

# CONNECTIONS

THE EUROPEAN RURAL DEVELOPMENT MAGAZINE

NEWS AND UPDATES

**ENRD THEMATIC WORK  
NEW EVALUATION HELPDESK  
FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS FOR AGRICULTURE**

RURAL ISSUES, RURAL PERSPECTIVES

**WESTERN BALKANS RURAL NETWORK  
FOOD ON THE URBAN AGENDA  
MIGRANTS IN RURAL SWEDEN**

FOCUS ON...

**RDP IMPLEMENTATION**



## 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 co-operation 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* (<http://enrd.ec.europa.eu>)

***Europe Direct is a service to help you find answers  
to your questions about the European Union.***

**Freephone number (\*):  
00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11**

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

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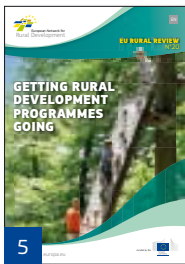
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## EDITORIAL

# Sharing the voices of rural development stakeholders



Welcome to only the second edition of Rural Connections, the European Rural Development Magazine produced by the ENRD. We have had positive informal feedback on the Spring 2015 edition, but further comments and ideas are always welcome as we continue to develop this magazine to meet rural development stakeholders' hopes and needs.

In this edition we bring you more "News and Updates" from European level, including an overview of the **ENRD thematic work** on 'stakeholder involvement' and 'improving implementation of the RDPs' so far in 2015 (p.4-5). We also share the latest updates from our colleagues in the **European Evaluation Helpdesk** and the **EIP-AGRI Service Point** (p.8-9).

Find out about the new European **financial guarantee instrument** for agriculture, online opportunities to promote '**Events in your Country**' at European level and the latest guides and publications produced by the EU institutions (p.10-11). Finally in this section, we provide a visual overview of the themes prioritised in the **2014-2020 Partnership Agreements** (p.12-13).

This edition sees eight "Rural issues, Rural perspectives" (p.14-25) covering topics from the integration of **migrants in Sweden** to the **optimal quality term 'Mountain Product'** and from rural networking in the **Western Balkans** to results-based agri-environment schemes (**RBAPS**) in Europe. We look forward to hearing readers' reactions to these articles and for more subjects that you want to discuss.

Finally, we present a series of on-the-ground reports and interviews with "A focus on... improving RDP implementation" (p.26-38). These look at: approaches to **integrated territorial development** in Brittany (France); **involving NGOs** in agri-environment scheme implementation (Poland); **improved administration systems** in West Cork (Ireland); and **Simplified Cost Options** (Denmark).

I hope that the issues covered in this magazine reflect the most relevant rural development policy topics that stakeholders are talking about. If not, it is up to you to raise your issues and add your perspective to the discussions. I look forward to hearing from you!

**Ed Thorpe**

Communications Manager, ENRD-CP  
editor@enrd.eu

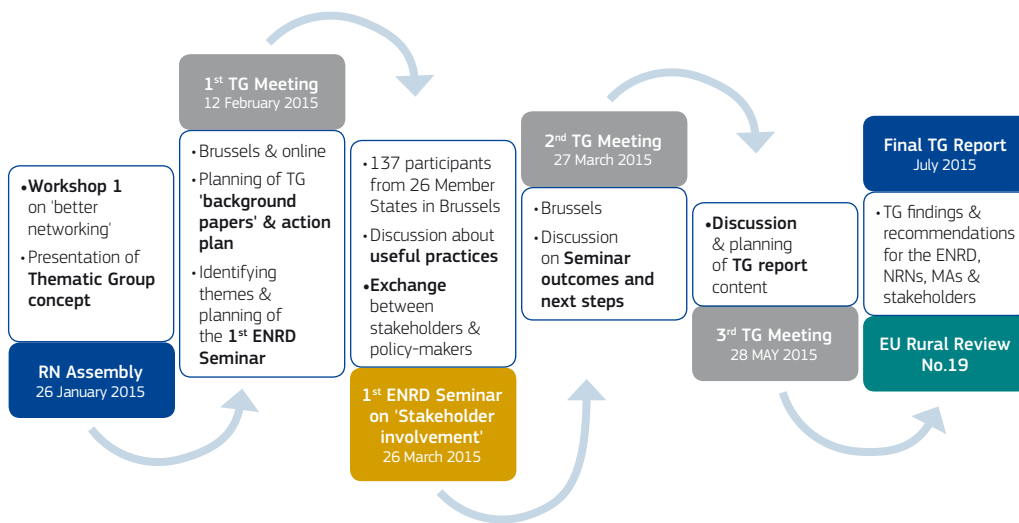
## NEWS &amp; UPDATES

## ENRD NEWS

## ENRD thematic work on stakeholder involvement

The ENRD Contact Point has carried out a series of activities in 2015 on the topic of 'Increasing stakeholder involvement' in rural development. These have aimed to lay the platform for future work throughout the 2014-2020 period.

ENRD activities on this topic have included Thematic Group meetings, a European Seminar and a thematic publication (EU Rural Review No.19).



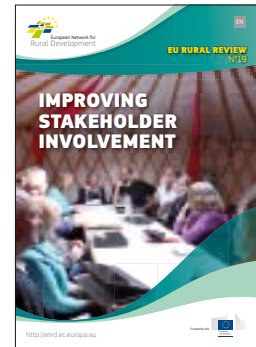
Effective **stakeholder involvement is vital** at all stages of rural development policy, from the definition of policies and programmes to implementation of projects on the ground. Stakeholder involvement benefits everybody, delivering better interventions and contributing to better rural development outcomes.

**KEY MESSAGES**

The thematic work stressed that **rural Networks have a stronger legal mandate**

in the new programming period to involve stakeholders in the implementation of rural development policy. This mandate needs to be put into action effectively across the EU.

Participants in the various activities highlighted the rather **mixed level of stakeholder involvement** in different EU Member States. Nevertheless, there have been **many positive examples** of promising methods and tools which could be used as examples to inspire more effective stakeholder participation.

**EU RURAL REVIEW No.19**

This publication examines the importance of stakeholder involvement in rural development and methods that can be used to support it. It provides answers and guidance on questions such as:

- What do we mean by stakeholder involvement in rural development?
- Who are the main stakeholder groups?
- Does stakeholder involvement have a legal basis in the EU?
- How can stakeholder involvement contribute to rural development policy in Europe?
- What examples exist of good stakeholder involvement in rural development?
- How can good communication and rural networking contribute?

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

**Thematic Group meetings:** find supporting documents and reports at: <https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/thematic-group-stakeholder-involvement>

**European Seminar:** read the final report and find a collection of stakeholder involvement examples at: <https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/en/en-rd-events-and-meetings/enrd-stakeholder-involvement-seminar-20150326>

**EU Rural Review:** find issue 19 dedicated to 'Improving stakeholder involvement' at: <http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/en/publications-and-media>

## NEWS &amp; UPDATES

## ENRD thematic work on improving RDP implementation

## THEMATIC GROUP MEETINGS

Rural development stakeholders came together in Thematic Group meetings to identify the priority issues for delivering higher quality and more results-oriented programmes. They identified a number of essential preconditions for the successful roll-out of the RDPs:

- Effective **two-way communication between the EU and the national/regional levels** to ensure RDPs are targeted to real stakeholders' needs.
- Functioning mechanisms for **formal and informal coordination among those directly and indirectly involved in policy delivery** to ensure the same level of understanding and a coherent interpretation of rules.
- **Increasing the quality of RDP management**, including identifying capacity-building needs and ensuring that already available instruments – such as technical assistance budgets, including for rural networks – are fully exploited.
- Making a major effort in **simplifying administrative procedures**.

## SEMINAR

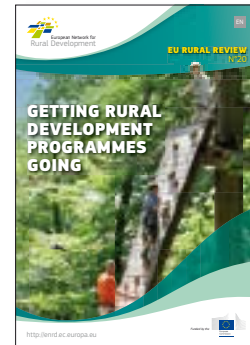
The ENRD Seminar on 'Improving RDP implementation' took place on 11 June 2015 in Brussels and brought together a wider range of around 100 stakeholders.

The Seminar highlighted that improving the implementation of the RDPs requires **better use of existing instruments** rather than inventing new solutions. For example, more structured and participative meetings of the Monitoring Committees can effectively increase the capacity to respond to actual stakeholders' needs and keep RDPs focused on results.

The use of **Simplified Cost Options** was widely recognised to ease administrative burdens in RDP implementation. It is, however, essential that appropriate knowledge and **administrative capacity** is developed to take full advantage of the possibilities offered by such instruments.

Participants identified a number of **good practices** relating to general management aspects of RDPs and of specific measures from around the EU. They also stressed the valuable **role for the ENRD** in collecting and sharing such examples.

▶▶ See following page for details of a series of ENRD Training Workshops on RDP implementation topics.



## EU RURAL REVIEW No.20

Issue 20 of the EU Rural Review is dedicated to the theme of 'Getting Rural Development Programmes Going'. Building on the thematic work stream, the publication addresses specific issues and examples around the following questions:

- Improving implementation of rural development policy
- Keeping RDPs focused on their agreed outcomes
- Simplifying RDP implementation: why and how
- Boosting financial performance by reducing errors
- Financial Instruments: making funding go further
- Launching Operational Groups

The Rural Review aims to help RDP authorities and other rural development stakeholders to understand and focus on important RDP requirements, as well as success factors and implementation tools. It provides an inventory of further advice and information.

 FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Find background information, supporting documents and reports on the **thematic group** page of the ENRD website:

<https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/en/thematic-group-improving-rdp-implementation>

Background material and a collection of good methodological practices can be found on the **Seminar** page of the ENRD website: <https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/en/enrd.ec.europa.eu/en/en-rd-events-and-meetings/enrd-RDP-implementation-seminar-20150611>

**EU Rural Review:** find issue 20 dedicated to 'Getting Rural Development Programmes Going' at: <http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/en/publications-and-media>

## NEWS &amp; UPDATES

## ENRD Workshops on 'Improving RDP Implementation'

The ENRD Contact Point organised a series of training workshops on: Simplified Cost Options (SCOs); Reasonableness of Costs and Public Procurement; and Results-Based Agri-Environment Payment Schemes (RBAPS). The workshops were aimed at national and regional managing authorities and intended to help improve the financial and administrative management of RDPs.

The SCOs workshop introduced various simplification measures as a way to

lower the administrative burden to beneficiaries and reduce the occurrence of irregularities in the management of the 2014-2020 RDPs.

The workshop on Reasonableness of Costs and Public Procurement aimed at improving the financial management capacity of RDP authorities to reduce errors in rural development spending.

The RBAPS workshop explored the potential constraints and opportunities

for increasingly involving farmers in receiving payments for delivering specific environmental results.

 FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Background material and good practices presented can be found by following links to the relevant workshop in the Events section of the ENRD website: <http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/en/news-events/events>

## Rural Networks' Steering Group

The Rural Networks' Steering Group met for the first time in February 2015 and then again in June 2015. The Steering Group guides and oversees the activities and thematic work of the ENRD and EIP-AGRI networks.

The Rural Networks' Steering Group is a newly established governance structure<sup>(1)</sup> whose tasks include:

- (a) preparing, implementing and following-up the activities of the ENRD and of the EIP network;
- (b) coordinating the thematic work and following-up its implementation;
- (c) assessing on an ongoing basis the effectiveness and efficiency of the activities of the ENRD and of the EIP network;
- (d) ensuring the coordination of the work of the [Rural Networks'] Assembly with that of other expert groups and committees.

At their first meeting, Steering Group members discussed priority topics for

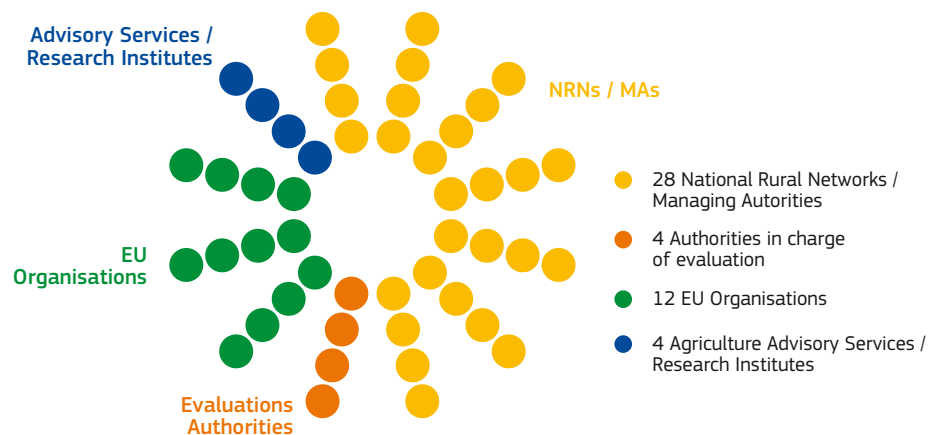
2015 and provided the European rural networks with guidance on which of their tools could be best used for which priorities. The second meeting collected members' feedback on the Rural Networks' intended activities relating to the priority topics, as well as first reflections for the networks' work in 2016.

