

ENRD

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Connecting Rural Europe...

Winter
2011-2012
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MAIN STORY: Communicating Rural Development to Citizens



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Dear Reader

Welcome to the very first issue of the ENRD Magazine!

Rural areas in the EU account for 90% of land and over 50% of the EU population live in rural and intermediate areas and so the ongoing development of these areas affects all EU citizens. This magazine is designed to reflect the breadth of rural development activity, taking place throughout the EU and of course to offer you the opportunity to share your views on key issues.

In this issue you will find a round-up of ENRD related news, including a look-back at a major conference on 'communicating rural development to citizens' held in Milan. This section also contains outcomes of important official meetings, focus groups and other ENRD gatherings.

Most importantly, this magazine is dedicated to you – rural development practitioners – and we have been inundated with accounts of events and activities ran by both National Rural Networks (NRNs) and Local Action Groups (LAGs), from Spain to Slovakia. Belgium is our 'Country Focus' in this issue, and you will find a number of rural development stories from Belgium featured throughout the magazine. This includes our

'Over to You' section, where we feature articles you've provided on such diverse themes as the 'Leader Approach' in Belgium, 'Transhumance' in Spain, and 'Social Diversity in Austrian rural areas. Of course one of the most important aspects of our work – is the promotion of the vast potential for using the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) to support rural development projects, which are literally changing lives in rural communities. In each issue we will feature five such projects, which we feel contribute to the goal of achieving sustainable rural development for all.

Our aim is to ensure each ENRD magazine is as inspiring as it is informative, packed with images and articles which reflect the wealth and diversity of EU rural development.. With this in mind, if it matters to rural Europe then we want to hear about it, so if you have something to share please do email us at news@enrd.eu

Finally, a big thank you to all of you who contributed to this pilot issue...be sure to watch out for yourselves in our 'out and about' section!



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***Spanish shepherd guides sheep to new grazing pastures
in the village of Molinos Blancos, Cuenca, Spain, June 2010***

This image portrays one of the last transhumance movements along the "Conquense Royal Drove". Each spring this shepherd leads about 3000 sheep from the "Dehesas" in the South (Jaen, Andalucia) to the northern mountains (Teruel, Aragon) - across 500 km in search of fresh pasture. With the arrival of snow in November, they start their return journey, in the search for an eternal spring.



ENRD *Report*

The European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) hosts and supports numerous events throughout the year, not to mention its involvement in a variety of ongoing thematic initiatives – all aiming to promote and share valuable knowledge on rural development, amongst all its stakeholders. In each issue, we update you on some of its latest activities.

360 degree multimedia exhibition – featuring highlights from rural development communications initiatives - at the Piazza Città di Lombardia, on the occasion of the 'Communicating Rural Development to Citizens' event.

Communicating Rural Development

Over 200 people attended a major international conference on 'Communicating Rural Development to Citizens' in Milan, on the 17-18 November, 2011. The event was jointly hosted by the Italian Rural Network, the Lombardy region and the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD). It highlighted the wide diversity of initiatives being used across Europe to promote and disseminate projects and programmes, co-financed by the EU through the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). One of the main highlights of the two days included an impressive outdoor multimedia exhibition, which showcased a dazzling array of communication tools and campaigns on EU rural development

"This sharing of 'best practice' helps to improve the overall cost-efficiency of communications activity, promotes funding opportunities in the current programming period and provides inspiration for the next programming round".

Camilo Zaccarini, Italian NRN

The event in Milan was part of a wider initiative, instigated by several National Rural Networks (NRNs), and supported by the ENRD, to demonstrate both how EU funds can be utilised for rural development in Europe, to beneficiaries and the public at large. "So the overall aim of the event was to create a network of communications experts from the NRNs, based on this wealth of experience," said Mr Camilo Zaccarini

of the Italian NRN. "This sharing of 'best practice' helps to improve the overall cost-efficiency of communications activity, promotes funding opportunities in the current programming period and provides inspiration for the next programming round," he said.

The first day of the conference focused on the particular experience of Italian Managing Authorities in communicating rural development policy and initiatives to the Italian public. A number of campaigns were presented, demonstrating the high production values applied, so as to better convey a positive message on rural development. A specific section was devoted to examples of how Leader is promoted in Italy, so as to nurture dialogue with the local population.

On day two, the direct experience of other NRNs was shared and discussed during two panel discussions. The first session centred on the issue of targeting a particular audience, with four campaigns presented, all aimed at a younger audience. The Danish Rural Network shared their experience of hosting a roadshow, so as to promote EAFRD funds to young people in 2011 - reaching more

than 3000 students nationwide. "We had a great response" says Mr René Kusier. "Pupils engaged in role-play activities where they could act as journalists, lobbyists, politicians, or someone trying to get funding for a rural development project". Another initiative targeting young people called 'RuraLand' was presented by the Italian NRN, highlighting the importance of increasing awareness amongst young people of the importance of protecting rural heritage and the environment. Their communication initiative included three distinct but co-ordinated projects: Rural4Kids, Rural4Teens, and Rural4Youth. Ms Cécile Schalenbourg from the Walloon Rural Network gave a presentation on an innovative video project, which has been stimulating debate on young farmers in her region (a more detailed summary of this project is featured in the 'NRN Focus' section of this magazine). And Mr Juha-Matti Markkola from the Finnish NRN provided an account of their successful 'Amaze me Leader' event, which took place last summer. It saw young people from all over the EU drive across Finland to experience first-hand what Leader is all about. In general, the importance of tailoring a campaign to suit the intended audience was highlighted, with much reference to the particular challenges of communicating rural development to young people. In particular, the importance of innovation was stressed – both in terms of concept and actual tools employed.

The second session focused more broadly on differences in terms of approach to communication activities. Much debate followed a presentation by the Dutch NRN on the potential of social media to engage a wider community of stakeholders. "What makes social media so exciting is that it genuinely allows for two-way communication," said Rob Janmaat. "In our country the Ministry of Agriculture has a blog on its official website on the future of the CAP, where the public can leave comments. This has been quite revolutionary and is really helping to inform debate in the Netherlands," he said. Issues relating to how to deal with the lack of control over content when working with social media were discussed. However, the general consensus was that social media can only continue to grow in importance as a communication tool in the future, for all potential audiences.

