parliamentary evaluation of the CAP.

Theory and best practice examples featuring eco-climate scheme opportunities were then complemented by a day of field visits and additional practical sessions focused on how the CAP Strategic Plans can help: farmers



make a sustainable farm landscape; optimise eco-schemes; incorporate public and market-driven bonus systems; and address the essential point that different countries have different needs for a green architecture.

Other highlights included delegates discovering more about how the Dutch collective approach has developed over a period of 25 years. This experience now converts to best practices being applied by farmers on the ground that deliver result-driven and collective eco-climate results through area-wide actions. Time and cost savings were also shown to be possible from the simplified management systems deployed in the Dutch contracting model.



© Daria from TaskArmy.nl, Unspsh

**i FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

CAP Strategic Plans: Exploring Eco-climate schemes  
<https://www.capcongress.com>

## NEWS &amp; UPDATES

## New definition for Smart Villages

A proposed definition of Smart Villages was presented recently by an EU pilot project on Smart Eco-Social Villages. It has mapped out a definition of Smart Villages and identified good practice examples through related case studies.

It notes that, “Smart Villages are communities in rural areas that use innovative solutions to improve their resilience, building on local strengths and opportunities. They rely on a participatory approach to develop and implement their strategy to improve their economic, social and/or environmental conditions, in particular by mobilising solutions offered by digital technologies.

Smart Villages benefit from cooperation and alliances with other communities and actors in rural and urban areas. The initiation and the implementation of Smart Village strategies may build on existing initiatives and can be funded by a variety of public and private sources.”

Smart Village strategies and roadmaps were also spotlighted as essential ingredients to improve access to services in various fields such as health, training or transport, to enhance business opportunities and to create jobs, to name but

some. While recognising the opportunities they present, it also highlighted that, “the use of digital technologies is not a precondition for becoming a Smart Village.”



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 FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Smart Villages definition and briefing note  
[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/news/smart-eco-social-villages-definition\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/news/smart-eco-social-villages-definition_en)

Pilot project on Smart Eco-Social Villages  
<http://www.pilotproject-smartvillages.eu>

## Rural women in Europe

On International Women’s Day, EU Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Phil Hogan, encouraged Member States to make use of the flexibility that the new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) presents to tackle issues related to rural women.

While noting the positive contribution of ENRD activities in this area, he emphasised that the CAP was not however the sole

answer to the challenges rural women face. Other EU funds also need to ensure they address the specific challenges and needs of women in rural areas. The European Parliament’s ‘EU In My Life’ website also highlights that women play a vital economic and social role in rural areas. Current Rural Development assistance includes, but is not limited to, helping business start-ups and on-farm diversification ventures, as well as offering funding to help cover costs of skills training or support networks.



© Abraham Caro Marín, European Union, 2015

 FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Commissioner Hogan’s speech  
[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/news/rural-women-europe\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/news/rural-women-europe_en)

ENRD work on promoting social inclusion  
[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/enrd-thematic-work/social-inclusion\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/enrd-thematic-work/social-inclusion_en)

EU In My Life  
<https://what-europe-does-for-me.eu/en/portal/2/J03>

## NEWS &amp; UPDATES

## New rural credit services

Young farmers are among the target group for up to €2 billion of financial aid in the form of loans that is being made available to the EU's agri-food sector by the European Investment Bank (EIB), which is part of the new joint initiative on young farmers between the European Commission and the EIB.

The new Initiative, launched by Commissioner Hogan and the Vice-President of the EIB Andrew McDowell at a special conference held on 29 April in Brussels, relies on two major elements.

1. Contributions from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) for specific schemes for young farmers in the form of financial instruments.
2. €1 billion from the EIB in the form of programme loans to EU banks willing to support agriculture and young farmers, with at least 10% of the new credit being earmarked specifically for young farmers. Participating banks have to add additional €1 billion to the resources from the EIB. The aim is to help young farmers overcome start-up or development challenges through favourable credit conditions such as longer payback periods, easier-to-access investment guarantees and eligibility criteria that recognise the value of working capital in supporting agri-food business cycles.

Jannes Maes, President of CEJA, the European Council of Young Farmers, said: "difficult access to credit has been recognised as one of the biggest barriers for young farmers across Europe. This joint initiative has the potential to give an EU-wide answer to that challenge. CEJA welcomes this new step and encourages Member States and financial institutions to ensure a quick implementation of the measures so that young farmers can fully benefit from these instruments."

Managing Authorities can also benefit from technical assistance and advisory services that accompany these new rural credit facilities. This should help national and regional programme authorities to adapt the prototype methodologies used at EU level in determining the scale of current financial gaps and apply these with accuracy to their specific circumstances.

 FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

New rural credit scheme

[http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-19-2294\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-19-2294_en.htm)

Conference and video:

<https://www.fi-compass.eu/event/4804/addressing-price-volatility-and-financing-needs-young-farmers-and-agriculture>

## LEADER in Moldova

LEADER's community-led local development approach is one of Europe's most well-known rural success stories. Its techniques have now been exported all around the world. This includes showing countries neighbouring the EU how to get started with LEADER. Moldova is one such country. It is part of a joint-EU-UNDP programme called Support to Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD) that is involved in promoting LEADER methods to enhance community empowerment, develop local entrepreneurship and SMEs, encourage investment into small-scale infrastructure refurbishments and promote inter-municipal cooperation. A review of the progress made in Moldova through LEADER has been published by AEIDL. It profiles a number of case study projects and more information from the SARD Programme.



© Alina Grubnyak, Unsplash

 FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Moldovan report by AEIDL

[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/news/leader-experiences-moldova\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/news/leader-experiences-moldova_en)

The SARD LEADER/CLLD Initiative

<http://www.leadermoldova.eu>

NEWS & UPDATES

## EU guides and publications



### Environmental benefits of the future CAP

Proposals for the CAP post 2020 include a new and modernised 'green architecture'. This would foresee changes to mandatory requirements, simplification, and new eco-schemes which are mandatory for Member States and voluntary for farmers. A new Commission explanatory brochure provides details about how it would work in practice.

[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/news/environmental-objectives-future-cap\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/news/environmental-objectives-future-cap_en)



### Demographic trends in EU regions

A European Parliament Think Tank report on demographic developments includes a dedicated research section on rural area data, which is complemented by an interesting collection of comparative data covering urban demography.

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2019/633160/EPRS\\_BRI\(2019\)633160\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2019/633160/EPRS_BRI(2019)633160_EN.pdf)



### The role of innovation in agriculture

A European Parliament Think Tank report scrutinises the potential for research and innovation support within the CAP post-2020 proposals. It features the EU's long-term strategy for agricultural research and innovation as well as analysis of European innovation partnerships and future opportunities for Horizon Europe.

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS\\_BRI\(2019\)630358](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_BRI(2019)630358)

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/home.html>



### New financing options for rural Europe

Three new publications from the fi-compass advisory platform are targeting EAFRD decision-makers with information about what they need to know when considering whether to use different types of repayable aid.

The reports consider the flexible use of financial products as a potential solution to economic challenges. Such flexibility – combined with support under the EAFRD – can reduce risks for both farmers seeking finance and financial institutions providing it during times of price volatility. The activity of financial intermediaries and guarantee institutions in the agricultural sector in the EU are profiled. The role of credit guarantee instruments in improving access to finance for farmers and agricultural enterprises by reducing interest rates and collateral requirements is explored.

[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/news/flexible-financial-products-eu-agricultural-sector\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/news/flexible-financial-products-eu-agricultural-sector_en)

A FOCUS ON... networX

## INTRODUCTION

networX 

## Inspiring Rural Europe

On 11-12 April 2019 over 400 people gathered to reflect upon the added value of rural networks. The Brussels meeting was the largest gathering of the rural development networking community in the current programming period.

The power of a rural network lies in its ability to facilitate information exchange and cooperation, generate knowledge, foster innovation, increase awareness and provide valuable stakeholder involvement and feedback on policy implementation.

The ENRD's recent networX conference provided a wonderful example of the benefits of bringing people together. The fast-paced, participatory event took place over two days in April. Gathering rural development practitioners from 35 countries, networX was a dynamic showcase for the latest thinking on networks and networking.

Networking has long been a feature of Rural Development policy. Indeed, prior to the creation of the ENRD, LEADER blazed a trail by demonstrating how networking furthers and deepens the reach of rural development policy amongst rural communities. Fast-forward to today and the networking ecosystem is thriving as it faces today's challenges and contributes to making rural areas more attractive.



© European Union, 2019

“ I would like to start by congratulating everyone involved with the ENRD on your great achievement of 10 years of successful rural networking.