The Steering Group brings together 48 representatives of National Rural Networks (NRNs) and managing authorities (MAs), evaluation authorities, EU Non-Governmental Organisations, and agriculture advisory services and research institutes.

 FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

EU Rural Networks' strategic framework and governance bodies: <http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/en/general-info/whos-who>

Detailed information on each Steering Group meeting can be found in the Events section of the ENRD website: <http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/en/news-events/events>



(1) Commission Implementing Decision of 20 November 2014 setting up the organisational structure and operation for the European network for rural development and for the European Innovation Partnership network.



## NEWS &amp; UPDATES

## Meeting of National Rural Networks focuses on 'Starting up NRNs'

Representatives of the National Rural Networks (NRNs), DG AGRI, the ENRD Contact Point and the EIP-AGRI Service Point came together in Jūrmala (Latvia), 12-13 May 2015, to discuss the most pertinent NRN activities at this early stage of the new programming period.

The meeting covered the state of play with the creation of the NRNs and their Network Support Units (NSUs) across the EU. Discussions then focused on their current work around drawing up and rolling out NRN action plans in ways that help to improve RDP implementation. There was a particular focus on communication

activities and the creation of EIP-AGRI Operational Groups.

Participants concluded that the national and European rural networks should seek to be more demand-led in their approaches to improving RDP quality.

### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

For event background material, report and good practices from across the Member States, please visit: <http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/en/enrd-ec.europa.eu/en/en-rd-events-and-meetings/2nd-NRN-meeting-20150512>



© ENRD CP



© Scottish NSU

*This was the second European meeting of the NRNs during the 2014-2020 period.*

## ENRD Contact Point kicks off Ruralabs

The first national 'Ruralabs' have taken place as part of a new series of national-level initiatives supported by the ENRD Contact Point. A Ruralab is a discussion group of stakeholders involved in the social, economic or environmental aspects of rural development in a country. It aims to explore practical ways in which networking can contribute to rural development practice in that country.

The first Ruralab took place in the Netherlands on 29 April 2015. It considered the main challenges and priorities for the National Rural Network at this point in time. A particular session explored ideas for using modern technologies for improving rural development connections.

Further Ruralabs have focused on practical aspects of the RDP and NRN implementation in Poland and how to optimise the coordination of the four country networks in the UK.

In the coming months the Contact Point will organise one Ruralab per Member State jointly with the National Rural Network (NRN). Each event will be tailored to the specific situation and needs of each country.

### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information, please contact: [john.grieve@enrd.eu](mailto:john.grieve@enrd.eu)

## NEWS &amp; UPDATES

## UPDATE FROM THE EVALUATION HELPDESK



### A new Support Unit 2014-2020

The European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development is – alongside the ENRD Contact Point – **one of the two support units for the European Network for Rural Development**. The Evaluation Helpdesk provides guidance on rural development policy evaluation under the remit of DG AGRI's Unit E.4 'Evaluation and studies' of the European Commission.

Following an open call for tender, the **new Evaluation Helpdesk was established** in the first half of 2015. This involved the creation of an office in Brussels with a permanent team of rural development experts, as well as a non-permanent team of **methodological core experts and thematic experts**.

The Helpdesk also has its own **network of locally based geographic experts** who extend the Helpdesk's support into Member States. These experts organise capacity building activities and collect good practices and evaluation-related information.

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Find contact details and meet the new Evaluation Helpdesk team: <https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/en/evaluation/contact-us>

### Strengthening the usefulness of evaluations

The Evaluation Helpdesk aims to **develop the European evaluation culture**, to consolidate stakeholder ownership of evaluation, and to improve the quality of evaluations within the rural development framework. It particularly supports the implementation of the sub-set of rules (Common Monitoring and Evaluation System) that relates to the evaluation of Pillar II of the CAP (rural development policy).

*"We rely on the Evaluation Helpdesk to ensure that the different evaluations from Member States are comparable, so that they can be synthesised and used to nourish the rural development policy decision-making process,"* explains Adelina Dos Reis, Head of the Evaluation and Studies Unit (E4) at DG AGRI.



© Evaluation Helpdesk

A specific Evaluation Helpdesk training activity took place in Lisbon 12-13 May 2015 in collaboration with local partners to build capacities in evaluation amongst Portuguese LAGs.

### Launch of thematic activities

The Evaluation Helpdesk **provides practical support and guidance** in evaluation methodologies and processes relating to Pillar II, with an enhanced focus on good practice, capacity building and training in Member States.

Two Thematic Working Groups of the Evaluation Helpdesk are already preparing support for Member States and evaluators in assessing the RDPs' results in view of reporting in 2017 and evaluating their NRNs. Support is also being given by answering any evaluation-related queries.

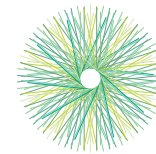
#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Make sure you are ready for the next evaluation milestones and European Commission requirements: <https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/en/evaluation>

For other information and to receive the Evaluation Helpdesk newsletter, please contact [info@ruralevaluation.eu](mailto:info@ruralevaluation.eu)

NEWS & UPDATES

# UPDATE FROM EIP-AGRI



eip-agri  
AGRICULTURE & INNOVATION

## EIP-AGRI in the RDPs

By 26 May 2015, the European Commission had approved 51 of 118 RDPs. Already, 41 include the possibility to support projects conducted by Operational Groups (OGs). These bring together actors with complementary knowledge (practical, scientific, entrepreneurial etc.) to build solutions to a practical agricultural problem or innovation opportunity. Provisional figures

show that 89 RDPs will support Operational Group projects.

In January 2016, the European Commission will organise an EIP-AGRI workshop where first experiences on Operational Groups will be shared. This aims to inspire everyone involved to find ways to work together and to set up Operational Group with a view to replying to calls for projects.

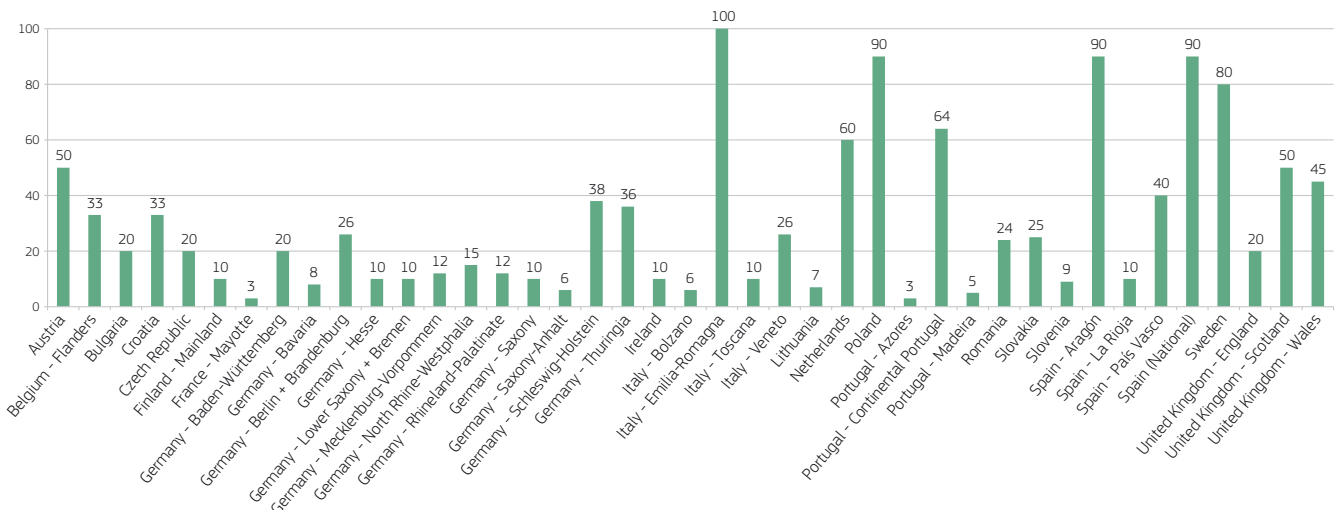
**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

[www.eip-agri.eu](http://www.eip-agri.eu)

Two EIP-AGRI brochures offer information and guidance:

- [EIP-AGRI Operational Groups – Turning your idea into innovation](#)
- [Participatory approaches for agricultural innovation](#)

**Number of planned EIP-AGRI Operational Groups in the approved RDPs (2014-2020)**



Source: European Commission  
Update 26 May 2015

## EIP-AGRI Focus Groups

EIP-AGRI Focus Groups are a temporary group of selected experts which come together, creating a forum for sharing knowledge and experience on a specific subject related to agricultural productivity and sustainability. Each Group brings together 20 experts – farmers or foresters, advisers, researchers and agri-business representatives – to discuss and document best practices and research results exploring practical innovative solutions to problems or opportunities in the field. Their output includes ideas for Operational Group projects.

Over the past three years EIP-AGRI Focus Groups have covered a wide range of themes such as organic farming, high

nature value farming, fertiliser efficiency, reducing the use of antibiotics in pig farming, soil organic matter, water, and new entrants into farming.

From 7 July until 7 September 2015, farmers, foresters, advisers and other experts can apply to join three new EIP-AGRI Focus Groups:

- Mixed farming systems: livestock/cash crops
- Benchmarking of farm productivity and sustainability performance
- Reducing emissions from cattle farming

Joining an EIP-AGRI Focus Group allows you to share your knowledge and to learn

from peers. It may also help broaden your professional European network, and form the start of a new co-operation.

If you have an idea for a new Focus Group topic, we want to hear from you. Share your ideas using the form on the Focus Group page of the EIP-AGRI website. All ideas will be taken into account.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

See the EIP-AGRI brochure: '[EIP-AGRI Focus Groups – Sharing knowledge to inspire action](#)'

Visit: <https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/content/focus-groupS>

## NEWS &amp; UPDATES

## EU NEWS

## New financial guarantee instrument for agriculture

The European Commission (Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development - DG AGRI) and the European Investment Bank (EIB) have jointly launched a new model guarantee instrument for agriculture intended to help ease access to finance for farmers and other rural businesses.

Member States and regions can adapt and use the model to set up financial instruments (loan, guarantee and equity funds) funded by their Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) to secure loans

for investments in areas such as farm performance, processing and marketing, and business start-ups.

Within the framework of DG-AGRI-EIB co-operation, a conference on financial instruments under the EAFRD took place on 23-24 June in Dublin, Ireland. The event aimed at improving understanding of how financial instruments can support delivering on EAFRD objectives. Similar events are due to take place in Vienna, Riga and Barcelona in autumn 2015.

 FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Q&A on DG-AGRI – EIB cooperation:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/events/2015/ec-eib-coop/qa-mou-ec-eib\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/events/2015/ec-eib-coop/qa-mou-ec-eib_en.pdf)

fi-compass conference on Financial Instruments under the EAFRD:  
<https://www.fi-compass.eu/event/246>



Visit the platform for advisory services on financial instruments under the European Structural and Investment funds (ESIF):  
[www.fi-compass.eu](http://www.fi-compass.eu)

## European Parliament Intergroup update

The European Parliament (EP) Intergroup on Rural, Mountainous and Remote Areas (RUMRA) has been working to collect feedback from stakeholders on the energy situation in European rural areas. The aim of the consultation has been to identify measures and solutions for creating a comprehensive energy policy that could generate a positive impact on rural energy consumers.

The stakeholder views will feed into a dedicated RUMRA White Paper to be

developed by the end of 2015. The consultation falls within the work of RUMRA's subgroup 'Climate change and energy'.

RUMRA was officially launched in March 2015. It aims to represent the voice of people living in non-urbanised areas. The Intergroup is intended as a forum for policymakers and civil society to discuss initiatives and legislation potentially affecting these areas.

 FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Visit the Intergroup's website:  
[www.rumra-intergroup.eu](http://www.rumra-intergroup.eu)

Read a perspective article on the RUMRA Intergroup on p.17 of the Spring 2015 edition of Rural Connections: <http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/en/publications-and-media/enrd-magazine>

## RUMRA Working Groups



Resource and financing for rural integrated development



RURBAN  
Rural and urban interrelations



Climate Change  
& Energy



Living nowadays in rural areas  
(Community, Rural Tourism)



Territorial  
quality products



Ultra peripheral  
and remote regions



## NEWS &amp; UPDATES

## Approval of the RDPs 2014-2020

Stay up to date with the latest approvals of the RDPs across Europe by checking the official updates page of the European Commission: [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rural-development-2014-2020/country-files/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rural-development-2014-2020/country-files/index_en.htm)

Here you can find information on all the approved RDPs, including factsheets, summaries and press releases.