Balázs Márton from the Hungarian NRN presented an insightful account of two very different promotional campaigns - one to promote rural tourism and another to promote farming to urban citizens. The first campaign 'Home for the Weekend' followed a traditional PR campaign approach, involving a series of advertisements promoting discounted rates in many rural areas. This campaign cost €330 000 and though the campaign was nationwide, its effectiveness proved difficult to fully assess. The second presentation

demonstrated how using modern tools such as social media and 'creating a buzz' around an innovative concept – can prove very fruitful and extremely cost-effective. The 'Rural Adventure' campaign essentially comprised of sending young people from urban areas to spend some time working on a farm, whilst sharing an account of their experience via an online blog. "Due to the overall interest generated by the concept, the campaign attracted much press attention and cost us - the NRN - more or less nothing," said Mr. Márton. And Maria Carla Ciscaldi from the Maltese NRN showed excerpts from a TV campaign which sees the NRN work with a producer to ensure consistent coverage of rural development stories on a high profile TV programme in Malta. "I would seriously urge all NRNs to build relationships with relevant media in their area, as it can really be an extremely cost-effective way of reaching the widest possible audience," she said.

The conference also featured a dedicated workshop on "effective use of audio-visual tools: tips and recommendations," organised by the ENRD Contact Point. "Audio-visual tools make a powerful impact," said Jacqui Meskell, who ran the workshop. "But effective planning can ensure a video - produced with a modest budget - can still retain high production values," she said.

Speaking after the event, Camilo Zaccarini said he was delighted with the success of seminar, which he hopes will "contribute to enhancing the debate between communications experts and the RDP's Managing Authorities and NRNs, so that more effective strategies and media campaigns can ensue at both central and regional level. We believe this is a first step towards the setting up of a new communications network to heighten awareness of rural development issues amongst the general public".

For further information on the event, log on to the ENRD website or visit <http://www.reterurale.it/Communication>.



© ENRD Contact Point



© Finnish Network Unit

Young people enjoy learning about Leader at the 'Amaze me Leader' event in Finland in August, one of the many communications events initiatives presented at the conference in Milan.



Participants at the 13th NRN meeting enjoy a stroll through De Hooiberg village, on a field trip to explore rural-urban linkages.

Added Value of Networking discussed at 13th NRN Meeting

The 'added value of networking' was the main focus of the 13th NRN meeting, which was held in The Hague, in the Netherlands, on 10-12 November, 2011. NRN meetings are held quarterly, to provide networks with the chance to get together to exchange ideas, discuss recent developments and identify common priorities.

Rob Peters from DG AGRI presented an overview of developments contained in the new CAP legislative proposals, regarding the future role of networks. ENRD Contact Point representatives provided an update on developments regarding the joint NRN initiative on the 'added value of networking' including presenting the preliminary results of an NRN survey, which aims to discover those areas of interest on which NRNs most commonly collect data. Based on early results it appears that NRNs closely assess the organisation and attendance of NRN meetings, as well as the collection and dissemination of good practice, among other activities.

During the meeting several other subjects were also addressed including the state of play of the Rural Entrepreneurship Thematic

Initiative – which aims to promote innovative aspects of rural business. Christophe Buffet of the French NRN presented a progress report on the Working Group on Short Supply Chains, with a suggestion that a future issue of the EU Rural Review magazine be dedicated to this theme. On 'Rural Finance', Donald Aquilina (ENRD CP) encouraged NRNs to look for examples in their own country, as well as the continued engagement of the Task Force on proposed next steps. According to the meeting the greatest challenge for the 'Social Aspects' sub-theme is how to precisely define the term. A particularly innovative initiative by the Belgian-Wallonian NRN was mentioned, which has resulted in the production of an informational DVD on issues faced by young farmers. An interesting survey coordinated by the Italian NRN on 'Youths in Rural Areas' was also discussed. As regards the 'Forestry' sub-theme, it appears that this continues to maintain considerable momentum and was highlighted as an example of the excellent work achieved by NRNs on an issue that is of growing importance in the EU.

The concept of 'clustering' or the grouping of networks on a geographical

basis was introduced as a new approach. Clustering NRNs on a macro-regional level fosters communication, promotes technical exchange, greater dialogue, Leader transnational cooperation (TNC) and the potential for future NRN joint activity. NRNs from around the Mediterranean Sea discussed the possibility of a future macro-regional informal cluster in their area. However, the Nordic-Baltic cluster provided practical advice for any NRNs planning to create such a grouping, including the importance of only discussing one item per meeting and clearly identifying which Network is responsible for convening the next meeting. They also issued a word of warning on setting realistic targets.

A social event, hosted by the Dutch NRN offered a chance for attendees to experience some Dutch hospitality with many participants taking part in field visits, as well as attending the Dutch Rural Parliament discussions in the House of Representatives. For more information log onto the [ENRD website](#).

Bioenergy from Forests: Economic Benefits for Rural Areas?



© Tim Hudson

Much potential for generating entrepreneurship can be achieved through the promotion of the bio-energy sector in rural areas, in particular relating to wood biomass. However, capitalising on the potential of this sector requires financial investment, and the development of existing companies and infrastructure, as well as the creation of cooperation networks to transfer good practice. This was according to the outcomes of a seminar in Finland on bio-energy from forests, held on 25-27 October, 2011.

Around 50 participants - including LAGs, NRNs, NGOs, entrepreneurs and researchers from 10 countries - came together in Punkaharju, home to the Finnish central museum of forestry, to discuss the issue. The event, which was organised by the Finnish NRN in collaboration with the ENRD and LAGs from Finland, facilitated discussion on the role of wood biomass as a driver for rural development, links between the public and private sector and future developments in the sector.



© Timo Kilpeläinen

Participants on a field trip to learn more about the production chain of forest based bioenergy.