*This forum has played a hugely important role in making sure that our rural communities are talking to each other, and talking to policymakers at all levels: regional, national and European.*”

And on networking's role under the future CAP:

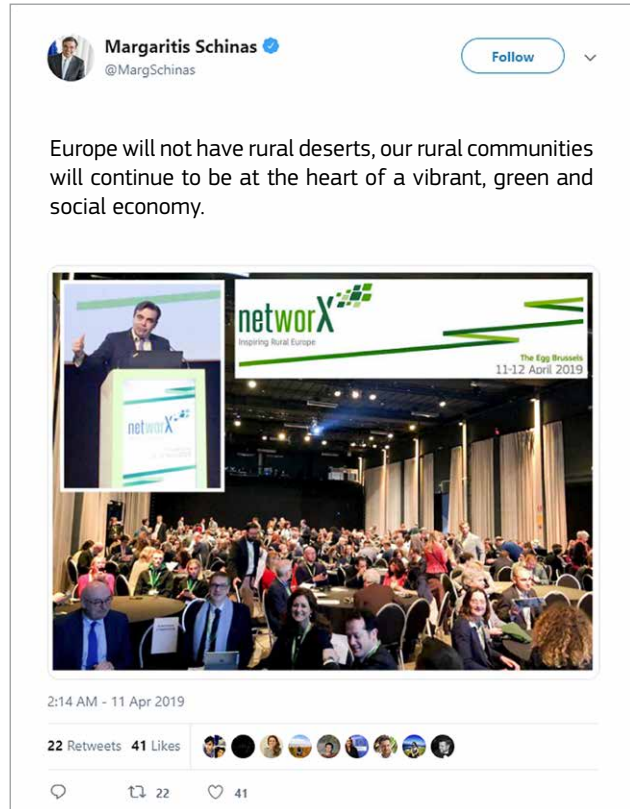
“ We want to reinforce the networks' contribution to the modernisation of both the agricultural and rural economies, the continued roll-out of knowledge transfer and innovation, and a key contribution to the new performance-based delivery approach. ”

Phil Hogan,  
European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development

[https://ec.europa.eu/commission/commissioners/node/475205\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/commissioners/node/475205_en)



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Following an opening plenary session featuring keynote addresses by Commissioner Phil Hogan and European Commission Chief Spokesperson, Margaritis Schinas, networX divided into six thematic strands that examined different aspects of networking, with topics ranging from how to build a network, to creating stakeholder engagement and networking for innovation. For more about the strands see page 16. More detailed reports are available from the ENRD website<sup>(1)</sup>.

In his opening remarks, Commissioner Hogan underlined that the rural networks provide a platform for vital connections between people. They continue to demonstrate a high capacity and to be a powerful tool for transferring knowledge and sharing experience on matters of policy design, implementation, innovation and evaluation.

Mr Schinas had a very strong message for networX. He emphasised that rural development represents Europe's positive agenda. He called on the rural networking community to promote and celebrate the "European added value"

in rural areas. He also revealed that the European Commission plans to launch a pilot corporate communication campaign focused on rural areas.

Throughout networX delegates had time to explore parallel activities, such as the Marketplace, where agricultural, territorial and innovation themes were highlighted. In stands run by the National Rural Networks and various stakeholder organisations. The final ceremony of the first-ever ENRD Rural Inspiration Awards<sup>(2)</sup> took place during networX. The awards, presented by Commissioner Hogan, recognise inspiring initiatives co-financed by the EAFRD in the 2014-2020 programming period. The

nominees are prime examples of how Rural Development policy is benefiting rural Europe.

The closing plenary summed up the key learnings from the event and looked to the future of rural networking post 2020. The new CAP proposal implies exciting changes for networking with a broader remit, new responsibilities and new opportunities. Rural networks must continue to support and facilitate the delivery of CAP support and the promotion of innovation in rural areas; to add value and help policies go further so that farmers and rural communities themselves address the challenges they face and seize the opportunities before them.

### networX objectives

- ✓ Recognition of networking as an invaluable policy tool for Rural Development
- ✓ Demonstrate the work and achievements of rural networks
- ✓ Prepare rural networking for CAP post 2020

### networX in numbers

- > 400 Participants
- > 40 Marketplace stands
- 35 Countries represented
- 25 Rural Inspiration Awards nominees
- 6 Thematic strands

(1) [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/networx-inspiring-rural-europe\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/networx-inspiring-rural-europe_en)

(2) [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/news/rural-inspiration-awards-meet-winners-0\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/news/rural-inspiration-awards-meet-winners-0_en)

A FOCUS ON... networX

## WORKING TOGETHER

# The power of networks

Over both days of networX, participants took part in a mix of six different thematic strands, each addressing a different area of rural networking. Current best practice was identified and there was plenty of scope for active participation and exchange, and much food for thought regarding the future shape and role of rural networking.



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## Networking for Policy Strand 1

**How is policy delivery supported by networking? The participants explored how networking helps to improve policy design and implementation. Networking for smart villages, the rural bioeconomy, and policy areas beyond Rural Development were considered.**

“Future networks should have the capacity to reach out and reduce the distance between Brussels and those on the ground, between policies and implementation, between places that work well and less well. We need to do deep networking!”

Paul Soto, ENRD Contact Point

### KEY MESSAGES

- Networks contribute to policy design by mobilising stakeholders
- Network can facilitate bottom-up approaches leading to tailored local solutions
- Networks should be open to all, but have a clearly identified target audience
- While working in a joined-up manner, different networks should concentrate on specific fields where they can have the greatest impact
- For Smart Villages the importance of grassroots, multi-stakeholder approaches is paramount
- For the bioeconomy, networking facilitates knowledge transfer and awareness raising
- Networking – in the form of clusters, digital marketplaces and related tools – supports linkages between different value chain actors and bio-based industries
- EU policy networks need to ensure that they are connected to real needs and able to respond flexibly to changes in local concerns

## Building a network Strand 2

Lessons learned from building rural development networks. An interactive group exercise explored how specific rural development challenges could be addressed when designing a network. Participants considered how a rural network could be most effective in the post-2020 period.

### KEY MESSAGES

- The enhanced scope of future CAP networks presents challenges and opportunities
- A rethink of networking components such as strategic approach, target groups and communications tools is necessary
- The empowerment of local stakeholders and a 'bottom-up' approach to problem solving can increase the farming community and land managers' involvement in networking



© European Union, 2019

## Networking for innovation Strand 3

How to connect with innovation advisors, brokers and support services? The participants highlighted good networking practices in innovation for agriculture and forestry and considered the role of Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS).

### KEY MESSAGES

- Key elements in successful networking for innovation range from communication, dissemination, collaboration and multi-actor participation, to facilitation, peer-to-peer processes enhancing mutual trust, motivation, ambition, engagement, simplicity and flexibility
- Under the future CAP, there will be a need for a more integrated approach to further develop a knowledge-based agriculture
- Many types of actors, such as farmers and researchers, NRNs, advisors, education systems, business and consumers, and media can play a role in AKIS

“ Although I have been working in multi-actor teams for some time now, I have increasingly realised how helpful, efficient and powerful cooperation in networks is. ”

Judith Treis, farmer and manager of Operational Group 'Biogemüse'



© European Union, 2019

## Networking with LEADER/CLLD

### Strand 4

The role and extent of local rural networking through LEADER Local Action Groups (LAGs). The strand used practitioner hosted 'Action Labs' to identify what is essential, what works best and what can be improved through LEADER.



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#### KEY MESSAGES

- People, not institutions, make networks
- Local networks are the eyes and ears of rural people
- Networking has delivered creativity and innovative solutions, boosting the self-confidence of rural people
- LEADER has motivated local communities to participate in developing their communities
- The inclusion of young people in networks is one of LEADER's biggest achievements
- Strengthen recognition of LEADER achievements through a stronger and more consistent identity

“ There is not a single approach to networking. There is a combination of on and off-line, direct and indirect contacts. Celebrate your success! ”

Anke Wehmeyer, German NRN

## Networking for evaluation

### Strand 5

The strand looked at how evaluation can help networks reach their objectives and goals, and how evaluation can be supported by networks.



© European Union, 2019

#### KEY MESSAGES

- The main added value of evaluating networks is the ability to identify and address specific needs
- Evaluation can measure decision-making processes, trust and reciprocity among actors
- Storytelling can be a powerful method to study and communicate the effects of networks
- Post 2020 CAP networks can support evaluation by: organising capacity building activities (seminars and webinars) to raise evaluation awareness; creating and facilitating expert groups on selected evaluation topics; or by disseminating evaluation findings with the help of social media, road trips and infographics

“ We need to know how the networks are doing their evaluations. And to share good examples and how they are looking at outcomes. Let's learn from EvaluationWORKS! ”

Teemu Hauhia, Finnish Rural Network

© European Union, 2019



## Stakeholder engagement Strand 6

The strand looked at how to promote effective stakeholder engagement in networks, by exploring three areas of activity – the work of the NRNs, how to exchange differing perspectives between stakeholders and how to improve engagement in the future CAP networks.

### KEY MESSAGES

- Thematic groups should be created to tell the story both before and after implementation of RDP support
- Thematic group events organised by NRNs need to take place regularly to strengthen local linkages between Managing Authorities and stakeholders
- Events need to include enough time for free networking and conclude with a clear key message
- Use appropriate and tailored communication channels for target stakeholder groups
- Identify potential connecting points to introduce new actors and new ideas to the network



© European Union, 2019

 MORE INFO

For more about networkX including the overview and strand highlight reports:  
[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/all-about-networkx-inspiring-rural-europe\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/all-about-networkx-inspiring-rural-europe_en)