As of 3 July 2015, 56 of the out of the 118 national and regional 2014-2020 RDPs had been approved.

## CAP-related events at Expo Milano

The Universal Exhibition 2015 is taking place in Milan Italy on the theme of: 'Feeding the Planet – Energy for Life'. It is a unique opportunity to highlight the added value of the EU regarding safe and sustainable food production and raise

awareness of the importance of farming and of the challenge of food security.

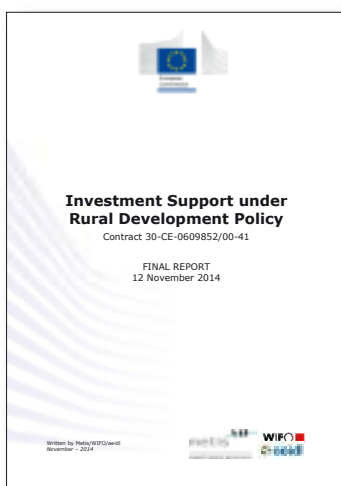
See the list of CAP-related events at EXPO Milano here: [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/expo-milano-2015/cap-events/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/expo-milano-2015/cap-events/index_en.htm)

## Share 'Events in your Country'

Agriculture practitioners in any of the 28 EU Member States can share events on topics related to agriculture, food, and rural development via DG AGRI's 'Events in your Country' platform. The platform provides an opportunity to increase the visibility of your events across Europe for free and to discover relevant activities in other countries.

Visit the page here: [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-communication-network/events-in-your-country/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-communication-network/events-in-your-country/index_en.htm)

## EU guides and publications



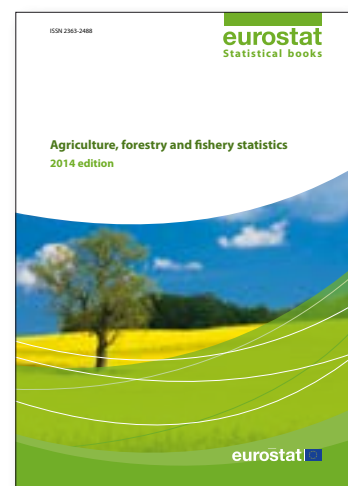
DG Agriculture and Rural Development has released a study reviewing and analysing investment support measures in Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) aimed at increasing productivity within the agricultural and forest sectors.

ISBN 978-92-79-35314-7  
Catalogue number KF-01-14-028-EN-N



DG Agriculture and Rural Development has produced a publication overviewing the new types of support and tools made available to young farmers to set up and develop their farms. The brochure is available in all official EU languages.

ISBN 978-92-79-38499-8  
Catalogue number KF-02-14-706-EN-C



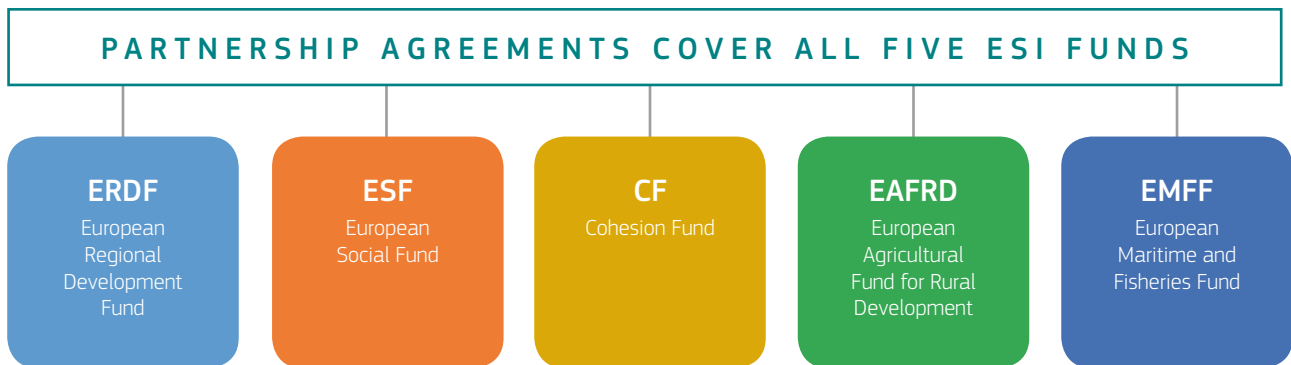
The latest publication by Eurostat, the EU's statistical office, on agriculture, forestry and fisheries provides data per Member State on agricultural production, prices, environmental matters, forestry resources, and a special focus on family farming in the EU.

ISBN 978-92-79-43201-9  
Catalogue number KS-FK-14-001-EN-N

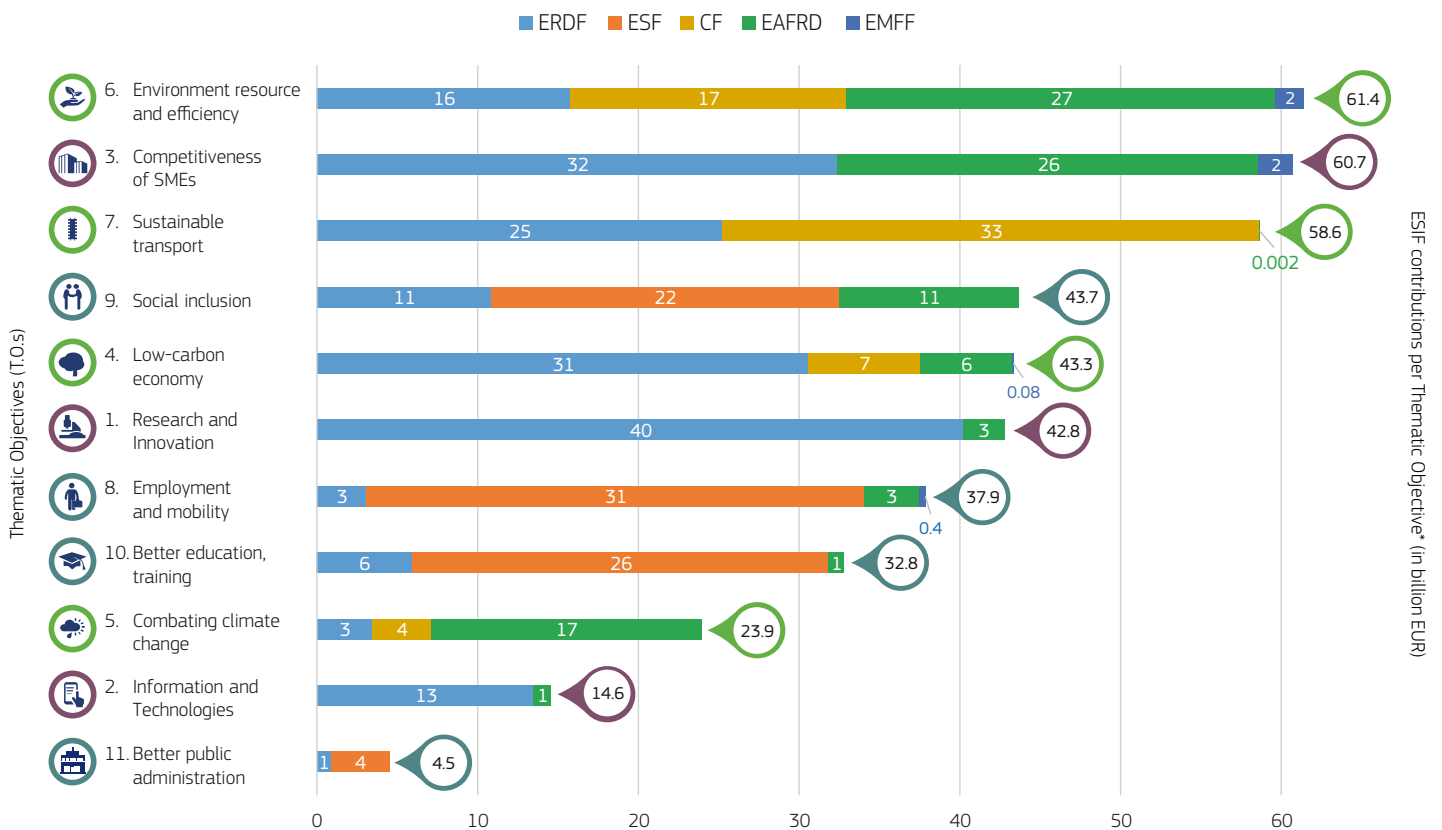
## NEWS &amp; UPDATES

## Infographics: Partnership Agreements 2014-2020

Each EU Member State signs a "Partnership Agreement" (PA) that sets out its investment priorities and strategy for optimal use of the five European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) over the current programming period. The PAs are drawn up by each Member State in negotiation with the European Commission.



## INDICATIVE ESI FUNDS ALLOCATION PER THEMATIC OBJECTIVE



NEWS & UPDATES

SELECTED THEMATIC OBJECTIVES PER MEMBER STATE AND INDICATIVE EAFRD ALLOCATION IN ORDER OF MAGNITUDE\*

	6. Environment & resource efficiency	3. Competitiveness of SMEs	5. Combating climate change	9. Social inclusion	4. Low-carbon economy	8. Employment & mobility	1. Research & Innovation	2. Information & Communication Technologies	10. Better education, Training	7. Sustainable transport	11. Better public administration	Total EAFRD allocation per Member State* (in billion EUR)
France	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			11.4
Italy	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			10.4
Germany	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			9.5
Poland	●	●	●	●		●	●		●			8.7
Spain	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			8.3
Romania	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●			8.1
United Kingdom	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		5.2
Greece	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			4.7
Portugal	●	●	●	●	●	●						4.1
Austria	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			3.9
Hungary	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●			3.4
Finland	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			2.4
Bulgaria	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			2.4
Czech Republic	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●			2.3
Ireland	●	●	●	●	●		●		●			2.2
Croatia	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●			2.0
Sweden	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			1.8
Slovakia	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			1.6
Lithuania	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			1.6
Latvia	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●			1.1
Denmark	●	●	●	●	●		●					0.9
Slovenia	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●			0.8
Estonia	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●			0.8
Netherlands	●	●	●	●			●		●			0.8
Belgium	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●			0.7
Cyprus	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			0.1
Luxemburg	●	●		●	●							0.1
Malta	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●			0.1
EAFRD per T.O.** (in billion EUR)	26.7	26.2	16.8	11.2	5.7	3.4	2.6	1.1	0.9	0.02	0	

\* Source: Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 1378/2014

\*\* Source: ENRD CP aggregated data on Thematic Objectives (T.O.s) from Partnership Agreements

Please note: The data and figures presented in this summary come from the European Commission approved version of the Partnership Agreements. For more information please visit: [http://ec.europa.eu/contracts\\_grants/agreements/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/contracts_grants/agreements/index_en.htm)

## RURAL ISSUES, RURAL PERSPECTIVES

# Balkan Rural Development Network

**Petar Gjorgievski**

The Balkan Rural Development Network (BRDN) is a regional grouping of NGO-based rural development networks in the ex-Yugoslav countries. BRDN aims to strengthen civil society and to promote multi-national exchange in rural development. We are particularly interested in expanding our work with our colleagues in the EU.



**Petar Gjorgievski** is President of the Rural Development Network of the Republic of Macedonia and a member of the Balkan Rural Development Network (BRDN) assembly.  
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The Western Balkan countries are facing many economic challenges. Their rural areas, with their natural and human resources, strong agricultural tradition and cultural heritage, can play a major role in addressing those challenges. All these countries have active rural development processes in hand. Some are already implementing, or soon expecting to implement, the IPARD programme co-funded by the EU.

## RURAL NETWORKS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

Each Western Balkans country has a rural development network consisting of non-government organisations at national or regional level. Our networks are actively involved in promoting rural development processes, stimulating the interest and activity of rural stakeholders, training LEADER-type groups, and keeping rural development on the political agenda in each country.

The BRDN brings together the rural development networks from Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo\*, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia into one transnational network. (Croatia is an EU member state, while the others are at different stages of seeking accession to the EU.)

BRDN has an overall aim to strengthen civil society and to promote multi-national exchange in rural development, particularly between EU Member States and accession countries. Its general objective is to facilitate the identification of mutual needs and interests, to promote

joint planning of projects and to support different institutions in fulfilling the needs of the Balkan countries in the area of rural development.