Biomass is the most common source of renewable energy in Europe and 80% of it comes from wood. Production of bioenergy is therefore another important function of European forests and a

growing economic sector, with much potential for boosting economic development and employment in rural areas. Bioenergy from wood is not only renewable but largely considered as carbon neutral, so the production of wood-based energy also supports EU strategic goals for 2020 of achieving 20% use of renewable sources in energy production, as well as a 20% reduction in carbon emissions.

The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) measures are the main instruments for realising the EU Forest Action Plan, which already support a range of activities to promote the production and use of bioenergy, most of which are related to the production and use of wood and wood-based biomass. In addition, EAFRD funding also supports energy production facilities at local level (small-scale). In fact, the range of activities supported by the EU is extraordinary in this respect, and exchanges between stakeholders offer a number of opportunities to learn more about optimising the efficiency of the wood-energy supply chain. The theme is of great importance for several NRNs, who through the ENRD Joint Thematic Initiative on Forestry, have decided to make of it one of the main topics on which to exchange experiences and good practice. With this aim, the seminar offered participants the chance, not only to discuss core issues but also to showcase a range of case studies and experiences brought by participants. Participants also visited a bio-fuel CHP plant in Savollinna and a farm business, which produces high quality wood fuel for local markets on a large scale.

In general, the seminar concluded that while the starting point for achieving targets varies from country to country, it was found that the development processes and challenges faced are similar and by working together improvements can be made. The outcomes of the seminar, together with information on all the other activities promoted by the NRN Joint Initiative on Forestry, can be found on the ENRD website or www.maaseutu.fi.

CAP towards 2020 Discussed at Coordination Committee Meeting

A summary of the CAP proposals 2014-2020 and the value of networking in this regard was the focus of the Coordination Committee meeting of the ENRD, on 8 December, 2011.

Whilst the importance of networking was acknowledged, it was recognised that more could be done at both EU and national level to meet its full potential, including reaching even more stakeholders.

Discussions on ENRD preparatory activities for the next programming round were also discussed, with the formation of two new Thematic Focus Groups on 'Environmental Services'



© ENRD Contact Point

'Networking' at the Coordination Committee meeting in Brussels.

and 'Innovation and Knowledge Transfer. The Focus Group on Environmental Services is to begin its work early in 2012.

The meeting also saw activities of the ENRD being presented, including NRN joint-action on the value of networking, the Rural Entrepreneurship Initiative and the development of its communications tools.

Rural Citizens Take Over Dutch Parliament

The 4th Dutch Rural Parliament took place in the House of Representatives in The Hague, Netherlands, on November 12, 2011. This bi-annual event attended by the ENRD aims to stimulate dialogue between the inhabitants of rural areas and policy makers.

Three workshops were held on local sustainable energy, citizen participation, and rural demographic decline – all of which were aimed at gaining insight into ways in which policy can address these issues. An interesting workshop on CAP reform was also held. This year's event also included a programme for international invitees.

The first Rural Parliament was held some 20 years ago in Sweden, in an effort to bridge the gap between National Government and rural inhabitants. The event enabled politicians to engage directly with rural people, village councils and local area committees, so as to better tailor policy to the needs of the people.



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Local Development Strategies: Focus Group Meeting in Portugal

The first meeting of Focus Group 4 on Better Local Development Strategies (LDS's) was held in Lisbon, Portugal, on 18-19 October, 2011. Hosted by the Portuguese NRN, the main objective of the meeting was to present and discuss the initial findings of the questionnaire for LAGs on defining and



© ENRD Contact Point

Farmer Francisco Borba presenting the 'Herdade da Gâmbia' project, which through reinforcing tide support walls facilitates nesting and birdwatching.

developing LDS's. Stakeholder interest in the topic is very strong and the group now numbers 75 members, approximately half of whom participated in the meeting. The questionnaire was answered by more LAG representatives than had initially been expected, and is seen as a further reflection of the

importance and relevance of the theme. This is mainly due to the fact that the outcomes of the Focus Group could influence the implementation rules for the new programming period. The initial findings of the Focus Group were presented to the Leader subcommittee on 23 November, 2011.

Second Rural Energy Day takes place in Brussels

The results of an important survey on 'Rural Energy in Europe' were presented at the 2nd Rural Energy Day, organised by the Future of Rural Energy in Europe (FREE) on 21 September 2011, at which the ENRD was one of the main exhibitors. Overall the findings of the FREE country study of five European countries indicated that energy consumption in households and services in rural areas rely less on natural gas than in urban areas. The share of oil in urban areas is lower than in intermediate and rural areas. Furthermore, there is a larger share of oil used in the agricultural sector, due to the use of heavy equipment such as electricity generators and tractors.



© SHV Energy N.V.

Andrew Ford, on behalf of the FREE initiative said: "Rural areas can contribute greatly to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and specific energy use policies aimed at rural communities could save money and combat climate change. In the agricultural sector, policies facilitating a better energy mix will be of enormous benefit. And access to sustainable and lower carbon energy systems in rural areas must be facilitated."

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7th Leader Subcommittee Meeting Discusses Local Development Strategies

An update on Leader implementation in each Member State was presented at the 7th Leader Subcommittee meeting, held in Brussels in November, 2011. This extended meeting also included two Local Action Group (LAG) members from each Member State.

A key focus of the meeting was the draft progress report of the new Leader Focus Group on 'Better Local Development Strategies (LDS's)' and a group discussion centred on the development and design of better LDS's.

In small groups the participants discussed questions on LDS's including the level of autonomy required by communities when drafting them, and overall quality issues. The second discussion centred on the requirements of the Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) in terms of the structure and content of LDS's.

DG AGRI presented the Commission's legislative proposals for Local Development 2014-2020, based on the proposed new Common Strategic Framework (CSF). Probably the most significant change proposed is that in the forthcoming programming period, community-led local development may also be funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF), in addition to the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF). In addition, it was noted that Focus Group 4 could play an important role in providing guidance on



Leader Subcommittee members at the meeting in Brussels.

implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of LDS's in the new programming period.

Participants also heard a presentation on the new 'Leader Gateway' section of the ENRD website, an analysis of those TNC approved projects already notified to the Commission and upcoming Leader related ENRD events, including a major seminar planned for Spring, 2012.