A FOCUS ON... **networkX****EVOLUTION OF NETWORKING**

## The road travelled

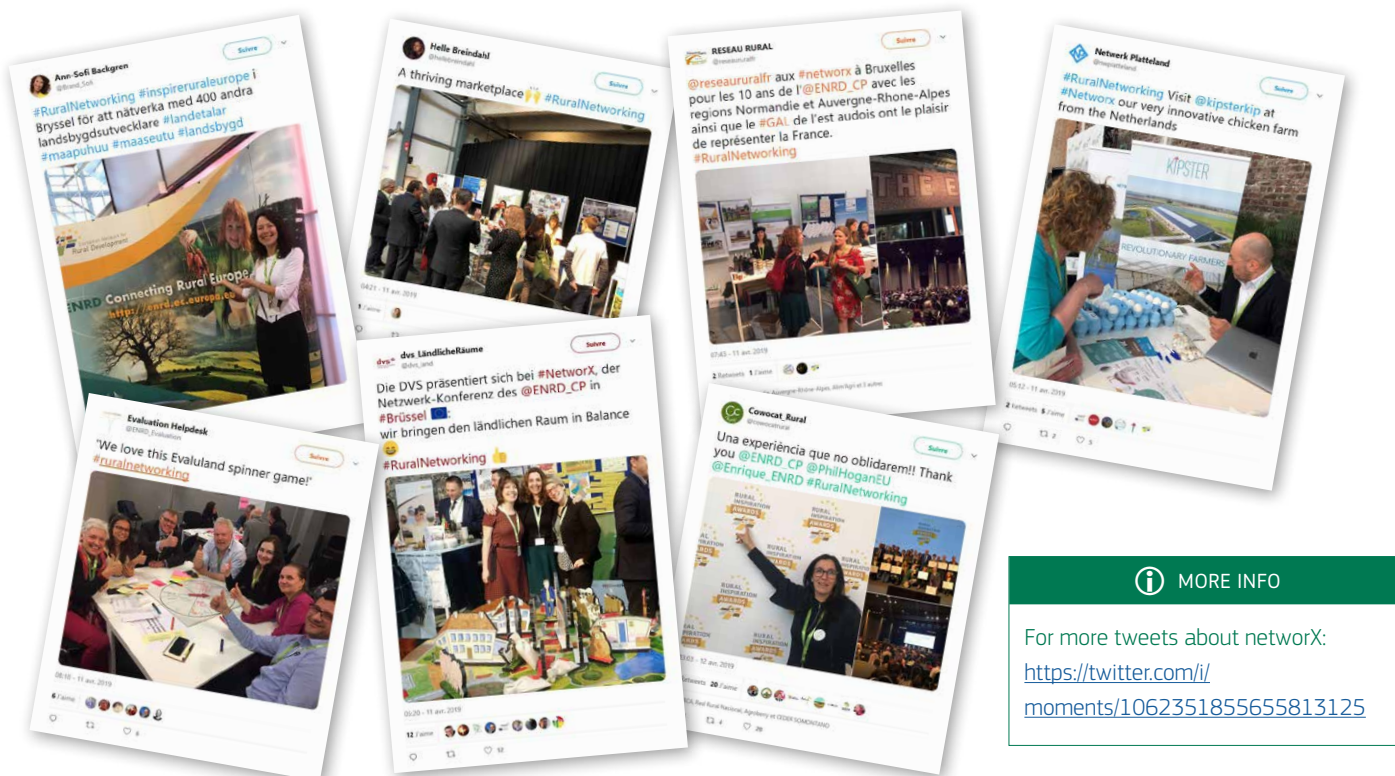
Networking has been supporting rural policy and rural communities for many years. At networkX participants shared memorable networking stories, considered the lessons learned so far and looked ahead to networking post 2020.



© European Union, 2019

**THE JOURNEY SO FAR**

networkX allowed time to reflect on 10 years of European rural networking. Speakers in the opening session on 11 April 2019 shared their positive experiences, personal highlights and thoughts for the future of rural networking. A series of personal testimonies included the story of setting-up the first National Rural Network in Finland, the creation of the ENRD, experiences from Italy in regional work, the launch of new EIP-AGRI networks in Bulgaria and the running of a rural network in Poland. The most recent experiences were shared by a rural youth vlogger and a new member of the NRN in the Netherlands.


 MORE INFO

For more tweets about networkX:  
<https://twitter.com/ii/moments/1062351855655813125>



→ Download this new publication launched at networX [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/publications/rural-networking-action\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/publications/rural-networking-action_en)

“ Networking is about curiosity, so be curious – about people, projects and other networks. Don't forget to have fun! ”

Helle Bøge Breindahl,  
LAG Manager (Denmark)



“ [Rural communities] shouldn't feel like we are left behind. We are the front runners. Networks have the key to a more sustainable future. ”

Maria Gustafsson, Swedish NSU



“ We have a big responsibility for the future to ensure sustainable rural areas. Let's continue this great journey together and convince more people to join us. ”

Oana Neagu, Copa Cogeca



## Networking in action

### SAMPLE OF NATIONAL RURAL NETWORK ACTIVITY IN THE EU IN 2017

Source: Common Network Statistics 2018



**43 303**  
Participations  
in workshops/  
trainings



**3 511**  
Project examples  
collected and  
disseminated



**3 072**  
Rural development  
publications



**2 473**  
Events



**946**  
Thematic  
consultations



**152**  
Thematic groups  
related to  
RDP priorities

A FOCUS ON... networX



© European Union, 2019

## Inspiring rural projects

The first-ever ENRD Rural Inspiration Awards ceremony took place during networX. The awards recognise initiatives funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) that demonstrate the contribution of Rural Development policy towards a more competitive, sustainable and inclusive rural Europe. From 176 entries, 25 projects were shortlisted and a jury subsequently agreed upon the 5 category winners. In addition, 8 225 votes were cast online by the rural development community to select the winner of the Popular Vote category.

© European Union, 2019







## Improving competitiveness

*This category comprises initiatives that enhance the competitiveness of farming, food processing and rural areas through diversification, promoting sustainable production and investing in innovation.*



© 2019 AGROBERRY

### AGROBERRY - ORIGINAL FROM ZAMORA

A young, female farmer introduced a blackberry plantation in a wheat and barley production area in Spain and created added value by developing a new range of products. EAFRD support helped her to establish the new plantation and to develop new products. Agroberry farm perfectly combines entrepreneurship, innovation and respect for the environment. Carried out by Ms Nuria Alvarez – who left Madrid and returned to her rural roots to launch the project – Agroberry has successfully introduced organic blackberry cultivation and developed a range of related products, such as fresh and frozen fruit, jam and liquor. Agroberry is thus diversifying local production while promoting sustainable and profitable development.

“*Agroberry is the result of love, hard work and values.*”

Nuria Alvarez (project beneficiary)

 MORE INFO

[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/agroberry-original-zamora\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/agroberry-original-zamora_en)



## Environment & Climate action

*This category focuses on initiatives preserving ecosystems, fighting against climate change and promoting resource efficiency in rural communities.*



© Krzysztof Kowalski

### KOWALSKI FARM

Krzysztof Kowalski's farm in the region of Mazovia is the largest breeder of the rare 'ZłotnickaBiała' pigs in Poland. The farm also grows flax and oilseed rape which are used to produce oil and feed the animals. With EAFRD support, Kowalski farm has adopted a series of good agricultural practices beneficial to soil, water quantity and quality and biodiversity conservation. These actions include the creation of wetlands, ponds and buffer zones; the cultivation of catch and leguminous crops; the use of organic fertilisers; the use of cultivation practices that are respectful of the soil's structure; and biodiversity preservation activities.

“*I always repeat, if you want to convince somebody to do something, you have to teach, inform and demonstrate good practices. One has to do it in a way which is the most interesting for listeners.*”

Krzysztof Kowalski (project beneficiary)

 MORE INFO

[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/kowalski-farm-agri-environment-climate-support-sustainable-agriculture\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/kowalski-farm-agri-environment-climate-support-sustainable-agriculture_en)



## Rural Revitalisation

This category highlights projects that maintain or generate new rural services, boosting the local economy and ensuring the connection of rural areas with surrounding areas.



© Kuitua pohjoiseen Kuitu kylässä

## KUITUA POHJOISEEN

The Kuitua Pohjoiseen project in Finland helped villagers to set up cooperatives and apply for public grants to build their own high-speed broadband networks. The EAFRD-funded project, under LEADER, demonstrated the potential of high-speed broadband to villagers and explained the steps to be taken to access it. As a result 31 villages and over 3000 people in Lapland are now connected. The project is a great example of rural communities taking their future in their own hands.

“Wow! I am grateful, amazed and surprised. This prize is for the ordinary people in my village and it means a lot.”

Seppo Alatörmänen (LAG Fell Lapland)

 MORE INFO

[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/kuitua-pohjoiseen-high-speed-broadband-network-north\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/kuitua-pohjoiseen-high-speed-broadband-network-north_en)



## Social inclusion

This category recognises efforts in rural areas to fight digital exclusion; promote social farming; combat energy poverty; help migrants' integration; and promote the involvement of youth in public life.



© Association Enerterre

## ENERTERRE

The EAFRD-funded Enerterre project promotes the renovation of traditional houses for the benefit of people in fuel poverty in rural areas in Normandy. The French project brings together available resources and coordinates the renovations, which are carried out by volunteers, under the supervision of building professionals. Enerterre enabled participating households to save on average 65.5% of the cost of renovating their homes. The improvements reduce household energy consumption and cut greenhouse gas emissions.

“I had just lost my job. I was having a hard time and losing confidence. Thanks to Enerterre, I realised that I was able to do things; I also realised that I wasn't the only person in this kind of situation, experiencing such difficulties. This experience restored my self-confidence.”

Catherine (home-owner and project beneficiary)

 MORE INFO

[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/enerterre-fighting-against-energy-poverty\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/enerterre-fighting-against-energy-poverty_en)



## LEADER

This category recognises inspiring use of the LEADER approach. The themes tackled by the nominees include youth entrepreneurship; visibility of rural areas; forest management; depopulation; and development of community infrastructures.



© CAPPP

## TIGES CHAVÉES

The Tiges Chavées project supports the sustainable management of small, privately-owned forests in the region of Wallonia (Belgium). Tiges Chavées LAG organised trainings for the plot owners on forest diagnosis, pruning, timber management, biodiversity and landscape interpretation. The EAFRD-funded initiative effectively fosters cooperation among the forestry stakeholders and with other sectors such as tourism and social inclusion.

“ I had inherited a small plot of forest from my parents but had no knowledge of forest management. The project has helped. It's a pleasure to give life again to this small part of forest linked to the history of my parents! ”

Christian Houzard (forest owner who participated in the joint sale of wood)

MORE INFO

[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/tiges-chavees-sustainable-management-private-forests\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/tiges-chavees-sustainable-management-private-forests_en)



## Popular vote

The winner of this category was chosen from the 25 award nominees via an online voting system between 11/03/2019 and 11/04/2019. The winner was selected from the 8 225 votes cast.