BRDN promotes exchange and joint initiatives between the member networks, and sustains contact with similar networks elsewhere in Europe. Except for Kosovo\*, all the member networks are partners within the PREPARE Partnership for Rural Europe.

Priority areas of co-operation are:

- LEADER-type activities, with creation of links at local, national and international level
- Trade and economic development
- Agriculture and agro-industry
- Promotion of cultural heritage and rural tourism
- Environmental protection
- Exchange of information, experience and knowledge.

BRDN works very closely with the Standing Working Group for Regional Rural Development in South East Europe (SWG), which represents the Ministries of Agriculture in the ex-Yugoslav countries and some other countries in the region. As an example of this co-operation, all the BRDN members took part in the events of April 2014 focused on "Empowering rural stakeholders in the Western Balkans", which were co-initiated by PREPARE, SWG and the European Commission. Three of our Networks – those of Montenegro, Serbia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – organised traveling workshops within those events.





© Michael Dower, PREPARE

Traditional pottery on sale at Zlakusa village, Serbia, Western Balkans.

### CO-OPERATION WITH NRNs IN THE EU

Our Networks already play a significant role in promoting partnership-based local development in the Western Balkans, and are likely to have growing importance in stimulating awareness, networking and active participation among all categories of stakeholder.

For these reasons, there is great interest within these countries in the EU's approach to rural development, including the LEADER principles. Sub-regional partnerships built on the LEADER model are increasing in number. These LEADER-type groups would happily participate in transnational cooperation (TNC) projects with EU partners.

We also wish to learn from, and contribute to, the debates and exchanges related to rural development in the EU. This should include exchange of achievements, experiences and know-how between LEADER groups, rural areas, national and local administrations and organisations involved in rural development within and outside the EU.

We are in close touch with the ENRD Contact Point, which hosted the 7<sup>th</sup> BRDN Assembly meeting held on 27 April 2015 in Brussels. We aim to further strengthen our co-operation with similar organisations, to participate in multinational events organised at EU level, and to

welcome people from many European countries to take part in events which we organise in the Western Balkans.

Our member networks are all contributing, as national champions, to the European Rural Parliament 2015 campaign (see perspective article in Rural Connections Spring 2015 p. 23). Active networking of this kind can greatly assist in strengthening the breadth and depth of rural development of the Western Balkan countries in the coming years. We look forward to strengthened co-operation with our EU partners in the future.

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Croatian Rural Development Network - [www.hmrr.hr](http://www.hmrr.hr)

Rural Development Network of Bosnia and Herzegovina - [www.ruralnamreza.ba](http://www.ruralnamreza.ba)

Network of Organizations for Rural Development of Kosovo\* - Email: [afirm\\_sharku@yahoo.com](mailto:afirm_sharku@yahoo.com)

Rural Development Network of the Republic of Macedonia - [www.ruralnet.mk](http://www.ruralnet.mk)

Network for Rural Development of Montenegro - [www.ruralportal.me](http://www.ruralportal.me)

Network for Rural Development of Serbia - [www.srbijaruralnet.rs](http://www.srbijaruralnet.rs)

\* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

## RURAL ISSUES, RURAL PERSPECTIVES

# Quality from the mountains

Juan-Andres Gutierrez

Mountain products offer a significant investment opportunity for territories given the range of economic, social and environmental benefits they can provide. In this context, the optional quality term 'Mountain Product' offers a particularly interesting tool to be supported by the 2014-2020 RDPs.



**Juan-Andres Gutierrez** is the President of Euromontana, the European multisectoral association for co-operation and development of mountain territories. [info@euromontana.org](mailto:info@euromontana.org)

## THE VALUE OF LOCAL

Local products are the result of the history and traditions of regions and often represent excellence in their domain. They link the product to the territory through specialised production processes and local resources. This cultural heritage must be preserved, defended and promoted at European level.

Local products can support local employment, promote social cohesion and community spirit and promote more sustainable production and distribution systems.

This quality dividend is perhaps most significant for mountain products that have specific characteristics because of the production environment, the quality of natural resources and the traditional techniques and know-how used for their production and processing.

Quality mountain products are an integral part of mountain territories' image and thus constitute an asset for the development of these territories.

## THE 'MOUNTAIN PRODUCT' QUALITY TERM

Quality policy has been a core focus of Euromontana's work since its foundation. The association has spent the past 15 years developing tools and projects and implementing an intense lobbying strategy to achieve recognition and promotion of the specific characteristics of mountain food products at European level. Key steps along the way have been the research project "EUROMARC", and the European Charter for Mountain Quality Food Products.

Euromontana's efforts have been rewarded by the still relatively new 2012 European Regulation on Quality



Europe's mountain products benefit from the quality of natural resources in mountain areas.

Schemes for Agricultural Products and Foodstuffs (EC 1151/2012). Article 31 of this Regulation established 'Mountain Product' as an optional quality term, which can be used in the labelling of products which come essentially from mountain areas, including any processing stages.

This optional quality term provides recognition of these products and a new opportunity for increasing the market access of mountain products in the EU and beyond. It will also be possible to promote whole territories on the basis of the mountain products which represent their entire heritage: landscapes, customs and traditions.

Now, Euromontana hopes that the quality term 'mountain product' will be promoted among mountain supply chain actors and its use encouraged at national and regional level through appropriate tools and measures provided by the new Rural Development Programmes 2014-2020.

The optional quality term Mountain Product provides recognition of these products and a new opportunity for increasing market access in the EU and beyond.

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Read about the discussions and conclusions of the 2014 European Mountain Convention in Bilbao, which explored opportunities for the development of European mountains offered by the new CAP with a special focus on mountain products:

[www.euromontana.org/en/conclusions-of-the-ixth-european-mountain-convention](http://www.euromontana.org/en/conclusions-of-the-ixth-european-mountain-convention)

# A new network on Territorial Cooperation

Sven Defrijn

In December 2014, we launched the European Network on Territorial Cooperation for the Provision of Public Goods. The main message of the network is that public goods – such as water and biodiversity – can be delivered more efficiently on a territorial scale than at the level of individual farms. Furthermore, they offer important economic advantages through reducing costs.



**Sven Defrijn** is one of the founding members of the European Network on Territorial Cooperation for the Provision of Public Goods. He represents ABC Eco<sup>2</sup>.

In 2013 and 2014 Group de Bruges organised two workshops where farmers, farmers' organisations and (regional) authorities from different countries presented examples and discussed issues related to territorial cooperation.

A small group<sup>(1)</sup> joined together to continue work and exchange on this topic, creating the European Network on Territorial Cooperation for the Provision of Public Goods. The network is open and informal, without an institutional structure, although we are currently supported by two people from the Netherlands Enterprise Agency.

## TERRITORIAL COOPERATION AND THE RDPS

We created the network to help increase both ecological and economic value from strengthening and improving implementation of the territorial approach. One of our key aims is to promote this approach within the 2014-2020 RDPS.

Territorial approaches can improve the effectiveness of the new greening policy instrument within Pillar 1 of the 2014-2020 CAP as well as the following RDP measures in particular:

- 10 – agri-environment-climate
- 12 – Natura 2000 and Water Framework Directive payments

(1) Sven Defrijn (Eco<sup>2</sup>, BE); Henk Smith (ANOG, NL); Jon Brennan (Leitrim Organic Farmers Cooperative, IE); Nat Page (Fundatia ADEPT, RO); and Pierre-Francois Vaquie (CUMA, France).

- 13 – payments to areas facing natural or other specific constraints
- 16 – cooperation

The new programming period has created opportunities and challenges. Groups of land users can be a single beneficiary for agri-environment contracts, opening the possibility to fund a territorial approach. However, most EU regulations, including monitoring and control systems, are still based on individual contracts rather than territorial approaches.

## PROMOTING EXCHANGE

One of the practical tasks of the new network is to collect good practices in the implementation of territorial approaches. We will work to communicate and exchange information on these and other ideas through an interactive website. We will also be organising open thematic workshops to inspire, inform and engage interested parties.

The network has already established links with researchers, but is still looking for partners to share experiences on territorial cooperation for public goods in other EU regions. Are you interested in joining?



*Territorial approaches bring stakeholders together towards shared aims.*

© ABC Eco<sup>2</sup>, Belgium

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

<http://groupedebruges.eu/3rd-european-conference-materials-documents>

Contact: [Remco.schreuder@rvo.nl](mailto:Remco.schreuder@rvo.nl)

## RURAL ISSUES, RURAL PERSPECTIVES

# Migrants in Sweden: developing our rural areas together

**Nils Lagerroth**

Europe is experiencing huge pressure from neighbouring areas that are affected by war and terrorism. Every day people are coming to our countries in an effort to start a new life. This can be seen as a challenging development for many. However, immigrants and asylum seekers can be a potential resource for our rural areas.



**Nils Lagerroth** works in the Network Support Unit of the Swedish NRN and is a member of the national working group for Social Inclusion of Refugees and Immigrants.

[nilslagerroth@jordbruksverket.se](mailto:nilslagerroth@jordbruksverket.se)

Sweden has been receiving and welcoming many people from different parts of the world for a long time. In 2014, it was the country in Europe which accepted the most immigrants per capita, according to UNHCR figures.

During the previous programming period, the Swedish NRN began its work towards people born in other countries. That work has provided a great foundation for this new programme period when the need for action is only increasing.

Now a working group for Social Inclusion of Refugees and Immigrants has been appointed by the Swedish NRN steering committee to have a greater role in the work of the Swedish NRN. Fourteen different authorities and organisations are represented and will work under the leadership of Per Hasselberg from The Rural Economy and Agricultural Societies of Sweden. They have also received a strengthened budget.

Asha Ismail Olsson represents SIOS, the umbrella organisation for ethnic organisations in Sweden, in the working group. "These people can contribute to society in many ways," she says. "One problem is that the immigrants most often end up in urban areas when they

come to Sweden. That leads to difficulties with housing and unemployment. On the other hand we have rural areas with a decreasing population, empty houses and business owners calling out for workers."

## VILLAGERS REACH OUT THEIR HANDS

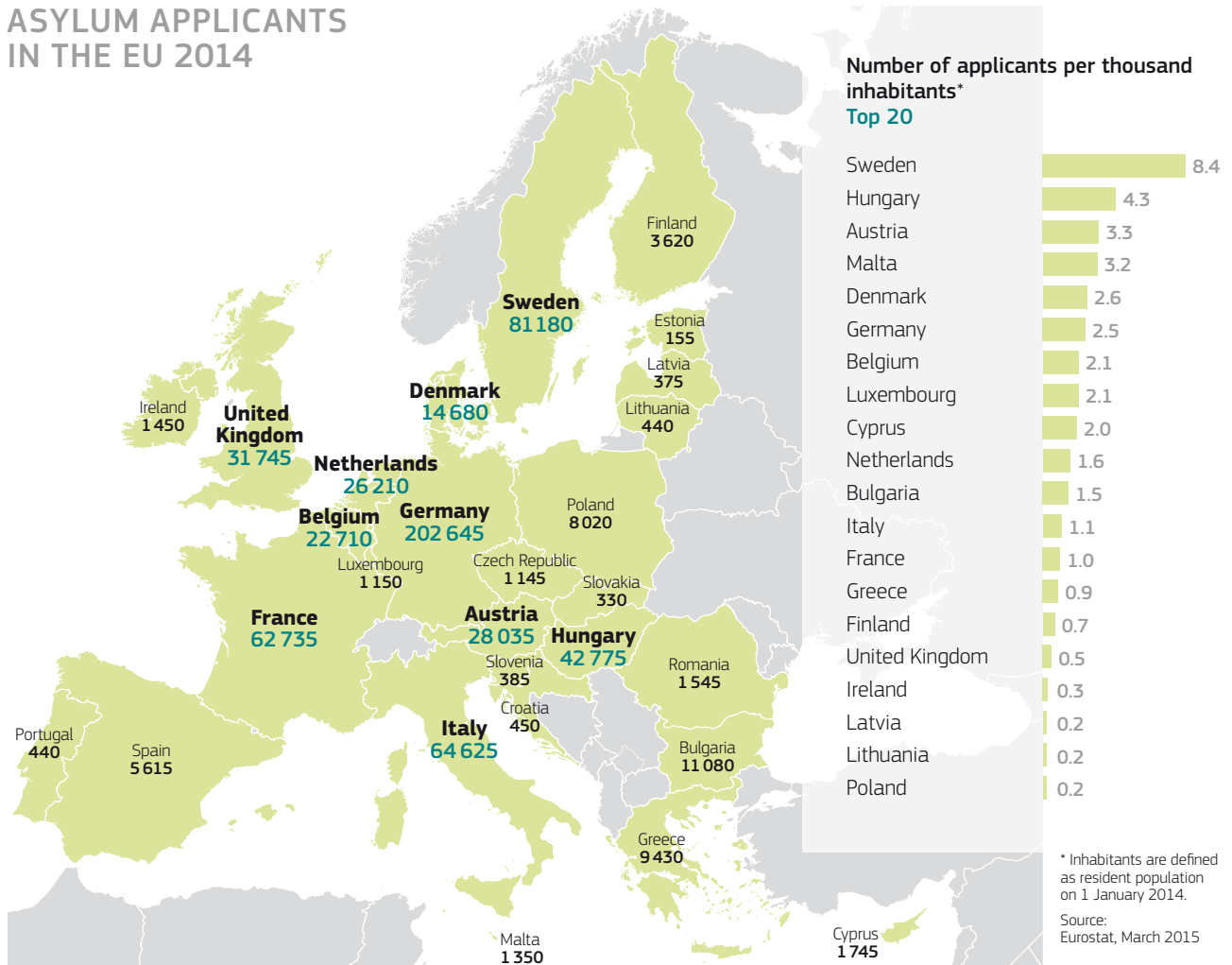
One good example where Swedish society has come together in an effort to help asylum seekers is on Orust island in western Sweden. There the church, the football team and other groups arrange different activities where the villagers and the asylum seekers can meet and get to know each other. These include Swedish studies, information meetings, ukulele courses and swimming lessons.