Rural Development Policy in Figures

Important information which demonstrates the progress of the RDPs is now available on the ENRD website in a more accessible format. Information on the links between resources and outcomes of rural development policy was originally presented mainly in the form of 'monitoring and financial indicator tables'. However, this important information has now been translated into 'information sheets' which present snapshots of the progress being made in each of the rural development programmes and most RDP measures, across the EU. This new format makes it easier for stakeholders to access this information 'at a



glance' - through the use of informative charts, graphs and brief explanatory text - thereby enabling users to draw informed conclusions. The information in table format is still available for those who wish to access the data in its original format.

Seminar on Delivery of Rural Development Programmes

Ensuring that the next programming round of RDPs is both effective, efficient and above all - 'results oriented', was the main focus of a recent seminar on 'Improving the delivery of Rural Development Programmes' held in Brussels, on 9 December, 2011. The seminar was attended by representatives of Managing Authorities, NRNs and other stakeholders and was informed by the analysis of Thematic Working Group (TWG) 4, which analysed what works well in terms of delivery mechanisms and what could

be improved in the future. The majority of the seminar focused on workshop discussions on how to improve programme design, make the implementation more effective and enhance coordination between implementing bodies, as well as ways of reaching beneficiaries and improving access to funding. Further details of the outcomes of the seminar are available on the [ENRD website](#).

ENRD Contact Point Visits



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French Overseas Department's Visit

A group of participants, training for the qualification 'Expert training in European Affairs', from the French Overseas Departments (les Départements d'Outre-Mer [DOM]) visited the ENRD Contact Point, on November 25, 2011. The group was keen to learn about ENRD activities and to discuss the implications of developments regarding the CAP post-2013 programming period, for such ultra-peripheral EU regions. For more information, visit: www.edater.fr

Representatives from DOM with members of the ENRD CP team in Brussels.

Bavarian Mayors Visit

A delegation of nine Mayors and rural district office ('*Landratsamt*') employees from Germany's Upper Palatinate region (Oberpfalz) and Middle Franconia (Mittelfranken) visited the ENRD Contact Point, on November 30, 2011. They represent nine communities, which make up the Oberpfalz-Mittelfranken Action Alliance. The group's objective for the visit was to learn about the activities of the ENRD Contact Point and to discuss the future of the Cohesion Policy post-2013.



© ENRD Contact Point

Mayors and district office employees from Bavaria at the ENRD CP offices in Brussels.



The Seeberger Family awarded with the "Agrar.Preis 2011" for their strategic approach to developing their business.

NRN Focus

National Rural Networks (NRNs) are organisations, set up by Member State governments to bring together the stakeholders involved in rural development and to help implement EU rural development policy. This section features all the latest news from recent meetings and other events organised throughout the EU.

Austrian Network: Focus on Success at Annual Conference

The Austrian NRN 'Netzwerkland' brought together more than 200 rural development stakeholders for its annual conference, on October 17, 2011. Attendees included 50 LAG representatives from Lambach in Upper Austria, who discussed competitiveness in the agricultural sector and future opportunities offered through the CAP. In addition, a range of networking case-studies were presented on Leader initiatives related to agriculture, nature conservation and forestry, with an emphasis on success and innovation. The highpoint of the evening was the awarding of the 'Agrar Preis 2011' to five of the best agricultural enterprises in the country. The winners were predominantly family

operations, with one in particular recognised for its strategic approach to developing their family farm business. Since 1997, the Seeberger family have been producing organic hay milk, which is processed into cheese, yogurt and curd before being distributed through a local health food store. Speaking at the conference, Christian Jochum from the Austrian NRN said: "Success in agriculture is not just about good management and salesmanship, but of course balancing the needs of people and economic thinking. Success in Leader is similar – it's all about people." For further information, log on to the Austrian NRN website at www.netzwerk-land.at

Walloon Network: Video on Young Farmers Stimulates Debate

An audio-visual project by the Walloon NRN is stimulating debate on young farmers in the region. The project centres on the presentation of six thematic videos on Starting Up, Multifunctional Agriculture and Small Scale Farming, Innovation, Environment and Energy, Networks, Broadening Horizons, Entrepreneurship and Business, and Regulatory Aspects of Farming. These videos are designed to be used as a toolkit by village associations, young farmer's associations and other practitioners involved in rural development,

to focus attention on the future of agriculture and the countryside and seek support in meeting the challenges facing the sector. The videos' use of personal testimony, particularly from young people, demonstrates that agriculture is not only a contemporary industry but is vital to the future of rural areas. "This project is helping us dispel the impression that agriculture is stuck in the past and doesn't have a



'Setting up the shot' during filming of the 'Young Farmers' video project in Wallonia.

role to play in modern culture," reflected Cécile Schalenbourg from the NRN. For more information on the project, log on to the Walloon NRN website at www.reseau-pwdr.be.



Traditional folk costumes take centre stage at a fashion show during the Agrokompex Fair.

Slovakian Network: **International Fair Promotes NRNs**

Representatives from NRNs and LAGs from Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland attended the International Agricultural and Food Fair at Agrokompex in Nitra, Slovakia, from 23-26 August, 2011. Facilitated by the Slovak NRN, the major exhibition enabled visitors to taste regional products, as well as showcasing traditional craft-skills and folk traditions. A number of prominent Slovakian politicians, including the Slovak Prime Minister Iveta Radičová and Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Regional Development, Zsolt Simon visited the exhibition and met with regional representatives. Speaking after the event Malvína Gondová, from the Slovakian NRN said: "The exhibition was a great success and we were able to develop a significant number of new contacts. Events like this are such an important part of rural development and so we're very supportive of all types of rural cooperation – whether national or transnational". Highlights from the exhibition were captured by a local television station and a short report is available online and as a DVD at www.nsrv.sk



Italian Network: **Rural Youth Campaign Launched**

An initiative by the Italian NRN (Rete Rurale) is encouraging young people to consider the impact of their actions on both the environment and their communities. The Rural4Youth Initiative brings together seven University Faculties with study programmes related to agriculture, the environment and communication, so as to focus the awareness of students on the issue of sustainability.