© Tourismus & Stadtmarketing Enns GmbH

## ZEITGEIST ENNS

Zeitgeist Enns successfully demonstrated the value of a 'pop-up' shop concept, supported by the EAFRD, which used vacant retail spaces in the centre of the small town of Enns (Austria). Businesses could rent the spaces on temporary basis. It gave them an opportunity to launch new ideas, to test out the location and attract new customers with minimum risk. The pop-up shops in Enns have helped revitalise life and add new services. To date, 20 pop-up stores have been opened with 4 now firmly established. This methodology is currently being replicated in other rural towns in Austria.

“ Thanks to ENRD and Commissioner. This prize is a very special honour for us. ”

Max Homolka (Zeitgeist Enns)

MORE INFO

[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/zeitgeist-enns-pop-shops-concept\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/zeitgeist-enns-pop-shops-concept_en)

## RURAL ISSUES, RURAL PERSPECTIVES

# The Green Danube

**Thor Morante**

The INSIGHTS project which is part of the Danube Transnational Programme is boosting slow, green and healthy tourism in the Danube region. A good practice guide has been produced and by June 2019, eight integrated sustainable tourism strategies will be in place.



**Thor Morante,**  
Communications  
Manager & Project  
Coordinator  
CEEweb for  
Biodiversity  
[tmorante@ceeweb.org](mailto:tmorante@ceeweb.org)

Slow tourism is one of the fastest growing segments of the global tourism industry, attracting both young and aging populations. And it is the implementation of this kind of tourism which the INSIGHTS project, funded by the Interreg Danube Transnational Programme, is tackling in the Danube area.

The regions involved within INSIGHTS (which stands for Integrated Slow, Green and Healthy Tourism Strategies) like many rural areas in the Danube region are characterised by unspoilt natural scenery and a rich cultural repertoire of living traditions. In other words, places with outstanding potential for sustainable, slow tourism.

Thus, since January 2017, the 13 consortium partners from nine countries have been working on how to better grasp the opportunities to ensure both environmental and economic long-term sustainability, while supporting the preservation of the diverse and valuable natural and cultural resources in the Danube region. The partners include non-governmental organisations, academics and the public sector.

## PAVING THE WAY

It is easy to imagine our desired tourist trekking in the morning, enjoying the quiet and fresh air, stopping off for a well-deserved locally-sourced meal before joining an energetic folk dance to round-off or perhaps to begin the evening. However, real effort is needed to agree the distinct experiences that each place has to offer.

Tourism services are typically fragmented and lacking effective coordination. Therefore, a major challenge has been to improve collaboration among different stakeholders in the tourism value chain. The solution for the INSIGHTS project was to develop a framework for horizontally and vertically integrated tourism management schemes, with local authorities setting

up context-specific sustainable tourism indicators and standards – aligned with nature and heritage protection aspects – while working alongside diverse stakeholders in accordance to the local capacities.

Moreover, capacity development for individual tourism providers is critical, both in terms of fostering bottom-up partnerships that can diversify their offer, as well as to promote uptake of ICT tools that increase visibility and attract more visitors.

Finally, the problem of low environmental awareness persists amongst a wide range of stakeholders in the tourism sector, which, coupled with a lack of awareness regarding the demands of the growing slow and eco-tourism segment, can limit the potential of the Danube area.

As a result, INSIGHTS first sought to define the thematic areas it wished to address. The thematic pillars are: 1) integrated tourism management schemes; 2) coordinated tourism supply development; and 3) promotion of healthy and eco-conscious lifestyles. The next question was where to start from in seeking to offer novel solutions and implement these pillars in the pilot locations. The target was to create a comprehensive model concluding with the production of eight integrated sustainable tourism strategies.

## LESSONS GIVING INSIGHT

CEEweb for Biodiversity, a network of non-governmental organisations in Central and Eastern Europe is a knowledge provider within the INSIGHTS consortium and was in charge of producing a booklet with the project partners, titled 'Collecting state-of-the-art good practices in slow, green and healthy tourism in the Danube region and beyond.' The publication highlights good practice cases most relevant for the Danube region and features five for each of the three thematic pillars.



© Michael Meyer / DCHS\_Eva Vovk / Michael Meyer / DCHS\_Eva Vovk LAG Central Istria

For the thematic pillar on integrated tourism management schemes, the good practice cases show how a destination can manage tourism in a sustainable and responsible way, thus developing viable tourism strategies that integrate local communities and help to preserve nature.

For the pillar on coordinated tourism supply development, the examples show sustainable slow travel approaches such as connected greenways, waterways, cycling routes or trekking trails, among others. The cases under the third thematic pillar showcase tourism as an educational tool that promotes healthy and eco-conscious lifestyles.

The collection of good practices helps the project members identify the topics needed to create a tourism destination. For example, it helps stakeholders looking for an organisational framework for a destination management scheme to define a set of topics. Beyond that, the booklet also explains the criteria to consider, such as identification of key products, market segments and development areas, preservation of biodiversity and cultural heritage, sustainability monitoring systems and so on.

All in all, the publication can be seen, in the simplest of ways, as a tool depicting successful cases which have been innovative in how they offer their destination in a coordinated, sustainable way among the distinct stakeholders.

The INSIGHTS project concludes in June 2019. It has created a comprehensive set of solutions to improve its partner regions by developing the capacities of public and private players, equipping them with effective tools in order to better capitalise on their available resources and to boost sustainable destination management. After 30 months of project operation, one could say there has been a rapid implementation done for slow purposes!

## PROJECT PROFILE: INSIGHTS

### Name

INSIGHTS – Integrated Slow, Green and Healthy Tourism Strategies

### Timeline

01/01/2017–30/06/2019

### Participants

13 partners from 9 Member States

### Aim

Foster sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage and resources

### Description

Danube Regions have great potential to become attractive destinations for the fast-growing trend of slow, green and healthy tourism.

Partners from Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Slovenia have joined forces to make their region's natural and cultural resources more attractive to tourists. The project is identifying new opportunities for slow, green and healthy tourism. There will be 8 integrated sustainable tourism strategies developed by the partner regions, to be adopted throughout the Danube Region.

### Funding

The INSIGHTS project is co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund and the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance.

### Programme

The Danube Transnational Programme (DTP) is a financing instrument under European Territorial Cooperation, better known as Interreg. The DTP promotes economic, social and territorial cohesion in the Danube Region through policy integration in selected fields.

## RURAL ISSUES, RURAL PERSPECTIVES

# Slow Trips

Wolfgang Berger

A LEADER transnational cooperation project on sociocultural tourism and slow travel experiences is bringing partners together from Austria, Luxembourg, Sweden, Germany, Italy, Romania and Lithuania. Together they are developing communications and marketing strategies to reach out to new types of tourists.



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Expectations regarding rural tourism are evolving in line with societal changes. The consequence is that new kinds of tourist target groups have emerged. In response, the tourism sector needs to innovate and be more creative in its approach.

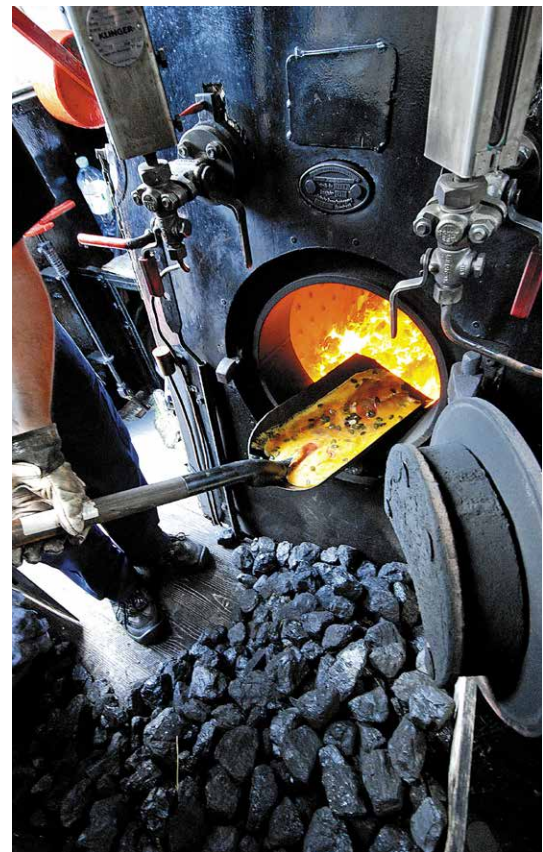
This new expectation relegates the need for staged touristic experiences that can serve as an idealised, but ultimately non-authentic, version of a region. The desire for more authenticity signals that it is high time to depart from the 'glossy' images found in travel guides and to open the discourse about a new concept of beauty in tourism.

'Participative tourism' where the visitors see themselves as participating observers, ones who witness the everyday life of the local population at first hand, aligns well with this trend. It can be viewed as a form of sustainable tourism as well as an alternative to the common 'sightseeing' model of cultural tourism.

Whether the chosen designation is 'sustainable', 'green', 'creative' or 'cultural/participative tourism', at its heart there are similar defining features. The aim is first and foremost the discovery and experience of a local culture. Such relationships are regarded as socially sustainable, as they are based on genuine encounters that enrich both guest and local host. It is especially this desire for a personalised discovery of a culture or region that comprises the potential for agricultural businesses looking to diversify their range of offers.

The move towards participative tourism is pan-European. The definitional boundaries and key values of this form of tourism can therefore only be determined collectively. That is why, 'Slow Trips' has been designed as a transnational cooperation (TNC) project. The TNC approach is the best way to understand the common challenge and the diverse and specific solutions that are being found. The diversity is a real added value. So far, Slow Trips, has identified components of slow travel

such as participation (activity), getting to know everyday cultures (contact with locals), playful learning (see the steam train driver example), discovering 'secret' places (hidden treasures), being told stories (storytelling).