A survey among the asylum seekers on the island shows that 30-40 per cent now want to stay in their village. For most other rural areas of Sweden, the typical rate is around ten per cent.

"Everything has changed for me since I came to Orust. I have come to know so many new friends and widened my network here, they are my new family, says Anas "Christophe" Alfadel, originally from the large city of Damascus, Syria. "I believe it is easier



## ASYLUM APPLICANTS IN THE EU 2014



to get to know people in a small village than it is in cities. I truly feel that the village needs me, people say that all the time and that makes me happy. Now I want to start a Dental Practice here since I am a certified dentist.”

### FOCUS AREAS FOR MORE WORK

A workshop held this spring with representatives from relevant authorities and organisations identified four areas for the working group for Social Inclusion of Refugees and Immigrants to focus on:

- **Mapping out the situation and potential for the new arrivals in rural areas.** In Sweden there is a great demand for local produce and handicraft etc – the task is to match people born in foreign countries and their interests and competence with the demand from Swedish consumers.
- **Identifying good examples and methods of civil society engagement in integrating migrants.** Civil society organisations in Sweden are often more developed and active in rural areas and are an important resource in the work for integration.

The Swedish Football Association for instance is working actively with integration of immigrants and are represented in most villages.

- **Supporting employment opportunities for immigrants in rural areas.** More can be done to raise awareness among employers and help immigrants into internships and work matched to their skills and interests. This is a key step for integration and, for example, language learning.
- **Supporting access to housing for immigrants in rural areas.** We will have to find methods to find available homes or inspire and inform house owners that there is a need to rent to people that come from other countries. It is particularly important to make accommodation available where the job opportunities can be found.

The working group has a significant task ahead. As part of these efforts, Per Hasselberg highlights their ‘Green Integration’ project which aims “to share the knowledge, experience and interests from the immigrants to the rural areas of Sweden”.

## RURAL ISSUES, RURAL PERSPECTIVES

# Results-Based Agri-environment Payment Schemes

Under results-based agri-environment payment schemes (RBAPS), farmers are given the freedom and flexibility to make their own land management decisions. They receive payments for delivering a specific environmental result or outcome. The European Commission has supported efforts to bring together research, information and practical experience on RBAPS. Here, we present a sample of insights and experiences from this work to reflect different issues and perspectives around this useful rural development practice.

## Charles Suss

Dairy farmer, North Vosges, France

I got involved in a results-based scheme because it recognises the good work I have done for years on the farm. What I find positive about the results-based scheme, compared to previous management approaches, is that it allows me the flexibility to cut the grass at the right time, depending on the weather

and other local conditions. Before, the timing was more rigid and did not always allow me to harvest at the optimum time.

The scheme gives me the flexibility I need to adapt my management practices to the meadow and improve my skills to keep these species-rich grasslands in a good status.



## Brendan Dunford

Manager of the Burren Farming for Conservation Programme, Ireland



We found that our results-based approach works very very well because it gives the farmers here a target for improving their environmental performance - their grazing system, their feeding system etc. - which they otherwise didn't have. It also allows them to think more carefully about what actions they should undertake on the farm because they understand now that improving their water supply for instance will help them increase their environmental performance score.

It gives the farmers a new language to talk about the environment and their environmental output. And one that makes real sense to them.

## Kaley Hart

Institute for European Environmental Policy, London, United Kingdom



Many more farmers could be interested in results-based payments, but to achieve this it's very important to see agri-environment schemes from their point of view. Involving farmers as well as environmental experts at the scheme design stage allows both sets of needs to be taken into account.

Flexibility is an important factor in farmers' decisions to join a results-based scheme. Farmers need to understand what the biodiversity objectives are, how achieving these will fit in with their farming systems and how environmental results could bring them other benefits, not just the payments.

**Dr. Rainer Oppermann**

Institute for Agro-ecology and Biodiversity, Manheim, Germany



There are three key success factors for the implementation of [RBAPS]. Firstly, we need understanding and acceptance of the schemes by agriculture and nature stakeholders. Secondly, we need suitable indicators that are easy-to-use and practical for the monitoring. Thirdly, it is important to have good advice and guidance about how to implement the schemes.

The schemes are easier to administer and control because biodiversity results are easier to check than management actions. Checking biodiversity results normally only needs one visit but checking management actions often requires two or three visits.

**Cécile Bayeur**

North Vosges Nature Park, France



In the North Vosges Nature Park we have implemented the 'flowering meadow' measure. This results-based measure aims to conserve species-rich grasslands. More farmers are willing to use the flowering meadow measure than the previous 'zero fertiliser' measure, which we found was funding grasslands with low ecological value. Also, the zero fertilisation approach did not significantly improve the ecology of species-rich grasslands and it seriously decreased the fodder quality for the farmers. So there was a risk that the zero fertiliser measure would fail.

**Martine Bijman**

Waterland & Dijken agri-environment farmer co-operative, The Netherlands

Our results-based scheme covers the number of nests and the type of bird. The principle is that farmers get paid for the number of birds. So the more birds the higher the payment, and one farmer contributes to the results of the other farmer. The farmers provide the co-operative with 75% of their nest protection payment

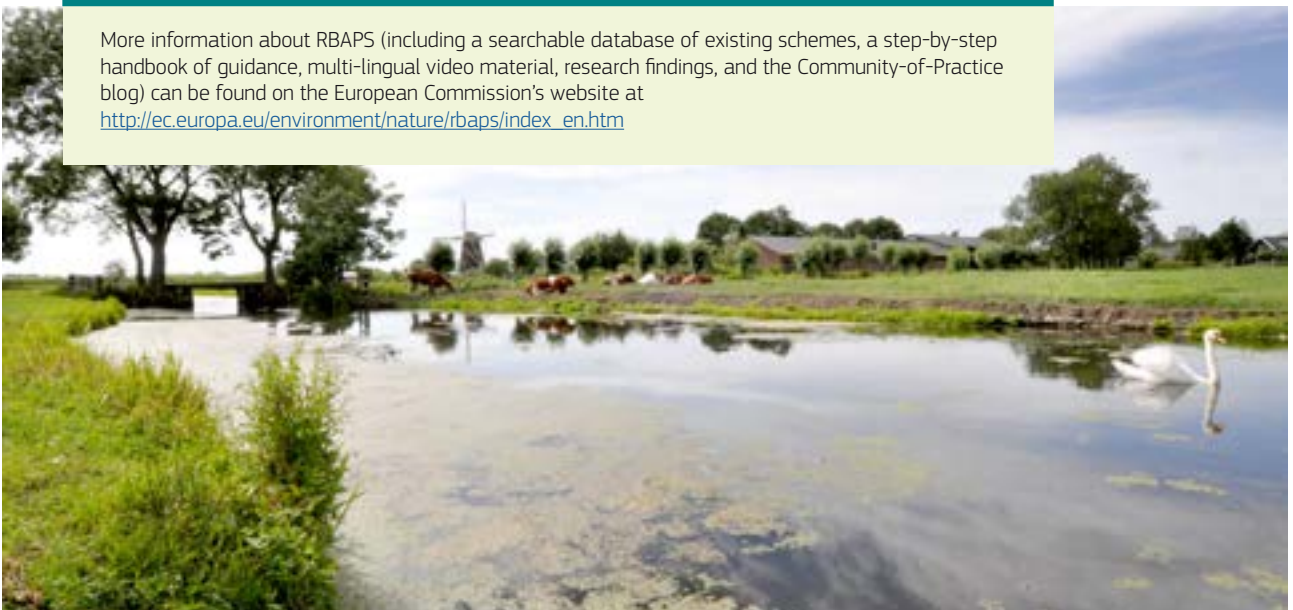
from the Paying Agency and €20 per hectare of all other agri-environment payments. The co-operative then redistributes the money among its members according to the biodiversity results.

The reason why farmers agree to work this way with the farmer co-operative is because the co-operative provides administrative services to the farmers. So the farmers have less paperwork when applying for agri-environment payments.



**i FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

More information about RBAPS (including a searchable database of existing schemes, a step-by-step handbook of guidance, multi-lingual video material, research findings, and the Community-of-Practice blog) can be found on the European Commission's website at [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/rbaps/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/rbaps/index_en.htm)



© Tim Hudson

*Results-based payments can focus RDP expenditure more sharply on environmental outcomes because there is a direct link between payments and biodiversity achievements.*

# Agricultural co-operatives in rural networking

Cátia Rosas

Co-operatives are created to bring farmers together to share resources and solve common problems. The principles of co-operation, democratic control and concern for community are at the heart of their work. Agricultural co-operatives have a key role to play in rural development and broader rural networking.



Cátia Rosas is Expert on rural networking and environmental issues in CONFAGRI, the umbrella organisation of the national agricultural co-operatives in Portugal.  
[Catia.Rosas@confagri.pt](mailto:Catia.Rosas@confagri.pt)

## AGRICULTURAL CO-OPERATIVES

Through co-operatives, farmers receive technical support, information and training on good farming practices to produce better quality goods. Members then deliver those goods to the co-operative, which provides added value – for example, by transforming grapes into wine – and can directly sell the products to the market. They can also share agricultural equipment and machinery.

Co-operatives strengthen the role of farmers within supply chains which are often dominated by larger players and can mitigate risk. They also give support to local economic, social and environmental activities in rural areas, being important actors in their communities.

Co-operatives allow their members to participate in political discussions, through their representatives in national and European advisory bodies. The importance of the sector allows for a strong and efficient networking 'from Brussels to the farm'. Co-operatives can engage in the design of European measures and in their implementation at local level, supporting communication and exchange between the different levels.

In Portugal, there are more than 700 agricultural co-operatives and 400 000 grassroot members. Their combined annual turnover is around 4 000 million euros and they are responsible for the production of 62% of the milk, 42% of wine, 22% of olive oil and 25% of fruit in the country.

## PRINCIPLES OF THE CO-OPERATIVE MOVEMENT

Among the co-operative principles, it is worth highlighting **inter-cooperation** (between co-operatives and other organisations) and **concern for community**. It is a business model that puts people at the heart of decision-making, providing economic resources under **democratic control**.

The co-operative model has shown great resilience in the face of the global financial collapse. However, most people do not know or ignore its differences to other entrepreneurial models. CONFAGRI is working to promote the co-operative form of business as the acknowledged leader in economic, social and environmental sustainability; the model preferred by people; and the fastest growing form of enterprise.

Co-operatives already make a significant contribution towards rural development. With appropriate support, greater understanding and recognition, they could contribute much more as key players within strengthened rural networking.



Co-operatives typically take an active role in their local communities.

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## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

<http://www.confagri.pt>

International Cooperative Alliance's 2020 vision:  
<http://ica.coop/en/media/news/2020-vision-outlines-opportunity-co-operatives-grow>



# Food on the urban agenda

**Marielle Dubbeling**

Food is increasingly an urban issue. Policy and programme initiatives are being undertaken all over the world in various fields related to urban and peri-urban food production and supply. Development of resilient cities and city region food systems requires both political will and the use of available policy and planning instruments, including the RDPs.