The pilot initiative, which began in September 2011, involves the use of modern communication tools including video, web blogs and a computer platform using Wiki language. As a first exercise students have been invited to produce short videos on their own personal experience of the subject. In order to extend participation to a wider audience, a web community for sharing knowledge, experience and good practice has been developed. Rural4Youth builds on the success of similar pilot initiatives aimed at younger age groups, including the NRN's 'Ruraland' initiative, incorporating Rural4Kids and Rural4Teens. These innovative projects have reached a wide audience of children and young people, thereby increasing awareness about protection of the countryside and rural heritage. Further information on the initiative is available on the Italian NRN's website www.reterurale.it.

Northern Ireland Network: LAGs Share Good Practice

The Northern Ireland Rural Network held a networking event, on the 6-7 October, 2011, which brought together LAGs and other practitioners working across axes 3 and 4 of the Rural Development Programme (RDP). Over 90 people attended the event in County Antrim, entitled 'Networking Across Clusters and Beyond' - organised after a survey indicated that many groups were working in isolation in the region. As well as providing an opportunity to share information about what has been happening in different parts of the region, those attending also heard an update from the European Leader Association for Rural Development (ELARD) on CAP reform and the future of Leader. Joyce McMullan from the Northern Ireland Rural Network said: "The event was a great success with participants benefitting from the opportunity to network more broadly, rather than just on specific topics. There were some excellent discussions on how Leader groups can engage in more strategic interventions and take a more proactive approach in shaping activity on the ground." For further information, see the Northern Ireland Rural Network website at www.ruralnetworkni.org.uk.



Networking 'in action' at the Northern Ireland LAGs 'clustering' event.

Dutch Network: Tackles Implications of Depopulation

The Dutch National Rural Network brought together some 100 participants, on 22 September, 2011, to discuss the effects of depopulation in the country. Participants included researchers, elected representatives, public workers and local citizens groups – all of whom travelled to The Hague to discuss the issue. The decreasing population in the Netherlands is having implications for the provision of services, in particular for young people and the elderly, as well as having a negative effect on social cohesion. Recent research findings indicate that the issue urgently needs to be tackled and so this event explored ways to increase citizen participation and capacity building, to tackle the associated decline in services. The increasing number of derelict buildings and offices was also discussed, many of which are now falling into disrepair. For further information on this issue visit the Dutch NRN website at www.netwerkplatteland.nl.



Mark Frequin, Director General Housing, Communities and Integration

Participant voices concern over depopulation at the Dutch NRN event in the Hague.

Spanish Network: White Paper on Transhumance Published

The Spanish NRN has published a White Paper on Transhumance in Spain, which sets out a sustainable future for the declining practice, aimed at engaging all stakeholders. The Network has been actively seeking to promote the role of transhumance and secure its future through a

range of activities, including national and transnational projects. Transhumance has great environmental and cultural significance across Spain's grasslands and meadows, and is closely linked to the high level of Natura 2000 status of these habitats. In addition, the resulting spread of fertilizer from grazing, provides a range of other benefits from protection against soil erosion to fire prevention. However, the practice of transhumance is in decline due to generational changes in agriculture, lack of modernisation and farm profitability. For further information see the 'Over to You- Spain!' article in this Issue, or log on to www.marm.es.

Sheep are led from the 'dehesas' in Southern Spain in search of fresh pastures.

Hungarian Network: Youth Participation in Rural Development

A two-day event aimed at involving rural youth in the Rural Development Programmes for 2014-2020, took place in Budapest, Hungary on 7-9 November, 2011. Organised by the Hungarian NRN, in cooperation with the Agricultural and Rural Youth Association (AGRYA), the event welcomed LAGs, NRNs, youth organisations and young farmer associations from 11 Member States, to discuss how to actively involve young people in rural development. The main themes addressed included youth participation in rural development, the implications of generational challenges in rural development projects, projects

implemented by youth groups, setting up youth associations, innovative projects targeting rural youth and supporting the networking of young people and their organisations. Participants included representatives and speakers from Austria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia. For more information, log on to the Hungarian NRN's website at: www.hungariannationalruralnetwork.eu

Encouraging youth participation in rural development is a priority for the Hungarian NRN.

Latvian Network: Supports Young Entrepreneurs

The Latvian Rural Advisory and Training Centre is extending an initiative to support young people in rural areas to become entrepreneurs. The programme, which was originally piloted in July 2011, is aimed at participants between 18 and 30 years old, who are interested in setting up a new business or social enterprise. The initiative involves a two-day training course to develop their ideas and help them to engage with other people who have experience in entrepreneurship and Leader projects. Students then present their business idea at the end of the training, which is followed up with the availability of one-to-one support from an NRN specialist, to help with the development of a business plan or funding applications for EU measures. By the end of 2011, the programme had run in Ogre, Kraslava, Rezekne and Jelgava regions in Central and Western Latvia. For further information, see the website of the Latvian NRN at www.llkc.lv.

Budding rural entrepreneurs in Latvia, on the two-day training course.



Over to You!

In this section, we share a selection of interesting articles on issues that matter to you - either taken directly from your publications or commissioned especially for this magazine. So, over to you!

Rural Development depends on different factors – one is to support personal development at any age.

Diversity in Society: an Endogenous Resource in Austria

The article appeared in the first issue of the Austrian NRN's magazine 'Ausblicke: Magazin für ländliche Entwicklung' in October 2009. It examines the importance of 'social diversity' in strengthening the potential of rural development policy, both in terms of finding answers to tough questions, and fostering a more open and inclusive rural society.

According to the Swedish innovation expert Kaj Mickos, rural development depends on one resource in particular: the people who live in a region. Regional development is therefore always about encouraging women, men, young people, older people, immigrants, independent thinkers and creative citizens to participate, even with their different interests. The only question is whether the current practice of rural development, sufficiently takes account of social diversity to use it as a resource.