© LAG Zeitkultur Oststeirisches Kernland, Christian Strassegger

'The dream of being a steam train driver' is a playful learning experience on an old narrow gauge railway in Eastern Styria. Tourists can operate a real steam engine and learn about the life and work during the steam age. To complete the experience, accommodation can be provided in a nearby exclusive old sleeping coach ([www.waggonhotel.at](http://www.waggonhotel.at)).



## PROJECT PROFILE: SLOW TRIPS

### Timeline

January 2019-December 2021.

### Participants

14 LAGs are part of the project. The lead partner is the LAG Zeitkultur Oststeirisches Kernland in Austria.

### Aims

- Generate ideas for Slow Travel in rural areas
- Professional narrative framings for the communications strategy and web-based marketing to portray the participating regions to target groups
- Establish model regions for participative tourism
- Development and testing of new offers
- Professional web-based marketing via booking and marketing platform with local subsites

### Potential beneficiaries

New business opportunities for diversified agricultural businesses, small hotels, private landlords and cultural initiatives.

### Target groups

Target groups differentiated according to the Sinus-Milieu<sup>(1)</sup> model of sociocultural diversity.

- 'Liberal-intellectual milieu': post-material and varied interests, desire for an autonomous life.
- 'Cosmopolitan avant-garde': ambitious and creative, mentally and geographically mobile, in search of new boundaries and solutions.
- 'Socio-ecological milieu': critical concerning consumption, normative conceptions of a 'right' way of living, ecologically and socially conscious.

(1) The Sinus-Milieu model depicts modern attitudes, values and lifestyles, <https://www.sinus-institut.de/en/sinus-solutions/sinus-milieu/>

The TNC project combines economic added value with natural resources and cultural heritage. This is realised through the project's focus on innovation, where the aim is to create new experiences for tourists involving new suppliers and host groups, including with agricultural businesses, craft enterprises, cultural mediators and creative artists. In addition, narratives are being developed to encourage a more original and unconventional portrayal of the regions. Such narratives refer to the cultural and historical heritage of the respective regions and will be presented on a shared web platform, where tourists can book their trip and which will go live in 2020. The presentation and booking platforms, which are to be newly established, support, in turn, the efforts of the involved rural tourism associations for internationalisation.

Besides the overall portrayal of the respective regions on the platform, various local options can be chosen. For example, geocaching routes – a kind of online treasure hunt – used in Eastern Styria (Austria). The website will be available in three languages and local subsites, and will be supported with print materials, press reports from invited bloggers and journalists.

The depiction of the region via new forms of 'non-commercial tourism', which can nonetheless be profitable, is another innovation favoured by the TNC project. An example is the 'lost places' concept. Such little-known places – in a town or region – can be relics from different epochs of its history. Especially popular at present, among specific target groups, are architectural and material relics from The Industrial Age.

The TNC project follows a non-standard definition of Slow Travel, since deviation from the norm, in the case of tourism like any other, is a basic requirement of any innovative process: "Don't take any pictures, don't buy any travel guides, leave out all the sights... then the adventure will arrive all by itself." (Dan Kieran: Slow Travel. 2012).

## FIND YOUR TNC PARTNER

The Slow Trips transnational cooperation project (TNC) used ENRD CLLD Partner Search an online tool that helps Local Action Groups (LAGs) find new project partners.

The Slow Trips TNC project followed on from the CultTrips TNC project which launched its cooperation offer on the ENRD CLLD Partner Search tool in the previous programming period. Some participating LAGs have re-joined for this second phase.

To see the list of offers: [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/leader-clld/clld-partner-search\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/leader-clld/clld-partner-search_en)

## RURAL ISSUES, RURAL PERSPECTIVES

# Road Trip Project

Hanna Soderstrom

An innovative communications campaign engaged millions of young people and showcased rural and urban areas around Europe.



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12 000 kilometres, 4 routes, 1 Europe – together with 1 van, 8 travellers and 60 videos – are core to a successful communications campaign called the Road Trip Project whose real value lies not in the figures but in the meaningful encounters it created that are inspiring a sense of belonging.

The travellers embarked on a month-long road trip to discover what the European Union stands for and to witness first-hand the impact it is having on the ground. The pilot initiative was introduced by the European Commission's Regional and Urban Policies Directorate. With Eurobarometer surveys showing that only 1-in-4 young Europeans are aware of what the EU does for their region, the goal of the campaign was to help (re)connect with generation Z (i.e. those aged 18-24) and boost their awareness of the European Union's role.

The travellers ventured off the beaten track to visit EU-enabled projects and initiatives. They tasted carob at a farm on a Croatian Island, woke up for a yoga session in the remote Massif Central mountain range in France, and tried traditional fishing at the border between Sweden and Finland. Together with local influencers they explored different regions in search of 'the best vibes'. The travellers shared their memorable journey

## ROAD TRIP PROJECT

Luisa and Louis, Yldau and Fabian, Susann and Kenneth, Luna and Achilleas were the first ever Road Trip Project travellers, selected from 2000 applicants.

During the spring and summer of 2018, the eight travellers went on a memorable journey across the continent, encountering EU-funded projects and initiatives along the way.

In all, they visited 24 European countries via four different routes: the Mediterranean (the route of the roots), the Atlantic (the route of great explorers), the Danube, (the route of great nature and shared resources), and the Baltic Route (a route through time and space).

<https://roadtripproject.eu>

experiences in short videos which were posted on social media to an ever-increasing number of their peers.

The Road Trip Project was a campaign for youth by youth. It successfully engaged digital natives using the right channels to engage in an open discussion about Europe. The campaign reached 22 million people, representing an impressive 53 % of the target audience of 18-24 year olds owning a Facebook or Instagram account Europe-wide.

The campaign also generated local media interest and made its audiences curious to learn more. One tangible result of this interest is the Road Trip Project's 99 things to do in Europe. Here, people can create their own journey via the online travel guide based on the tips and stopovers of the Road Trip Project's participants. And the exciting news is that a new edition is planned for 2019 – new routes, new travellers, new encounters and new opportunities to participate. Stay tuned!





## RURAL ISSUES, RURAL PERSPECTIVES

# Democritical: empowering rural youth



**Hannah Kirkpatrick**

Rural Youth Europe is making young people in the countryside aware of how they can influence the democratic process.



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Rural Youth Europe (RYEurope) unites rural youth organisations across Europe to promote rural development, environmental-friendly lifestyles and youth participation. In addition, we wish to raise awareness about human rights and intercultural diversity.

Democritical – a joint study session organised with the European Council of Young Farmers (CEJA) on the theme of democracy – is a prime example of how RYEurope can empower young people. The aim of the study session, which we ran in Budapest during February and March 2019, was to understand the complications that rural youth are faced with in democratic processes and to develop innovative and engaging ways of encouraging participation. Over 30 members from throughout Europe participated at this event, giving them a platform to bring forward their own personal experiences with democratic processes and to share their ideas on how to overcome them.

Democritical allowed its young participants to:

- Learn what a democratic process is;
- Analyse how rural youth is involved in the process and recognise barriers that hinder youth participation;
- Learn how emotions impact democratic processes;
- Examine possibilities and take action; and
- Feel empowered to participate in democratic processes.

Beyond Democritical, RYEurope arranges yearly seminars and a rally to discuss and share knowledge on topics such as rural development, youth participation, intercultural dialogue and human rights. We also encourage members to participate in other European youth events too.



© Rural Youth Europe / CEJA

## RURAL YOUTH EUROPE

Rural Youth Europe (RYEurope) is a Non-Governmental Organisation for rural youth. Established over 50 years ago – in 1957 – it functions as an umbrella organisation for youth organisations that promote and activate young people in the countryside.

RYEurope provides international training possibilities and works as an intermediary between national organisations, youth organisations and public institutions at the European level.

RYEurope is a member-led organisation: democratically constituted and led by young people for young people. It educates and trains young people to help create an awareness of rural and social issues.

It actively encourages rural populations and industries to help support ideas and grow the strengths of the members organisations. RYEurope lobbies to highlight the problems and needs of rural youth targeting international and national bodies, as well as the general public.

<https://www.ruralyoutheurope.com>

## RURAL ISSUES, RURAL PERSPECTIVES

# Alter'NA: a guarantee fund for agricultural transition

**Camille Massol**

To facilitate access to finance for farmers and rural entrepreneurs a new guarantee instrument was created for the French region of Nouvelle Aquitaine. Alter'NA brings together the region with the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, the Investment Plan for Europe and the European Investment Fund. It is one of the first cases under the EAFRD – EFSI Initiative for financial instruments that was launched by Commissioner Hogan in 2016.



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## ADDRESSING MAJOR CHALLENGES

Nouvelle-Aquitaine, the leading agricultural region in terms of added value in Europe, wants to address challenges related to climate, the environment, health and the economy. In responding to these issues facing the agricultural sector the region requires a continuous research and innovation effort over the next ten years. To facilitate this change, and to help introduce new practices, the region is mobilising new investment tools to promote access to credit in the agricultural sector. As part of this process, the region entrusts the European Investment Fund (EIF) with the creation of a new fund of funds, called Alter'NA (Alternative in New Aquitaine).

Alter'NA aims to:

- Support the transition of farms in the livestock and plant production sector.
- Support the creation of eco-greenhouses for fruit and vegetables.
- Support the development of short supply chains and the creation of added value on farms (via processing and/or marketing at farm level).
- Support agri-food companies' sales of certified organic farming products.

The initiative will benefit projects looking to, for example, improve livestock buildings, boost on-farm processing or develop agri-food companies. It will promote the development, processing and marketing of agricultural products.