**Marielle Dubbeling** is Director of the RUAF-Foundation, an International network of Resource Centres on Urban Agriculture and Food security.  
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## FOOD IS AN URBAN ISSUE

Economic and food-price crises, climate-induced disruptions to food supply and an alarming increase in diet-related health problems have all made it evident that cities need to think about how to ensure access to sufficient, affordable, healthy and safe food for their populations.

Cities – as hubs of consumption – increasingly recognise their responsibility in building more resilient and sustainable food systems. These need to promote environmentally sustainable forms of food production, reduce food waste and provide decent livelihood opportunities for those producing, processing and selling food in rural, peri-urban and urban areas.

Furthermore, cities are starting to see food as a driver for other sustainable urbanisation policies around issues including transport, health, land-use planning, employment, waste management and climate-change adaptation.

## PRINCIPLES OF CITY REGION FOOD SYSTEMS

Food systems are key to operationalising rural-urban linkages, planning and climate-change adaptation at the territorial level. The notion of the ‘city region’ – encompassing one or more urban centres and their surrounding peri-urban and rural areas – thus becomes the relevant level for integrated and comprehensive solutions for a future-proof urban food system.

Results of the on-going EU-funded ‘SUPURBFOOD’ research project highlight the need to reconnect different urban flows to allow the reduction, recycling and re-use of food waste, urban organic waste, wastewater, energy

and nutrients to achieve sustainable modes of urban and peri-urban food provisioning.

Another guiding principle is to create and enhance spatial synergies by using land for more than one purpose at a time, and by using food as a medium to link different urban policy objectives. Examples include the promotion of synergies for food production, flood risk reduction, storm water management and climate-change mitigation.

A final key principle is improved food governance and transparency in the food system. This can be brought about by strengthening direct producer linkages through short food supply chains.

Food governance can also be improved by setting up and strengthening organisational and multi-stakeholder structures that facilitate involvement of various stakeholders, including different government departments and jurisdictions and those that link civil society activities and initiatives to more formal food policy and planning.



City-owned farm Huebhof in Zurich.

© stadtmues.ch

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

[www.ruaf.org](http://www.ruaf.org)

This article is based on the Editorial of RUAF's Urban Agriculture Magazine No29 'City Region Food Systems'

[www.ruaf.org/publications/magazines](http://www.ruaf.org/publications/magazines)

FAO and RUAF publication titled 'City Region Food Systems'

Wiskerke, J.S.C. (2015, forthcoming). Urban food systems. In de Zeeuw, H. and P. Drechsel (eds): "Cities and Agriculture-Developing resilient food systems". Earthscan.



## RURAL ISSUES, RURAL PERSPECTIVES

# New Rural Policy of the OECD

Paul Soto

The recent OECD rural development conference set out ideas for the implementation of 'New Rural Policy'. The approach is to explore new and emerging opportunities for promoting economic development of rural areas through diversification. It places a strong focus on investment, improving urban-rural linkages and partnerships of all kinds.



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## BACKGROUND

The OECD Rural Development Policy Conference, *National Prosperity through Modern Rural Policy: Competitiveness and well-being in rural regions* took place, 19-21 May, 2015 in Memphis, USA. This conference marked the 10<sup>th</sup> meeting of the world's leading policy officials, international experts and representatives from the private sector to discuss best practices for rural areas.

The rationale behind the conference was that the 'New Rural Paradigm' set out in a 2006 OECD publication is more relevant than ever because of the crisis, but that implementation has been poor. The aim of the OECD now is to relaunch its collaboration with member countries based on the implementation of its document: '**New Rural Policy: Linking up for Growth**'.

The main message or narrative of 'New Rural Policy' seems to be economic: in times of crisis, when public resources are scarce, rural areas must be seen as sources of "opportunities, options and growth" which contribute to the rest of the economy. Member countries cannot afford to waste these opportunities.

## KEY EMERGING TRENDS

There is a strong focus in moving away from compensatory grants towards **investments in the key drivers of growth** in rural areas. This involves a deeper understanding of the main factors which affect



The OECD launched its New Rural Policy document at its major rural development conference in May 2015

the competitiveness and productivity of diverse rural economies. Governments should take a systemic view and step in to "prime the pump", remove obstacles and address market failures at different levels.

There is a strong emphasis on **supply chains and clusters**. The Americans seem to be particularly good at using a range of financial instruments and leveraging in private investment through public-private partnerships. Commissioner Hogan expressed interest in this aspect. But it should be noted that this requires a more integrated approach to rural economies than the often isolated "measure-based calls for projects" which are prevalent in many parts of the EU.

Although, agriculture and forestry still occupy a pivotal role as a central part of the natural assets of each territory, there is recognition that new jobs are going to come from **diversification**. Opportunities for growth and jobs were identified around actions to support the resilience of rural areas to climate change, policies to support local food systems and the broader and newer agenda of promoting the 'bioeconomy'.

Despite a somewhat unclear definition, the '**bioeconomy**' concerns the development of new goods and services from the natural assets of rural areas. In some places like the Nordic countries the emphasis seems to be on energy (eg from forestry products) while in others (Delta Region) it is on bio-engineering and



The OECD's New Rural Policy stresses rural-urban linkages and grassroots initiatives such as demonstrated by herb gardeners in the Rotterdam City Region Food System (for more information on this initiative see RUAF's Urban Agriculture Magazine No29 'City Region Food Systems'; p.14 by Jan-Willem van der Schans: [www.ruaf.org/publications/magazines](http://www.ruaf.org/publications/magazines)).

using agriculture to produce a range of new products and services.

Finally, the OECD calls for more **evidence-based policies**, clearer definitions of what is rural and a focus on more rounded measures of 'well-being' rather than one dimensional measures of GDP.

### DIVERSITY OF RURAL AREAS

There was a strong recognition of the complexity and diversity of rural areas. They are seen as including some of the most successful areas as well as areas with the highest concentrations of poverty. An important observation was that rural areas closer to cities seem to do better. There is therefore a strong message about **improving urban-rural linkages** and partnerships.

The complexity of rural areas and their economies also means it is impossible for central governments to micro-manage development from the top down. Their role is to provide flexible supportive frameworks which encourage **grassroots initiatives** by private, civil society and public actors. This requires strategies for improving trust and participation among stakeholders.

### CONCLUSIONS

Many of the issues and approaches profiled by the OECD's New Rural Policy are similar to the issues raised by the first European Rural Networks' Assembly that took place in January 2015 and subsequent Rural Networks' Steering Group meetings. The ENRD Contact Point has a range of tools that could be mobilised to support joint activities with the OECD to explore these common issues.

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

[www.oecd.org/rural/rural-development-conference/](http://www.oecd.org/rural/rural-development-conference/)  
[www.oecd.org/gov/regional-policy/thenewruralparadigmpoliciesandgovernance.htm](http://www.oecd.org/gov/regional-policy/thenewruralparadigmpoliciesandgovernance.htm)  
[www.oecd.org/economy/rural-urban-partnerships-an-integrated-approach-to-economic-development.htm](http://www.oecd.org/economy/rural-urban-partnerships-an-integrated-approach-to-economic-development.htm)

## A FOCUS ON... IMPROVING RDP IMPLEMENTATION

## REPORT

# A strengthened commitment to territorial development in Brittany, France

The Regional Council of Brittany is looking to improve the opportunities for pooling and coordinating European funds to be applied at the territorial level. Implementation will be administered at the level of the region's 21 'Pays'.



© Frédéric Henry

“It’s a question of projects, not budgets,” explained Thierry Burlot, Vice President of Brittany Regional Council, to the elected officials preparing to sign the territorial contracts for the 2014-2020 period.<sup>(1)</sup>

In addition to the contracts signed by the region's two urban centres (Rennes and Brest), partnership contracts will be signed with the 21 *Pays* that make up the entire Brittany region (see box). Territorial development approaches can

be implemented at the level of each *Pays*, bringing together elected officials and civil society stakeholders. Each *Pays* has its own stakeholder “Development Council”.

Since 2005, the Regional Council has used these local bodies as the basis for forming partnerships to achieve both regional and local development objectives. Due to their size, the *Pays* provide the ideal context for implementing projects that respond to specific local needs within the strategic regional approach. They support an integrated, “bottom-up” approach to development.

(1) *La Gazette des Communes*, no. 2248, 24 November 2014.

According to Brittany's development policy document, the partnership contracts that the region negotiates with individual *Pays* will serve multiple purposes:

- As instruments to implement regional policy at the territorial level, tailored to the specific challenges facing each *Pays*.
- As tools to give local actors ownership of regional issues and to improve public policy coherence.
- As a framework for supporting smaller-scale projects that are important for the territory, "on the condition of meeting stronger requirements that these projects are exemplary, are innovative in nature and can be reproduced in other areas."<sup>(2)</sup>

### SINGLE PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE

France delegates responsibility for disbursing its European funds to the regions. Brittany will therefore align its 2014-2020 territorial policy with European policy. The Regional Council has decided to focus on the *Pays* in its implementation of the Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) aspect of the ERDF, and the Community-led Local Development (CLLD) aspect of the EAFRD and EMFF.

European fund mobilisation will therefore be based on the joint strategies negotiated by the *Pays*, their Development Councils and the Region. These strategies will act as both the "Local Development Strategies" for CLLD and the "Integrated Strategies" for the ITI.

Each *Pays* will have a "Single Programming Committee", which will select the projects that will receive European funding and issue its opinion on the allocation of regional funds.

(2) [http://www.bretagne.fr/internet/upload/docs/application/pdf/2014-08/politique\\_territoriale\\_2014\\_2020.pdf](http://www.bretagne.fr/internet/upload/docs/application/pdf/2014-08/politique_territoriale_2014_2020.pdf)

### France's 368 Pays

In France, and more particularly in Brittany, the concept of the *Pays* first arose in the 1970s, in the poorest rural inland areas. The concept reflects a desire among local populations to enact change and take the future of their territory into their own hands. One of the slogans at the time was "Live and work in the *Pays*".

The *Pays* movement grew and became more organised as the years went on. Over time, the public authorities came to recognise the importance of this new geographical scale and its potential for promoting local development.

Act no. 95-115 of 4 February 1995, officially recognised the *Pays* as providing a legal framework for communes and inter-municipal authorities to join forces on a voluntary basis to implement territorial approaches. *Pays* have two main aims:

- To develop the assets of the territory.
- To further enhance solidarity between urban and rural areas.

A *Pays* is defined as: "A territory comprising several inter-municipal

authorities, usually covering an employment catchment area encompassing an urban centre and its rural surroundings, or made up of a network of small villages and towns, united by geography, history or economic activities. In other words, a territory which covers the areas in which a population lives, works, accesses services and engages in leisure activities. The *Pays*' legitimacy comes from its sustainable development approach, developed jointly by local elected officials and civil society and formalised in a '*Pays* charter'."<sup>(1)</sup>

This approach to territorial development was an inspiration behind the European LEADER Initiative, which has itself further enhanced and improved the effectiveness of the approach.

In 2013, there were a total of 368 *Pays* covering more than 80% of France's surface area and 48% of its population.

For more information, visit: <http://www.anpp.fr/spip.php?rubrique22>

(1) Interministerial Delegation for Territorial Development and Regional Attractiveness (DATAR).



Brittany is divided into 21 *Pays* covering the whole of the region.





Brest is one of the two major urban centres in the Brittany Region.

“It’s about involving local stakeholders alongside the elected officials and simplifying things – since a single body (the Single Programming Committee) will assess all projects.”

Sébastien Hamard  
Director of Development and Solidarity,  
Brittany Regional Council

“We want the Single Programming Committee to apply the LEADER approach to all the Funds. The Committee will be made up of 50%-1 elected officials and 50%+1 local stakeholders from the Development Councils. These should be representative of the different economic, social, cultural, environmental, fishing and maritime sectors.”

## CONSULTATION

Various meetings have been held and reports produced as a result of discussions on the direction of regional territorial policy.

The Regional Council provided an overview assessment, inviting all stakeholders to take part in identifying the common issues for development at regional level and in each of the *Pays*. A multi-territory meeting was held in June 2013, attended by some 300 people. The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss regional contract arrangements and address territorial

planning and solidarity matters, as well as eligible project types.

“The priorities of the integrated territorial approaches were discussed at length with the local stakeholders, even if the programming arrangements themselves are defined through negotiation with Brussels.”

Thierry Burlot  
Vice President, Brittany Regional Council

“Fund-specific stakeholder meetings took place, although care was taken to maintain a territorial approach. Combining sector-specific and territorial approaches is always a challenge. We organised regular meetings of the *Pays* and Development Councils, taking these opportunities to discuss with them the use of European Funds to support integrated territorial approaches,”<sup>(3)</sup> explains Thierry Burlot.