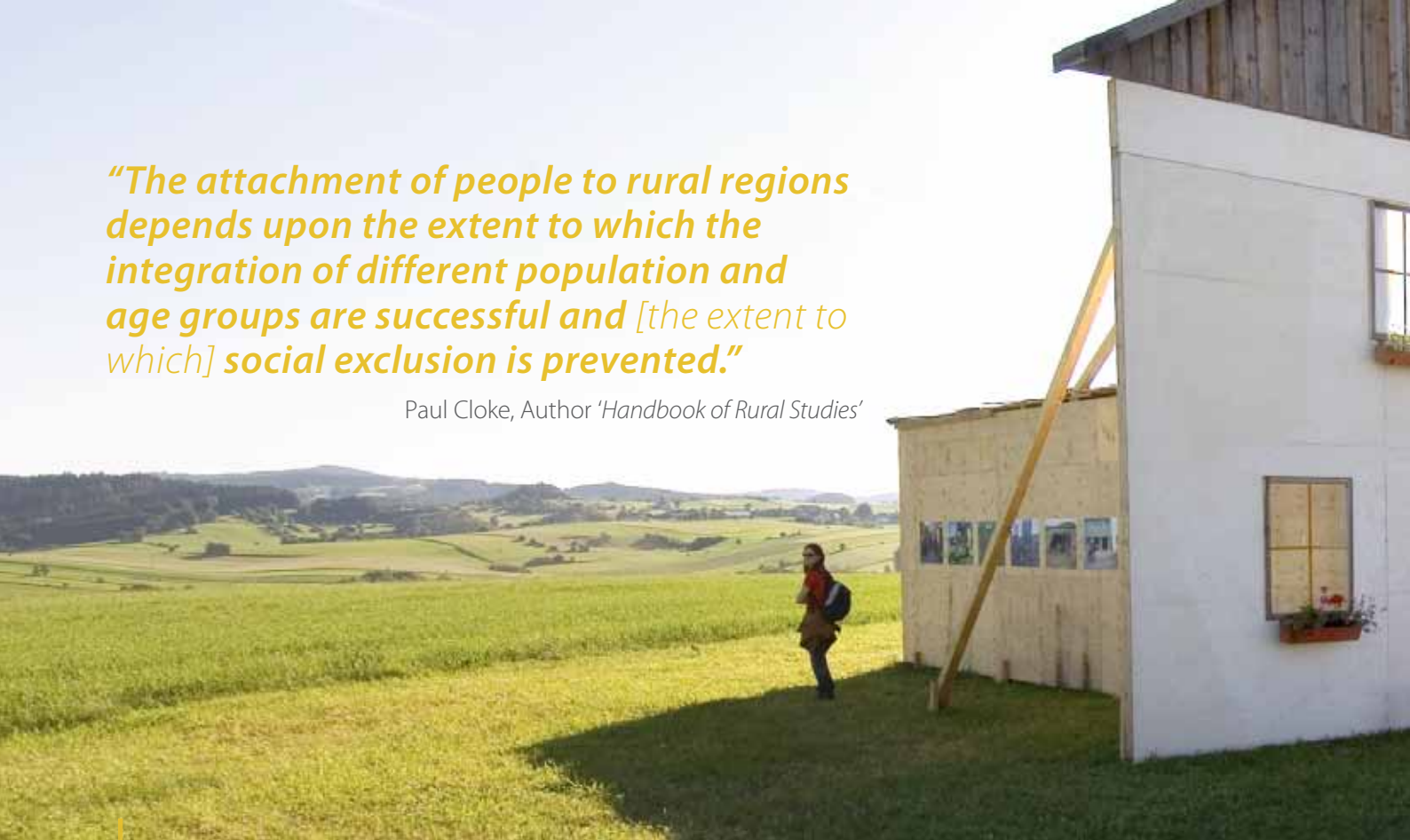
"I have the impression that you have to live a relatively conventional life in rural areas. Social flexibility is often missing: support and respect is not [so common] for those whose specific interests lie outside the mainstream. This lack

of social flexibility is a significant reason why people, not only leave rural areas but also lose their connection to their home region." This comment comes from an interview with the artist Ines Doujak, who moved away from Carinthia. Diversity in different forms is a central theme of her artistic work. Among other areas, she examines the role of stereotypes in the context of gender roles and racism. At the "Documenta 12" event, she contributed an exhibit ("Victory Garden") about the privatisation of genetic diversity through misuse of patent protection for life forms and seeds.

Paul Cloke in his "Handbook of Rural Studies" expresses it differently, but takes a similar line of argument in a contribution entitled "Rurality and Otherness". He writes: "The attachment of people to rural regions depends upon the extent to which the integration of different population

“The attachment of people to rural regions depends upon the extent to which the integration of different population and age groups are successful and [the extent to which] social exclusion is prevented.”

Paul Cloke, Author 'Handbook of Rural Studies'



Festival of Regions 2005: Project “Leben am Hof” (“Living on the farm”) reflects architectural, economic and social structures in the rural area.

and age groups are successful and [the extent to which] social exclusion is prevented.” And Mark Shucksmith notes in his book *Exclusive Countryside? Social Inclusion and Regeneration in Rural Areas*: “Inadequate attention is paid to the changing demands and social relationships of different population groups. Questions of inclusive participation are extremely relevant in rural areas. Social exclusion can develop to a massive extent, particularly in apparently open small community structures,” he says.

The subjective political view of the artist and the analysis of the regional researcher led to the same conclusion: it is not only the often difficult labour-market situation, which leads to migration from rural areas - particularly by young, educated women. Limited “social flexibility” may also play a decisive role.

Social Flexibility Encourages Innovation

Social flexibility in an organisation or region determines the extent to which the people involved can develop their talents and interests and contribute to development. Social flexibility comes from respect, encouragement and use of

diversity. In regions with a high level of social flexibility, being different is seen as a resource and not as a threat. This makes it possible to [find] new ways of seeing things, to have diverse experiences and develop interesting know-how, with the potential to use all of this for the benefit of development.