## A PIONEERING EXPERIENCE

Alter'NA is a guarantee fund of €30 million, with €14 million coming from the EAFRD and €16 million from the French region. It is expected to generate about €150 million worth of loans over three years helping farmers and agricultural businesses to grow. Alter'NA is being managed by the EIF. It builds on the standard First Loss Portfolio Guarantee (FLPG) model whereby financial instruments are deployed through selected financial intermediaries.

The EIF selects the banks, which have to be well represented in the regional territory, who will be part of the scheme. These banks – offering the most attractive conditions to rural entrepreneurs in terms of interest rates, personal sureties required, fee rates and so on – are expected to be mobilised as from the summer 2019.

“Alter'NA reflects the EIF's willingness to work more closely with the regions and particularly in the agriculture sector in order to prepare them for tomorrow's challenges. The signing of the financing agreement and thus the creation of the Alter'NA fund of funds is an important and promising milestone for this large agricultural region. Alter'NA's financial guarantee will be deployed through selected financial intermediaries, facilitating better access to bank financing,” noted Pier Luigi Gilibert, EIF Chief Executive, on the occasion of the signing of the financing agreement for the creation of Alter'NA on 23 November 2018 in Bordeaux (France). It also represents a step forward for the EU Rural Development policy as it



combines resources from different funds and launches a new way of financing agriculture for the region.

### LAUNCH OF ALTER'NA

"The Alter'NA fund of funds will accompany approximately 1 500 final beneficiaries active in the agricultural sector in Nouvelle-Aquitaine, with more than €150 million euros of investment!" noted Alain Rousset, President of the Nouvelle-Aquitaine region.

Access to finance is an essential issue for a very large number of farmers in Nouvelle-Aquitaine. The need for a financial tool to make it easier to access bank financing in order to implement projects had been widely mentioned in the context of the feasibility study conducted for the region using the fi-compass platform.

In response, the region of Nouvelle-Aquitaine, based on the results of the feasibility study, decided to partner with the EIF. The aim of the partnership is to develop a financial instrument that will be available to financial intermediaries who can use it to facilitate farmers' access to credit. The instrument will enable the mobilisation of additional private co-investment and will encourage better project performance.

Thanks to Alter'NA, Nouvelle-Aquitaine could join the leading European regions in terms of EU financing support for agricultural holdings.

### NOUVELLE-AQUITAINE AND THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

Agriculture and agri-food are the major economic sectors of the region's rural areas. While the region is a leading agricultural region in terms of added value created and jobs the challenge is to move to a more innovative model of farming and food production. Alter'NA strongly signals that facilitating modernisation, innovation and the taking into account of environmental and societal expectations are regional priorities.

[www.nouvelleaquitaine.fr](http://www.nouvelleaquitaine.fr)

Twitter: [@NvelleAquitaine](https://twitter.com/NvelleAquitaine)

Facebook: [RegionNouvelleAquitaine](https://www.facebook.com/RegionNouvelleAquitaine)

### EUROPEAN INVESTMENT FUND

The European Investment Fund (EIF) is a specialist provider of risk finance to benefit small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) across Europe. Its shareholders are the European Investment Bank (EIB), the European Union, represented by the European Commission, and a wide range of public and private banks and financial institutions.

The EIF carries out its activities using either its own resources or those provided by the EIB, the European Commission, by EU Member States or other third parties.

By developing and offering targeted financial products to intermediaries, such as banks, guarantee and leasing companies, micro-credit providers and private equity funds, the EIF enhances SMEs access to finance.

### FI-COMPASS

fi-compass is a platform for advisory services on financial instruments under the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF). fi-compass is provided by the European Commission in partnership with the European Investment Bank.

fi-compass is designed to support ESIF managing authorities and other interested parties, by providing practical know-how and learning tools on financial instruments. These include 'how-to' manuals, factsheets and case study publications, as well as face-to-face training seminars, networking events, and video information.

More information on fi-compass:

<https://www.fi-compass.eu>

<https://www.fi-compass.eu/esif/eafrd>

## RURAL ISSUES, RURAL PERSPECTIVES

# The Smartest Village in Finland

Lauri Hyttinen

Finland's Smartest Village competition has stimulated interest from all over the country. Although all are competing for first prize, in reality everyone's a winner. That's because the organiser's main motivation is to help as many villages as possible to find smart solutions to the future provision of services in their respective rural areas.



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At the Finnish National Rural Network (NRN), we certainly don't claim to have all the answers when it comes to smart villages. Our approach to the smart village initiative could be summarised by just two words, 'do something!'

We are utilising our innovative spirit and have decided to act fast and experiment. We were however armed with the knowledge from our previous work that competitions are great tools to build enthusiasm and encourage

participation. And that is how the Smartest Village in Finland competition came to be born.

The purpose is not to find the village that can already claim to be the smartest. We want to identify those villages that are most eager to learn to become smarter. When applying, the villages were asked to identify the challenges they are facing, to outline their ideas about how to solve them, and to identify the key actors they will need to co-operate with, in order to achieve their goals.



Initially we were hoping for around 10 villages to register. We were therefore positively surprised to get 34! Finland is a big country geographically. Coupled with the large number of applicants, there were initially some delays in implementation. However, thanks to the creation of regional teams, the competition is now moving ahead.

The participating villages first need to identify the single most important challenge they want to tackle. Each village is currently finalising the challenge it wants to overcome. The duration of the competition is relatively short, so prioritising is very important. Originally scheduled to finish at the end of 2019, it was agreed to continue until June 2020. Despite this prolongation, the villages still need to prioritise their activities in order to get concrete results.

The participants have asked for assistance in reaching their targets. The NRN has responded by gathering our regional village associations, LAGs, regional authorities and other experts to provide assistance, and is also using consultants to facilitate the process. The richness of rural development is that every village is different, as are their respective development needs. Finding the best solution for each village means planning, experimenting and adjusting.

While smart villages are first and foremost about people, the smart village concept is broad. We have chosen digitalisation as the common denominator for the competition. Obviously, one can be smart without digitalisation, but we felt that it provides a focus for development activities and helps distinguish the smart villages from otherwise well-functioning ones.

The competition is also supported by our thematic working group on smart villages. Group members not only provide their time and expertise for the villages, the villages provide a real-life laboratory for the group to experiment with. By entering the competition, the villages have signalled their willingness to become smarter and to try new approaches to improving service provision in their area.

### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Smart Villages Portal  
[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/smart-and-competitive-rural-areas/smart-villages/smart-villages-portal\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/smart-and-competitive-rural-areas/smart-villages/smart-villages-portal_en)

ENRD thematic work on Smart Villages  
[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/enrd-thematic-work/smart-and-competitive-rural-areas/smart-villages\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/enrd-thematic-work/smart-and-competitive-rural-areas/smart-villages_en)

The EU Action for Smart Villages  
[https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/sites/agriculture/files/rural-development-2014-2020/looking-ahead/rur-dev-small-villages\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/sites/agriculture/files/rural-development-2014-2020/looking-ahead/rur-dev-small-villages_en.pdf)

### WHO'S THE SMARTEST?

Finland's Smartest Village competition is a search for villages with the willingness and need to become more vital, active and innovative.

A smart village is one that actively seeks new solutions for providing services in areas such as healthcare, education, food and energy production, mobility, retail, hobbies and culture. The competition is designed to help and encourage villages to find smart solutions to the challenges of today and tomorrow.

The selection criteria for the winning village include higher service accessibility and quality, idea-rich solutions and the number of villagers actively involved. Although a competition, encouraging development is the real point of the initiative.

The competition is organised by the National Rural Network (under the EAFRD) in cooperation with the structural funds ESF and ERDF, the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, the Ministry of Transport and Communications, the Rural Policy Council of Finland, the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities and the Village Action Association of Finland.

<https://www.maaseutu.fi/en/the-rural-network/smart-villages>

Smart Villages are "rural areas and communities which build on their existing strengths and assets as well as on developing new opportunities", where "traditional and new networks and services are enhanced by means of digital, telecommunication technologies, innovations and the better use of knowledge."

*EU Action for Smart Villages, European Commission*

Measuring 'smartness' is going to be extremely difficult, as will be selecting the winner. But in truth the nature of the competition is to make every village a winner. And it's also about learning from failure. The participants are not only sharing their success stories, they will also consider those initiatives that work less well. In this experimental mindset of our competition, failure is an acceptable result once it is not repeated.

## RURAL ISSUES, RURAL PERSPECTIVES

# Storyboarding rural development

Dr Shane Conway, Dr Maura Farrell and Dr Aisling Murtagh

The Irish National Rural Network is using an innovative communications approach to illustrate intuitively how the European Agriculture Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) translates into projects in rural Ireland.



**Dr Shane Conway,** Postdoctoral Researcher, National Rural Network/National University of Ireland, Galway

Storyboards are visual, interactive, informative, online maps. The Irish National Rural Network (NRN) is using Storyboards to help tell the story of how EAFRD Measures are making a difference to life in rural Ireland.

The Irish NRN developed its first Storyboard to showcase LEADER project examples from Ireland's 2007-2013 Rural Development Programme (RDP). It continues to be used as a dissemination approach and is now being applied to Measures under Ireland's 2014-2020 RDP. The Storyboards facilitate visually-engaging databases of project examples, organised geographically and displayed on an interactive map.

## WHY STORYBOARDS?

Using Storyboards appealed to the Irish NRN for many reasons. Core features include the ability to tell stories and to place them on a map of Ireland. This helps to bring EAFRD supported rural development initiatives to life by easily showcasing the range of projects receiving support and where they are located. The communication tool shows the bigger picture, while also focusing on the local level through telling the story of individual projects on the ground.

The NRN used the Knight Lab StoryMapJS tool developed at Northwestern University, Illinois to develop Storyboards. It is a free online tool which can be easily accessed. It has an intuitive, user-friendly interface allowing you to add content such as text and images to build a story.