## IMPROVED COORDINATION

During the 2007–2013 period, the Development Councils within each *Pays* did not receive coordination assistance from the Region, but only support for specific studies or actions designed to build the capacity of their members. The Development Councils regularly expressed a need for more substantial support

from the Region in terms of day-to-day coordination.

In 2013, Brittany’s network of Development Councils conducted a survey.<sup>(4)</sup> This revealed the following concerns: “reductions in time dedicated to coordination and budgetary resources, high turnover of the coordinator role (successive fixed-term contracts) and vague or non-existent informal relationships with the *Pays*”.

Since 2014, it has been proposed to financially support the roles of coordinators and to treat them as territorial planning practitioners in their own right, essential to the work of the Development Councils and their ability to formulate proposals on the future of their *Pays*.

In 2014, each *Pays* conducted research into the organisation of their regional planning coordination and its local funding model. The outcomes of this research are being used as the basis for negotiations with each *Pays* on a “territorial planning framework agreement”. These framework agreements will set out the support arrangements for project initiators.

A regional budget of €15.2 million will be allocated to coordinating the *Pays* strategy and supporting project initiators. An additional budget will be assigned to Development Council coordination, enabling each Council to receive €25 000 per year.

“The *Pays* have an important role to play in supporting project initiators,” explains Sébastien Hamard. “They are there to help them. The work that we and the *Pays* do to engage stakeholders includes coordinating local meetings, explaining and educating. The Development Council members also act as information relays to other private stakeholders.”

(4) “Quels Conseils de développement demain? Propositions du réseau des Conseils de développement bretons” <http://www.ceildev-paysredonbs.org/uploaded/ra-seau-cd-propositions-quels-cd-demain.pdf>

(3) Réseau Rural Français newsletter, no. 46, March 2014.



“We also want all project initiators, whatever their status, to present their project to the Single Programming Committee. This helps build the connections between the different levels and with other private or public stakeholders, and to encourage experience-sharing, pooling of resources, etc.”

“*The Region has made a clear policy choice in favour of integrated territorial approaches.*”

*Thierry Burlot  
Vice President, Brittany Regional Council*

“We want to give local practitioners greater responsibility and improve the fluidity of arrangements,” concludes Thierry Burlot. “This requires closer coordination and alignment between committees, which is not easy to do in practice. Our challenge is to make things as simple as possible, with a system that we know is complex.”

### Setting an example: LEADER Redon-Bretagne Sud

“Following the revision of its Territorial Charter for 2006-2012, the Redon-Bretagne Sud Pays sought to go even further in aligning its territorial development strategy and its financial tools.

It was thus that when they came to launch the LEADER programme 2007-2013 and sign the new Region-Pays Contract (a multi-year contract between the Region and the Pays, under which the Region funds a certain number of activities), the elected officials decided to create a Single Programming Committee.

This initiative reflected a commitment to strengthening complementarity between the various programmes in the interests of improved outcomes. As a result, decisions relating to the Region-Pays Contract and LEADER projects have been made by the same

representatives since 2008. The LAG was therefore able to fully align itself with the Pays’ strategy and actions.

The creation of a Single Programming Committee had the effect of improving local stakeholders’ understanding of the territorial strategy and strengthening transversal and multi-sectoral links. Furthermore, it helped to facilitate co financing and synergies between territorial programmes.

Considered a good practice, it was this principle that was subsequently adopted by the regional management authority (Brittany Region) as the basis for the Single Programming Committees for the new LEADER programme 2014-2020.”

*Charlotte Chelala, LEADER coordinator,  
Redon-Bretagne Sud Pays*



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*Territorial approaches can bring together farming and maritime interests into one coherent strategy.*

### Brittany Budget for Territorial Development 2014-2020

TOTAL BUDGET: € 389 900 000

Including:

- Regional funding: € 266 000 000
- Local ERDF (ITI): € 77 000 000  
(€ 48 000 000 for Pays,  
€ 29 000 000 for urban centres)
- LEADER/CLLD (EAFRD):  
€ 36 800 000
- CLLD (EMFF): € 8 100 000

**i** FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

[www.bretagne.bzh](http://www.bretagne.bzh)

## A FOCUS ON... IMPROVING RDP IMPLEMENTATION

## INTERVIEW

## INVOLVEMENT OF POLISH ENVIRONMENTAL NGOS IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY

## Dr Jarosław Krogulec

BirdLife Poland

Jarosław Krogulec has worked at The Polish Society for the Protection of Birds (OTOP) for the past six years, recently as Head of Conservation. Being BirdLife's partner in Poland, OTOPI and Mr Krogulec are very involved with rural development matters, including inputs into the country's new Rural Development Programme.



© Dorota Lukaszik

considerations. We provide scientific bodies of evidence to inform decision-making processes. That is one of the reasons why the Managing Authority and Institute want to involve our expertise during the RDP planning process.



#### What other added-value does the RDP gain from your involvement?

NGO involvement in RDP planning is not a choice. EU rural development policy makes its funding conditional on adequate consultation with, and participation of, civil society groups. We make good use of these opportunities to feed into the way that the RDP is operating.

For example, a highly important part of our work is based around national monitoring of bird populations. This is an obligation for all Member States and so we can use the data we collect to identify species and habitats that need special attention to help protect them from problems. Our data goes back many years, which shows clear trends about how different birds respond to differing land uses.

Birds like the aquatic warbler are becoming rare and we worked with the Managing Authority to design a targeted agri-environment funding scheme for the RDP that will pay farmers to look after these birds. We can provide this type of added value and we are also bringing other useful benefits for the Managing Authority.



#### Why did Poland want to involve NGOs during the RDP planning process?

We have been advising on the RDP's funding measures that have environmental effects, which is many of them. For the new programme, our involvement was encouraged by the government, which helped us provide guidance to Ministries about how RDP measures can support birds and habitats.

This RDP planning phase also saw us working closely with The Institute of Technology and Life Sciences Our particular involvement helps to bring in more detailed knowhow about environmental



© Andrzej Kosmicki

Endangered bird species like the aquatic warbler are expected to benefit from NGO participation in the RDP.



### How do you involve stakeholders on the ground?

Much of our work requires direct contact with farmers so we know a lot about their situations, their interests, and why they farm in the ways that they do. BirdLife Poland works very closely with small-scale farmers and we often highlight their potential inputs in rural development policy. In addition, our mandate extends to providing farm advisory services and we focus on areas where gaps exist in RDP guidance from other advisory sources.

As a result we can help target the RDP to achieve its important policy goals. What's more, we do this in ways that will be acceptable for local farmers. Our relationship with Polish farmers is very positive and this gives us useful insights into the agricultural community. Recently we can see that farmers are less euro-sceptic than they were in the past. This may be linked to NGO efforts to increase

farmers' awareness about how the EU can support them, without them having to make major changes.

Another point to note about involving NGOs is their interest in suggesting new ideas for RDP improvements. This type of innovative thinking can create better quality RDP measures and projects.



### What are the main challenges faced by NGOs during RDP involvement?

Resources are not surprisingly our biggest challenge. Sometimes we feel like we are as busy as both the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Environment, but we only have a tiny staff compared to the Ministries. We are always stretched and so this means we cannot participate in all the RDP's nature conservation work. We do not have enough time or people to get involved in issues linked to climate change but we should because we have valuable information about using wildlife as indicators to measure climate action.

We were disappointed by shifts of money from the RDP to other CAP measures for 2014-2020. This has been associated with a dramatic 93% reduction in Polish land that can be covered by agri-environment measures for birds. Such a budget cut has a negative effect on NGOs' involvement because large and small organisations alike have all made good use of previous funding to increase the RDP's environmental outcomes. The main challenge is therefore to find solutions that avoid us losing the great momentum that was developed by all the constructive work that the RDP did before.

Farmers especially are confused about what they should do now. They have become accustomed to using the funding to farm in environmentally-friendly ways and they do not want to feel pressured into business-decisions that threaten young birds or endangered EU species.

## A FOCUS ON... IMPROVING RDP IMPLEMENTATION

## REPORT

# Administering integrated local development in West Cork, Ireland

West Cork is well-known by the Irish local development community for its success in coordinating packages of socio-economic and environmental support in rural areas. This is delivered through bodies such as the West Cork Development Partnership (WCDP).



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Located in the south of Ireland bordering County Kerry, West Cork is a predominantly rural region famous for its picturesque towns and villages, beaches and rugged beauty. It remains a traditional provider of quality livestock and dairy products with sheep and cattle businesses forming a backbone for the rural economy. Other premium food products, as well as tourism, crafts, services, and new technologies

like renewable energy continue to help diversify income opportunities throughout the 3 200 km<sup>2</sup> region.

WCDP operates as a multi-functional local development organisation that channels funds from various EU and national sources into business and community projects through a strategic territorial action plan. LEADER funding and a Local Development Strategy form key constituents of the WCDP's wider integrated operations.



“*The WCDP seeks to promote, support, assist and engage in social development; enterprise development to facilitate rural regeneration and community development designed to benefit and promote the welfare of local communities.*”

WCDP Mission Statement

### MANAGING MULTI-FUNDING IN PRACTICE

Ian Dempsey, WCDP Chief Executive, explains how the organisation's integrated approach to local development works noting, “We use different funding for different types of project activity. These are all designed and managed so that they complement each other. This improves our ability to support a good range of beneficiaries and project activities.”

Funds from the EU include LEADER, INTERREG and Horizon 2020, which are co-financed by national sources. Schemes promoting social inclusion, assisted employment, community development, household energy, and rural recreation are all also administered by WCDP using national budgets. Such a multi-faceted mandate requires WCDP's support systems to be multi-faceted too. This is essential for controlling efficiency and reducing risks of errors occurring between un-integrated administration apparatus.

A company commitment to continuous improvement of its operating procedures has seen WCDP introduce new IT and project management systems. Together, the combined project and financial control system offer interesting insights into how

LEADER groups (or other rural development stakeholders) can implement effective integrated administration of multi-funded approaches.

### USING LESSONS FROM AUDIT

“Following an audit from the EU we realised the benefit of enhancing our team with a member of staff who is specialised in financial management systems. We have also trained a dedicated member of staff to cover public procurement matters and this skill-set is another essential component of our operations,” states Mr Dempsey.

“These new resources have helped us to operate sound financial systems that

serve both project beneficiaries and our colleagues from the national authorities. In addition, we have introduced a dedicated ‘customer relations management’ tool that further improves the efficiency and effectiveness of our financial management. This is a database package which centralises all the information that we and our customers need for our development work.”

“*Our responsibilities to our communities have been a force behind our drive to continually increase the effectiveness of internal and external administrative systems.*”

Ian Dempsey  
WCDP Chief Executive



West Cork is a predominantly rural area famous for its picturesque villages and rugged beauty.





Crucial local services can benefit from more strategic implementation of EU funding.

Everything from meeting minutes during project preparation stages to photographs from project monitoring visits can be linked within the customer relations management (CRM) database. Among many other useful functions, this type of tool can collate progress reports and match financial expenditure against results. It can also be used to identify geographical areas with clusters of opportunity or the contrary – gaps in uptake.

In West Cork, the use of a CRM tool for LEADER prevents risks of information being lost and also helps to avoid duplication of effort. It ensures a much more systematic approach to financial controls and it can be used remotely which is convenient for staff carrying out fieldwork with development projects.

### THE VALUE OF EFFICIENT ADMINISTRATION

“We have learned that creating linkages early-on between funding sources on the CRM system results in a more common and consistent administration system that produces the most useful results.”

Ivan McCutcheon  
RDP Programme Manager, WCDP

“An important point to be aware of about any CRM system is to make sure that you choose one that is flexible enough to be adapted and compatible with several

different sources of development funding,” highlights Mr McCutcheon.

Success factors for integrated rural development in West Cork thus include effective integrated administration of multi-funded work. Many benefits can be achieved by providing a ‘one-stop-shop’ approach for communities to use. This reduces the need for the general public to try to understand different funding streams and it can avoid the complexity of different application processes. Results of such simplified and centralised approaches can help to encourage more local people to make more use of available EU and national development services.

“Integrating different funding programmes in the CRM system provides a more standardised approach to our work which produces efficiencies for everyone involved. It does require investment in staff and IT at the start but the benefits are worthwhile,” says Mr Dempsey.

### PRACTICAL BENEFITS FROM SYSTEMATIC APPROACHES

“We had to gain peoples’ buy-in to use the system properly in a systematic way. There were some concerns that it would create additional workloads but the advantages of using an integrated administration tool were soon clear”. These advantages include: time savings; easier access to all the information needed that is

shared in one place; analytical options for cross-referencing and comparing project information; and less chances of confusion or lost paperwork.