Consultant and social researcher Heinz Metzen describes the positive use and constructive integration of diversity as a basic precondition for greater self-development. In many companies, especially those operating internationally, the self-development of employees has been encouraged by professional Diversity Management experts for years. The operational direction of Diversity Management aims to achieve increased problem-solving ability in heterogeneous groups. The aim is to harness the “power of diversity” for growth, further development and innovation. Scott E. Page of the University of Michigan describes the link between innovation and diversity with his observations that “diversity powers innovation” and “innovation requires thinking differently”. Network analysis also comes to a similar conclusion: heterogeneously constructed networks are seen as more stable, more creative, more innovative and

more productive. The challenge in achieving these positive effects of heterogeneous networks then, is the successful management of imbalances and tensions.

“This is how we are – and nothing else”

Does current rural and regional development policy foster the social flexibility that makes sustainable use of diversity possible? The answer is probably ‘not always and not everywhere’ – and overall certainly not enough. Women, young people, immigrants and the often quoted independent thinkers outside the mainstream and establishment, are underrepresented in projects and the management of regional development organisations, as they are not really recognised as having “potential” outside standard roles. In addition, the increasing institutionalisation and specialisation of regional development organisations could have negative effects on their originally open, network-like character and thereby on the involvement and productive use of diversity. And the one-sided emphasis on economic efficiency in development work may contribute to only a small circle of individuals being involved, whilst creative potential is overlooked. Another



© Festival der Regionen, Norbert Artner

negative effect on social flexibility comes from the fact that the rapid and secure use of all available EU subsidies is increasingly becoming the driving force for funding organisations. This approach results in little space being left for innovative pilot projects and experimental fields of regional support programmes. Another limiting factor in this context is a gradually observable politicisation of regional and national development organisations. However, an excessive stress on regional identity which is (too) strongly based on tradition and regional characteristics and largely excludes region-independent current (global) values, can also lead to the exclusion of social groups and the restriction of social flexibility. After all, identity, especially when defined very narrowly, means nothing more than: "This is how we are – and nothing else!" It follows that anyone who is not like "us" does not really fit in the picture, unless he or she adapts and ceases to be different. The final consequence of all this can be a limitation of the ability of the region to act and develop. This ability can, according to a recommendation of the "The future in the Alps" project (CIPRA 2005-2008), only be developed "if the regional society and economy is sufficiently diverse to allow individuals a broad spectrum of (social and economic) roles and approaches."

Simply for Reflection

A basic precondition for the encouragement and use of social diversity is 'respectful thinking'. The intelligence researcher Howard Gardner describes 'respectful thinking' as one of the "five intelligences of the 21st century". What he means by this is that respect and recognition depend on the realisation that nobody can live alone or only inside his "tribe" and that the world consists of people who look different, think differently, feel differently and pursue different, but in principle equally valuable, pleasures and goals. Acceptance of this is, according to Gardner, the first decisive step for constructive coexistence (cf. "Psychology Today", July 2009). However, for the functioning of heterogeneous networks – and that is what regional development systems should ideally be – three other factors play an important role. The most important factor for fruitful relationships in networks is confidence in those involved. Critical reflection on whether one's own behaviour builds or destroys confidence is therefore a basic factor in cooperation in diverse network structures. Cooperation between different interest groups does also, however, require a certain degree of generosity. This means in practice that one must not

begrudge "the others" some success and one must deliberately make contributions that benefit the partners. Short-term egotistical expectations and continuous defence of one's own privileges poison cooperation in heterogeneous groups. The third success factor for productive use of social diversity is curiosity. People who are interested in the concerns and problems, knowledge and experience of others, who are open to new relationships, acquire new, alternative ways of development, thereby increasing their options. In this context, "happiness research" comes to the following conclusion – "inquisitive people are happier people."

Applied to rural development, one can also say 'inquisitive regions are happier regions'. Encouraging inquisitiveness and thereby social diversity in rural regions would be a rewarding task for an innovative rural development policy.

Luis Fidschuster,
Netzwerk Land,
ÖAR Regionalberatung

The basis of this contribution: T. Dax, E. Favry, L. Fidschuster et al., Neue Handlungsmöglichkeiten für periphere ländliche Räume [New action perspectives for peripheral rural areas], ÖROK, 2009.



LAGs in the countryside

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Progress of Leader 'Axis 4' in Wallonia

This article, taken from Issue 10 of the 'Ruralités' Magazine of the Walloon NRN (edited mid of 2011) promotes the characteristics and added value of the Leader approach in Wallonia, as well as an overview of the specificities of Leader and the role of LAGs in the region.

'Leader' stands for *Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Economie Rurale* (Links Between the Rural Economy and Development Actions). Originally, it was an EU initiative, which aimed to establish links between rural economy projects and stakeholders. 'Leader' aims to mobilise populations in rural areas, support their ideas and to experiment with new methods. It contributes to improving quality of life in rural areas and economic diversification, is part of a European initiative and promotes the establishment of transnational cooperation (TNC).

An initial selection of 10 LAGs was carried out in July 2008, and 5 new LAGs were chosen in April 2009. The minimal admissibility criteria were the following:

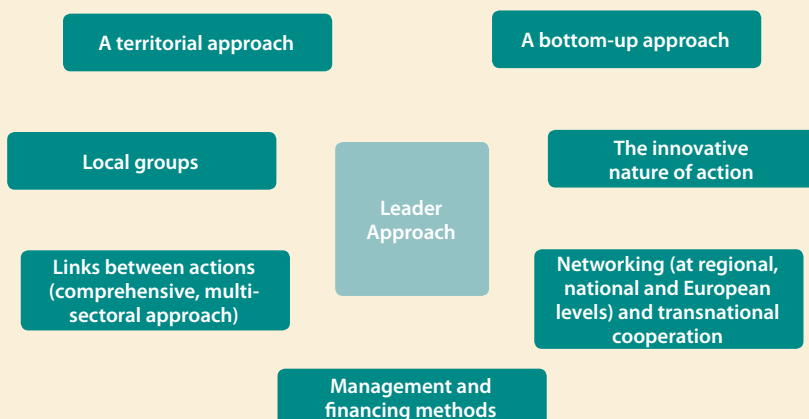
- Number of communes (municipalities) in the LAG (minimum 3);
- Population density (max. 150/km²) or the percentage of undeveloped land (min. 80%);
- Population (between 10 000 and 50 000)
- Representation of the private sector in the LAG structures (min. 50%)
- The 7 characteristics of the Leader approach.