Another benefit of the tool is how it links with other communication channels. Storyboards form one of a series of ways that the NRN disseminates information on EAFRD projects. To engage a wide audience, it is

important to present project examples in different ways. Storyboards act as an anchor point hosting a range of information about projects such as posters, detailed case studies, images and links to wider information. This can then be linked to NRN social media platforms and newsletters for wider dissemination.

Carrying out research on projects and working with beneficiaries to gather information is also a core part of the process of developing Storyboards. Once content is developed, the information hosted in the Storyboard can be re-packaged for different mediums, such as printed posters and flyers for sharing at events, as well as infographics for use on social media. This further capitalises on project stories adding value to the Storyboard content.

## LEADER STORYBOARDS

A bottom-up method of supporting rural development, LEADER is a community-led local development (CLLD) policy initiative. The NRN's LEADER Storyboard from Ireland's 2007- 2013 RDP maps the geographical location of 35 projects across Ireland and details their stories of CLLD. It includes projects supporting a range of different areas such as rural tourism, farm business development, community services and beneficiaries such as SMEs and community groups.

For the 2014-2020 period, the NRN chose to focus the LEADER Storyboards around key themes. Three Storyboards have been developed with projects from across Ireland. For example, one focuses on 'Rural Environment' featuring 12 projects and another on 'Social Inclusion' featuring 10 projects. These Storyboards feature a summary of each project, thus providing rural individuals, businesses and community groups with easy and convenient access to information on inspirational



**Dr Maura Farrell,** Lead Researcher, National Rural Network/National University of Ireland, Galway



**Dr Aisling Murtagh,** Research and Development Officer, National Rural Network/Irish Rural Link



© Irish NRN

LEADER project examples and ideas. Part of the NRN's ongoing work is developing more detailed case studies to add more depth to the LEADER Storyboards.

### EIP-AGRI STORYBOARDS

The European Innovation Partnership for Agriculture Productivity and Sustainability (EIP-AGRI) is one of five European Innovation Partnerships launched to boost the EU's capacity to innovate. Following two competitive open call processes, there are now 23 EIP-AGRI Operational Group projects in Ireland. They bring together actors such as farmers, researchers, advisors and agri-businesses to identify innovative solutions to particular challenges facing the agriculture and forestry sectors. The EIP-AGRI Storyboard developed by the Irish NRN serves as 'one-stop-shop' for accessing information on the aims, activities and rationale of these projects. The storyboard also includes direct links to each of the project's abstracts featured on the EIP-AGRI Service Point Operational Group database featuring innovative agricultural practices and technologies throughout Europe.

### ILLUSTRATING VALUE AND SHARING GOOD PRACTICE

Storyboards illustrate the value of different EAFRD support Measures and showcase potentially transferable good practices that can help to influence future rural development. For example, LEADER Storyboards and the specific stories illustrated through case studies are useful for LEADER Programme Development Officers in a number of ways. They help potential applicants to

conceptualise projects and see what is possible. Stories also clearly demonstrate in a holistic way the value of projects to local rural areas.

### FUTURE WORK

Ireland's NRN has developed five different Storyboards to date. The first is from LEADER during 2007-2013, the second and third are from LEADER in the current programming period and are themed respectively on 'rural environment' and 'social inclusion', the fourth is on EIP-AGRI. The latest one is themed on 'economic development' aspects of LEADER. Some feature more in-depth stories than others and the NRN continues to carry out case study research on funded projects to further develop its Storyboards.

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

- LEADER Storyboard  
<https://www.nationalruralnetwork.ie/leader/storyboards/>
- EIP-AGRI Storyboard  
<https://www.nationalruralnetwork.ie/eip-agri/>
- ENRD Workshop on 'Project Examples and Good Practices: Approaches to Collection and Dissemination'  
<https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/enrd-workshop-project-examples-and-good-practices-approaches-collection-and-en>

## RURAL ISSUES, RURAL PERSPECTIVES

# Rural Poland and the EU

Jerzy Wilkin and Katarzyna Panfil

New report highlights the positive role EU integration has had on rural areas in Poland. Some key findings are mentioned below.



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Rural Poland 2018 is an in-depth report on rural areas published by Foundation for the Development of Polish Agriculture (FDPA) and edited by Jerzy Wilkin and Iwona Nurzynska. The year 2018 was a special one as Poland celebrated the century of regaining independence in 1918. The authors of the Report are among the most eminent Polish researchers of rural areas.

The report provides new insights into the demographic, social and economic evolutions that have taken place in rural areas in the past 100 years. The report also demonstrates the main changes in Polish agriculture and rural areas since European Union accession. The year 2004 marked the beginning of long-term and increasing financial support provided to the Polish agriculture sector on an unprecedented scale. The result is that Polish farmers and other rural residents are the two groups that benefited the most from European Union membership.

“By joining the EU, Poland became a fully-fledged beneficiary of the CAP and obtained access to funds earmarked for modernisation of agriculture, improvement of living standards and reshaping the structure of the rural economy.<sup>(1)</sup>” During the 2004–2017 period, Poland received over €147 billion from the EU budget. Nearly 32% of this (€47 billion) came from the CAP and was dedicated to projects implemented in the agri-food sector and in rural areas. Agricultural producers benefited most, receiving €28 billion in direct payments.

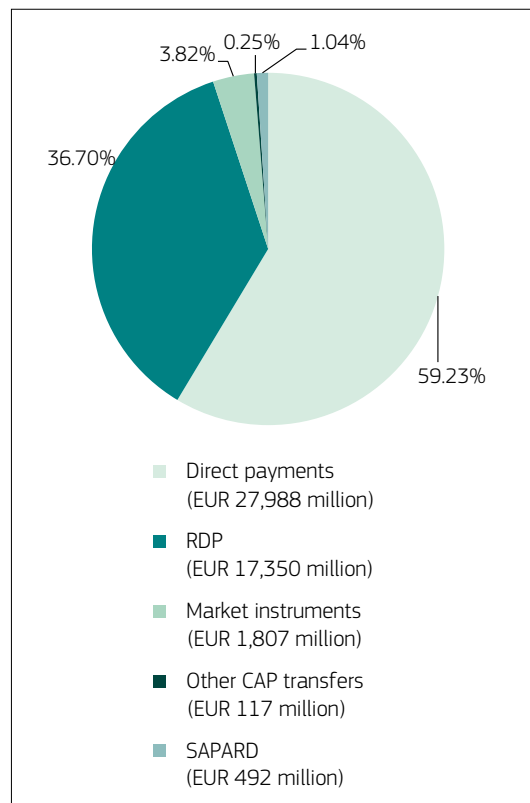
Thanks to the Small Farmer Scheme about 712 000 farmers, which represent 55% of all farms, received support in 2015.

In general, Polish farms are not large. Some 90% of agricultural holdings have between 1–20 ha representing 48% of total farmland. Medium-sized farms of 50–100 ha were the fastest growing segment in the

2007–2016 period. In 2016 the largest farms (over 100 ha) represented 21% of total arable land and 1% of the total number of farms. In total there are 4000 more farms and 68 500 ha of farmland being managed by holdings in this size category than in 2007.

Poland is also concerned by the problem of generational renewal. In 2004–2013, Poland earmarked close to €1 billion for investment in projects carried out by young farmers under the CAP, which led to a total of

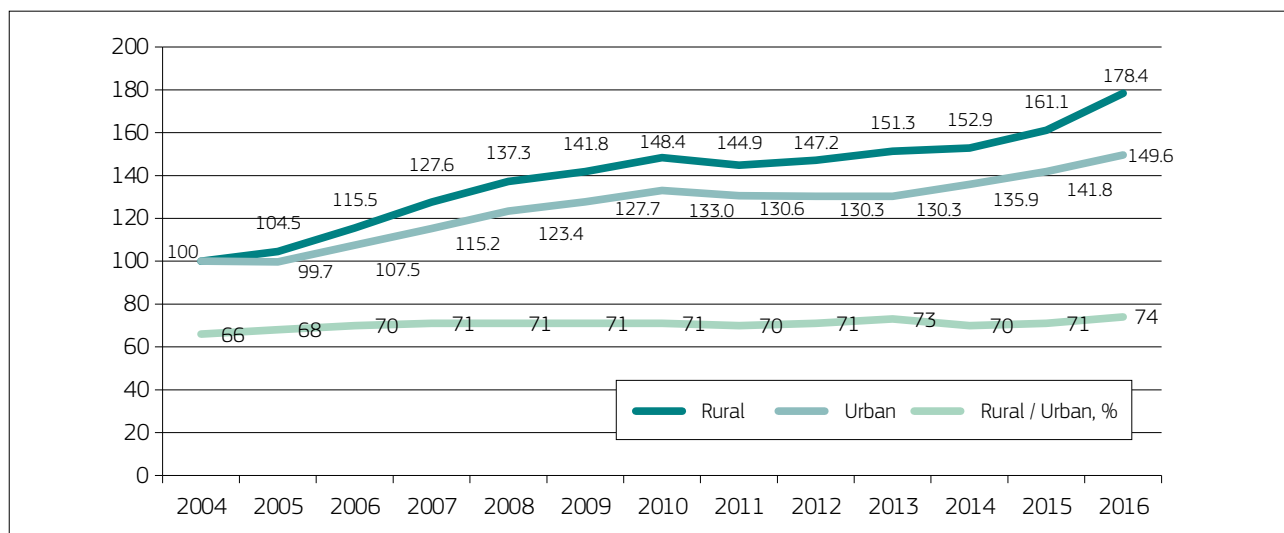
Figure 1. Transfers from the EU budget under CAP in 2004–2017



(1) Iwona Nurzynska, chapter 6, Poland as a beneficiary of the CAP, p. 133 Rural Poland 2018.