Simplified administrative functions are possible through the CRM system. For instance, WCDP now have a centralised list of contacts that they provide information for. Previously a number of un-connected lists had to be manually coordinated and there was scope for mistakes occurring during reporting or promotion. Now the WCDP can simply check their existing lists and select the type of people they want to include. Adding and deleting data to this ‘master list’ is also easier and limits possibilities for repetition during communication activities.

Using a shared and integrated administration system provides everyone with the same information at the same time. Different members of staff at local, regional national or even EU level can access the system online to check on a project’s progress, or see what needs to be done next for the project. This can be done without having to speak to the desk officer who is responsible for the project and such efficiency can significantly improve the flexibility of staff resources.

Induction procedures for WCDP users of the CRM system stress the IT adage that “If you put rubbish into the system you will get rubbish out of it”. Hence, care is taken to make sure that everyone involved knows how to make the best use of the integrated administration system and how to gain from its multi-fund compatibility.

### DECREASING MULTI-FUNDING WORKLOADS

WCDP expects to continue making good use of its integrated administration system in the 2014-2020 period. New approaches to LEADER and other local development funding in Ireland present the organisation with opportunities as well as challenges. Their previous experience with the CRM

system is expected to prove highly valuable during work involved in coordinating the new support.

Mr Dempsey underlines a salient point in this task stressing how important it is for integrated administration systems to “Decrease the workload and not increase it. We need to make sure that the systems fit with our needs and we need to prevent us having to make too many compromises that could alter the development methodologies that we want to pursue for our communities.”

Multi-funding challenges like this will be common for other local development organisations around Europe. Simplification needs to sit at the centre of all such administrative systems in order for them to remain straight-forward and easy-to-use for everyone involved (beneficiaries, staff, partners, evaluators, and auditors).

Designing-in compatibility standards from the start will help efficient operations in the long-term. High priorities here include exploring and identifying options for consistent

administrative systems, ideally those that can make use of similar application procedures, shared performance indicators and common monitoring frequencies, as well as parallel reporting requirements and timings.

#### **ADDITIONAL ADVANTAGES FROM SIMPLIFICATION**

Being a bottom-up development organisation, WCDP is always seeking ways to build the capacity of the community groups and business sectors that it serves. Consequently, the CRM software system was introduced with an aim to not only improve the efficiency and effectiveness of internal WCDP operations, but also to show external groups how a similar CRM approach could help to optimise their own operations.

“Another benefit from the software package is that we can use it as a demonstration model to promote good management practices for local organisations.”

*Ivan McCutcheon  
RDP Programme Manager, WCDP*

“As part of our capacity building remit, we have transferred our knowhow about using CRM systems to community projects such as organisers of local music festivals and an environmental forum. Social inclusion groups and other community bodies have also been interested,” highlights Mr McCutcheon.

“A notable success has been the advice and support that we provided about with the CRM software for a rural transport association. We helped them set-up and test their own version of the database in a pilot project that was subsequently adopted nationally for all branches of the rural transport association. This enhanced their capacity to control their finances, improved their understanding about client bases, and focused the targeting of their rural transport services.”

Indirect development outcomes like this and the success achieved by West Cork’s integrated approach to administering local development represent good practice in rural development that can be replicated elsewhere around Europe’s countryside.



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*Improved administration can help coordinate packages of socio-economic and environmental support in rural areas.*

## A FOCUS ON... IMPROVING RDP IMPLEMENTATION

## INTERVIEW

## REDUCING RDP RED TAPE IN DENMARK

## Kristian Handberg

The Danish Agrifish Agency

Kristian Handberg works at The Danish Agrifish Agency and he has been involved in preparing new simplified administration procedures that will come into force in 2016 for Denmark's Rural Development Programme (RDP).

© Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries of Denmark



#### Why did Denmark want to make their RDP simpler to use?

We see that simplification is a win-win process because it creates benefits for both the people who want to apply for and use the RDP funding, as well as the staff and organisations that are involved in administering the funds.

It can be frustrating for funding applicants sometimes when they do not know why certain decisions have been made about the amount of funding that they receive. This can also lead to mistakes being made and wrong amounts of funding being claimed for different things – which requires more paperwork and administration time for everyone involved.

We know that farmers and other users of the RDP are very busy and so we wanted

to find ways to help make the funding decisions clearer and the financial claims easier to use. More 'transparency' in the administration system will therefore reduce the amount of time that is needed to apply for grants and the money should also be used more accurately with less errors.



#### How is the RDP being made simpler to use?

One of the main ways that we have done this is to start introducing so-called 'Simplified Cost Options'. These set fixed prices for common things that the RDP money is used to pay for. For example we know that many farmers use the funds for fencing their livestock so we can set a common cost for each metre of fence installed. We can do the same for each square metre of a new cattle barn, or pig pen, etc. etc.

Previously, the farmer would have had to get at least two price quotes for these costs from different suppliers and they would have had to use the supplier that provided the best value for money. This evidence of value for money is important because the RDP funds come from EU tax payers, and should not be wasted on paying for things that are too expensive, or things that are not really necessary.

However, the process could be quite time-consuming and complicated for the farmers who had to get the different price quotes. Also the funding authority had to check that these prices were reasonable value



for money and then a judgement needed to be made about how much money would be approved. Sometimes farmers would question the judgements and ask for more explanations about their funding decision.

### What is involved in using RDP tools like Simplified Cost Options?

Our aim was to calculate standard costs for a wide range of different items (we call them 'cost objects') that are used for a lot of rural development projects. To do this we had to first look back at all our data covering cost objects from recent RDP projects. It was good that we already had the data we needed but we discovered that the data was stored in different places. So an important early job involved collating all the information we needed in a central source. This was not only useful for calculating the Simplified Cost Options but it also meant the data could be used for other evaluation and management purposes as well.

We used external consultants to help us bring all the data together that we needed from 2010 to date. They also carried out a lot of the analysis to calculate reasonable costs. This work identified average prices from previous projects and the consultants also took account of potential changes in price before providing us with a set of recommendations for standard costs for different RDP cost objectives.

It took a few months to complete all the work and during this time the consultants often came back to us to ask us questions about why we had made certain funding decisions in the past, plus also how much flexibility we were willing to provide for the new RDP. Many of the questions forced us as an organisation to reflect carefully on our previous approaches. They also made us think even more carefully about our future operations and this exercise is extremely useful for a government agency like ours.



### What useful lessons have you learned so far that other RDPs could use?

Before we started the calculations we spoke to our RDP colleagues in Sweden because they began working with Simplified Cost Options a couple of years ago. They told us about some useful lessons they had learned so far, which included the importance of consulting different

stakeholders. This was very useful advice because it gave us more perspectives on the costs and that helped to make them more accurate. It also helped to make our proposed costs more acceptable since a lot of people and experts felt that their opinions had been considered.



*Easier red tape will allow farmers to concentrate on producing food and caring for the countryside.*

Stakeholder consultation and dialogue are therefore vital in order to get the Simplified Cost Options working well and this has positive knock-on benefits for the implementation of the RDP. Our consultations for example involved us seeking assistance from specialists like the Danish Knowledge Centre for Agriculture and the Danish Pig Research Centre, who gave us information about costs for specific equipment. We included their figures in the overall calculations. Then we tested the accuracy of the costs by discussing them with independent advisors at the Department of Food and Resource Economics at The University of Copenhagen.

Other useful people involved were the auditors who will be checking that the new RDP projects provide value for money. I have spoken to a number of auditors

about simplified costs and they encourage us to document all our decisions. It is important for auditors that the RDP can show a full 'audit trail' explaining how costs are calculated, who has been consulted, what other research occurred, and how the agreed costs were demonstrated as being a fair price. This could be a useful lesson for other countries to note.



### What success factors are involved in RDP simplification?

One of our main conclusions from the consultation is that we needed to be prepared to go back and revise our initial calculations in order to take account of new information before we set the final standard cost. Another useful point to know from the process is that in reality we also decided not to introduce Simplified Cost Options

for some cost objects that we originally planned for. This was because it proved too difficult to calculate a common cost for work that might vary greatly between different projects. For example, a cost object that is very volatile and therefore could mean that some beneficiaries would get heavily under- or overcompensated wouldn't make sense to use.

I think that a measure of our success in introducing Simplified Cost Options will therefore be the willingness of farmers and other RDP beneficiaries to use the funding, at least as much as before. We should also be able to see a reduction in financial claim errors, which will be good for everyone too.





# Books & publications

## *Le développement territorial*

Une réponse émergente à la mondialisation

**Pierre Campagne, Bernard Pecqueur**

This book considers the development of rural areas in the context of globalisation. Through field research in 16 rural areas in the Mediterranean region, it explores the historical and economic evolution of concepts such as 'rurality' and 'territory.'

The book argues that while the entry to the global market occurs naturally for some rural areas, others considered "difficult" can capitalise on their specific resources and governance, and through their own approaches to territorial development can adapt to a globalising world. It examines in detail the mechanisms creating favourable conditions for the development of these less

advanced rural areas.

ISBN 978-2843771842



## *The Sustainable Intensification of European Agriculture*

**RISE Foundation**

This report presents a systematic look at the policies needed to prepare European agriculture for the global challenge of feeding a population

of 9 billion by 2050 and aims to contribute to future reforms of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

It provides an analysis of the concept of 'Sustainable Intensification' and argues that increasing agricultural productivity while improving environmental performance

should be an underlying principle for future EU policy. To achieve this, Europe needs to provide the appropriate knowledge base to enable sustainable management of resources and to devise an effective measurement tool for environmental farming performance. These efforts on the policy level need to be complemented by improved sustainable farming practices on the ground.



## *The World of Organic Agriculture*

Statistics & Emerging Trends 2015

**FiBL, IFOAM Organics International**

This publication examines recent developments in global organic agriculture and overviews organic legislation worldwide, focusing on standards and regulations, organic certification and emerging market trends. Furthermore, it provides comprehensive statistical data on indicators such as surface area under organic management, land use in organic systems, producers, markets and selected crops in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, North America and Oceania.

The report has been published annually since 2000 and presents statistical data collected through the annual survey on organic agriculture worldwide.

ISBN 978-3-944372-11-2

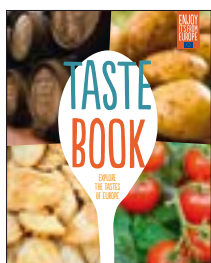


## Taste book

Explore the tastes of Europe

### European Commission/DG AGRI

This publication offers a flavour of a selection of European products recognised by the EU for being of genuine quality for respecting local traditions and production methods. Each product is accompanied by an original recipe that will



inspire you to explore the variety of tastes that Europe has to offer.

The European quality labels aim to encourage diverse agricultural production, protect product names from imitation and help consumers by giving them information on the

unique character of these products. Learn more at <http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/quality/>

You can order a free paper copy of this publication via the [EU Bookshop](#).

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Catalogue number KF-05-14-080-EN-C

## LIFE and Soil protection

### European Commission

With issues such as erosion, soil sealing, carbon capture and contaminated land of growing public concern and policy focus, this publication highlights and assesses the LIFE programme's contribution to soil protection to date.

It provides an overview of EU soil policy, analysis of LIFE's input to its implementation and interviews that link soil science to policy-making to practical action. In particular, the brochure examines the impact of LIFE actions on soil sustainability, including land take and contamination, soil biodiversity, soil monitoring and protection, and sustainable agriculture.

You can order a free paper copy of this publication via the [EU Bookshop](#).

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## European Countryside

### The Journal of Mendel University in Brno

This international open-access journal publishes theoretical and empirical research on rural development issues. With four issues per year, the journal explores topics such as LEADER, demographic and social change in rural areas, rural-urban dynamics, sustainable development and rural tourism across European countries and regions. Agriculture and rural development practitioners and researchers will find here research articles, comparative studies, conference papers and reports.

# ENRD PUBLICATIONS

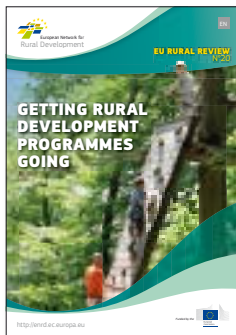
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## EU RURAL REVIEW

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).

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KF-AJ-15-020-EN-C

### No.19 – Improving stakeholder involvement



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### No.18 – Organic Farming



KF-AJ-14-018-EN-C

## EAFRD PROJECTS BROCHURE

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### Rural Development Priorities 2014-2020



KF-02-15-287-EN-C

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