Figure 2. Dynamics and relations of nominal per capita incomes of rural and urban residents in 2004–2016 (in %)



53 000 completed projects. The current programming period is targeting support to 28 700 young farmers worth € 717 million. Therefore, between 2004 and 2020 nearly 82 000 projects by young farmers are to be supported, with funding of € 1.7 billion.

Most of Poland's rural residents (75 %) are not involved in farming. A key challenge is thus to create non-agricultural jobs and diversify source of incomes in rural areas. During the 2004-2015 period over 40 000 job creation projects were completed as part of the Rural Development Programme (RDP).

Full access to the Single Market has had a positive effect on Polish trade. Indeed, the trade benefits surpass the net EU transfers received. Over 80 % of Poland's agri-food exports are sold to other EU Member States. The balance of trade surplus in agri-food products in 2017 totalled € 7.1 billion.

Opinions in rural areas about the country's economic situation and living conditions of families changed to positive. Individuals take an optimistic view both of their own situation and of the overall business climate, and optimistically look to the future. Support for the European Union and Poland's presence in it, is firmly high and not subject to fluctuations.

Poland's EU integration has also helped reduce disparity between rural and urban areas. Income differences between agriculture and other sectors of the economy have been narrowing. This means a relative improvement of the economic and social situation of rural residents. In 2004–2016, the nominal per capita income of the

rural population increased by 118 % compared to a 94 % increase for the urban population. The standards of living of rural residents do not diverge considerably from the quality of life of residents of smaller towns (i.e. up to 20 000 residents), which can be seen as a factor of the success of Polish rural areas.

#### BENEFITS OF EU INTEGRATION

*The Rural Poland 2018 report highlights the following impacts of Poland's EU accession on rural life:*

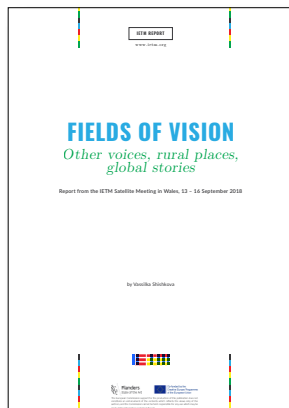
The disparities in agricultural income between Poland and other EU countries decreased due to factors such as direct payments and other transfers, reduced employment in agriculture, improved farm structure and economic strength of farms, and greater specialisation of production in farms.

An analysis of agricultural incomes in the EU Member States indicates Poland has been closing the gap with EU-15 countries in the wake of EU accession.

Improvements to rural infrastructure have led to a tangible improvement in the living conditions of rural residents and farmers and increased the status of both rural areas and the farmer's occupation.

For more information on the report in English and Polish: <https://www.fdpa.org.pl/rural-poland-2018-the-report-on-the-state-of-rural-areas-angielska-wersja-raportu>

# Books & publications



## *Fields of Vision: Other voices, rural places, global stories*

**IETM**

Europe is recognised around the world for the quality of its arts sector. A new report from IETM – the International network for contemporary performing arts – reflects on the scope of creative sector specialisms to provide tools for helping to develop and enrich Europe's countryside. It forms part of an advocacy initiative promoting networking of artists working with rural communities and exchanges or research on working methods in rural areas. The case for RDP funding for the arts is also discussed in the publication.

[https://www.ietm.org/en/system/files/publications/report\\_wales\\_2018.pdf](https://www.ietm.org/en/system/files/publications/report_wales_2018.pdf)

## *Towards a Common Food Policy for the EU*

**IPES-Food**



A new publication has been launched by the International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES-Food) to map out a novel 'governance architecture' for sustainable food systems. The report makes the case for a Common Food Policy for the EU. It presents a time-bound vision for reforming European food systems under a Common Food Policy. The text is

proposed as "a policy framework setting a direction of travel for the whole food system, realigning the various sectoral policies that affect food production, processing, distribution, and consumption, and refocusing all actions on the transition to sustainability." The content draws on a three-year participatory research process involving over 400 farmers, food entrepreneurs, civil society activists, scientists and policy-makers.

[http://www.ipes-food.org/\\_img/upload/files/CFP\\_FullReport.pdf](http://www.ipes-food.org/_img/upload/files/CFP_FullReport.pdf)

## *Good practices with an impact on the development of rural areas*

**The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development**

Poland's National Rural Network (NRN) has produced a review of useful good practices that the NRN and its partners were involved



with during 2017-2018. The publication is available in English and the selected examples include dissemination of agricultural innovation, food production, short supply chains, organic production,

reduction of environmental degradation, rural entrepreneurship, and promotion of the countryside. These good practice cases also range across precision agriculture, gardening therapy, regional products, care farming and rural youth support.

[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/news/good-practices-poland\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/news/good-practices-poland_en)

# ENRD PUBLICATIONS

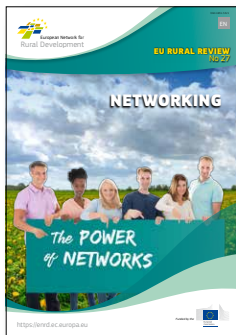
Keep up to date with all the latest news, views and developments in European rural development by reading the various ENRD publications.

These are available on the *Publications* section of <https://enrd.ec.europa.eu> or you can subscribe by emailing [subscribe@enrd.eu](mailto:subscribe@enrd.eu). For further information write to [info@enrd.eu](mailto:info@enrd.eu).

## EU RURAL REVIEW

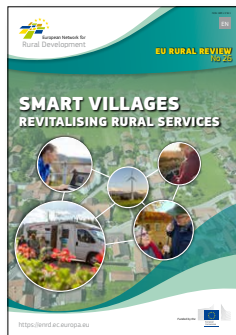
The EU Rural Review is the ENRD's principal thematic publication. It presents the latest knowledge and understanding of a particular topic relevant to rural development in Europe. Themes range from rural entrepreneurship and food quality to climate change and social inclusion. It is published twice a year in six EU languages (EN; FR; DE; ES; IT; PL).

### No.27 – Networking



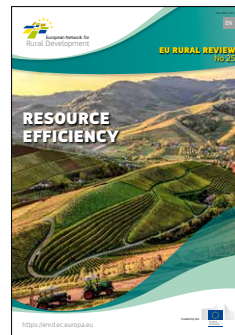
KF-AJ-18-002-EN-N

### No.26 – Smart Villages: Revitalising Rural Services



KF-AJ-18-001-EN-N

### No.25 – Resource Efficiency

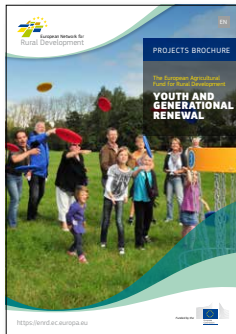


KF-AJ-17-002-EN-N

## EAFRD PROJECTS BROCHURE

The ENRD publishes brochures presenting good and interesting examples of EAFRD-funded projects. Each edition highlights successful project examples around a particular rural development theme. The brochures aim to showcase the achievements of the EAFRD and inspire further projects. They are published in six EU languages (EN; FR; DE; ES; IT; PL).

### Youth and Generational Renewal



KF-AP-18-003-EN-N

### Digital and Social Innovation in Rural Services



KF-AP-18-002-EN-N

### Resource Efficient Rural Economies



KF-AP-18-001-EN-N

## HOW TO OBTAIN EU PUBLICATIONS

### Free publications:

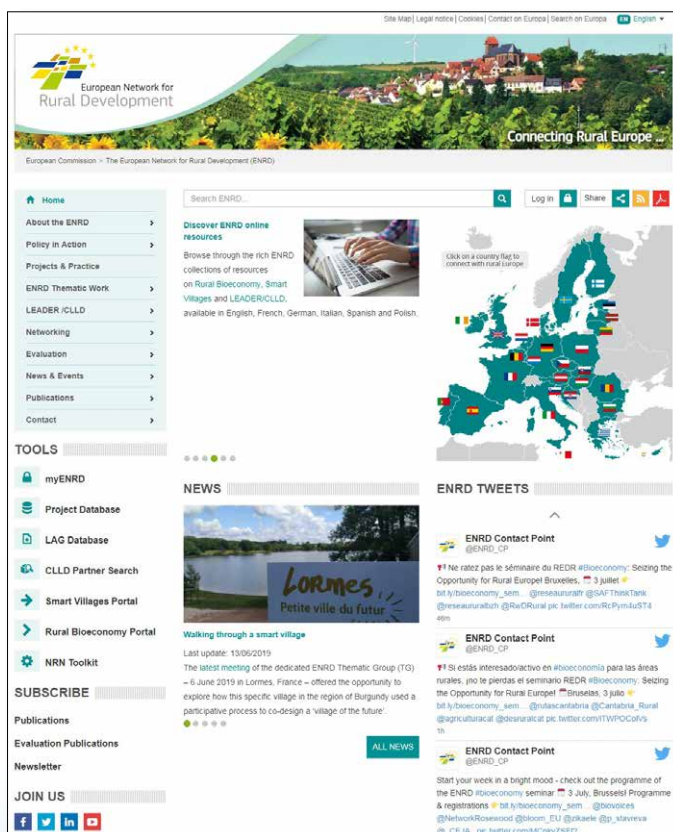
- one copy:  
via EU Bookshop (<http://bookshop.europa.eu>);
- more than one copy or posters/maps:  
from the European Union's representations ([http://ec.europa.eu/represent\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/represent_en.htm));  
from the delegations in non-EU countries ([http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/index\\_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/index_en.htm));  
by contacting the Europe Direct service ([http://europa.eu/europedirect/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/europedirect/index_en.htm)) or  
calling 00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11 (freephone number from anywhere in the EU) (\*).

(\* ) The information given is free, as are most calls (though some operators, phone boxes or hotels may charge you).

### Priced publications:

- via EU Bookshop (<http://bookshop.europa.eu>).

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