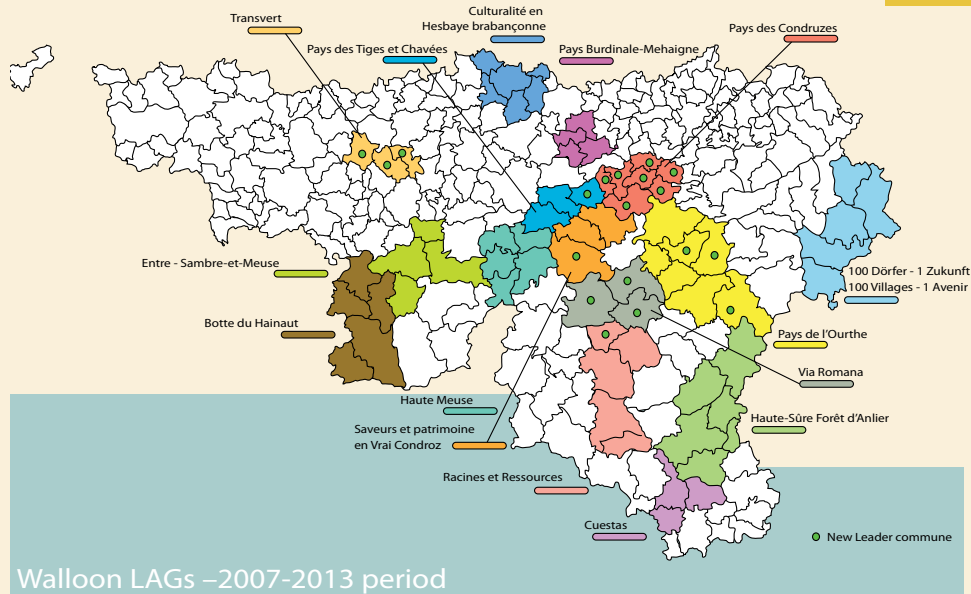
The 2007-2013 Leader 'axis 4' is the fourth Leader phase in Wallonia. After Leader I (1991-1993) and Leader II (1994-1999), most recently fifteen areas have benefitted from opportunities under Leader + (2000-2006). Today,

Leader has become an integral part of regional development instruments and is the fourth axis of European rural development policy.

Local Action Groups (LAGs) bring together public and private partners from different socio-economic sectors. Through a 'bottom-up approach' LAGs are responsible for developing and implementing territorial development strategies.

The results produced by the combination of these characteristics constitute the added value of the Leader approach. The territorial approach enables the initiation of the process based on the resources and special requirements of each area. The bottom-up approach gets local stakeholders to participate, while taking each area's situation into account.





The region of Wallonia has entrusted an interface and intermediation mission to the Rural Foundation of Wallonia (FRW) and to the Centre of Rural Economy (CER). These two bodies support LAGs in the implementation of Leader through training, assistance in setting up projects, and in administrative and financial management.

It creates a new, shared vision of strengths and weaknesses, threats and opportunities, influencing the establishment of objectives and actions. The local group is organised into a horizontal partnership, bringing together local stakeholders and institutions. The innovative nature of actions, links between them and the multi-sectoral approach have an influence on the type of actions and methods chosen. Networking opportunities and transnational cooperation, influence relationships between the local environment and the outside world (sharing of information and knowledge, and the development of common projects). The financing method ensures a certain flexibility in implementation and it guarantees, in most cases, the development of cross-sectoral projects: territorial mobilisation, organisation of local stakeholders, analyses of feasibility and drive, etc.

A Few Figures:

- 15 Local Action Groups covering 69 Walloon communes
- 1.5 million euros (45% Europe, 45% Wallonia and 10% local) per LAG with the possibility of rebalancing by 10% in view of the progress of projects
- 106 projects underway, of which 4 are included under the sub-measure Agriculture and Competition, 11 under the sub-measure Environment, 65 under sub-measure Quality of Life, 11 under Cooperation and 15 under the Acquisition of Skills.

2011 - A Key Year

The implementation of the Strategic Development Plan requires time - time to set up the field teams, mobilise partners, and take the administrative steps linked to each project. Today, the 15 LAGs, which have been set up, show an increasing number of visible and concrete actions. Most of the local projects are engaged in local and regional administrative procedures. This necessary step enables LAGs to proceed with implementing actions and mobilising their area, set up communication actions, and even participate in European events or transnational cooperation projects.

Self-Assessment Exercises

The annual self-assessment, set up by the Leader Administration and Interface, is an important process for LAGs. It constitutes a real opportunity to carry out an evaluation with the team, partners and project managers. The assessment is made up of databases and instruments providing an overview of results, thus enabling LAGs to see the problems that need solving, areas that need improvement and projects that need to be reorganised. During this key year, self-assessment should also help to identify the projects that will benefit from complementary financing, in the rebalancing between the further-advanced and less-advanced LAGs.

The Added Value of the Leader Approach in Wallonia

Although it is still too early to measure the precise impact of the fourth Leader axis in Wallonia, the first 'strong points' of this programming period can now be identified. Various elements indicating the added value of the Leader method illustrate how the [particular] characteristics of the Leader approach have been taken into account, and show clear signs of success in Wallonia.

Creating links, the new local partners, regional Coordination Platforms, Discussion Forums and Working Groups, as well as the recognition of LAGs as relevant regional development actors, all constitute visible results of the Leader delivery system.

Something that is harder to evaluate is the position of rural areas with regard to the challenges of globalisation. However, this is still [possible] for example, through the recognition of local potential and local know-how to retain or attract entrepreneurs to rural areas, the comeback of local products and services as well as the local use of raw materials.

Another factor is the optimisation of movements within an area. The movement of tourism, materials, waste, or simply the water that flows through an area all play different roles. There is an art to channelling these, managing them and developing them ethically and sustainably.



A day between the LAGs on the theme "Gardens and market gardening" (at Phytisia).

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Moreover, rural areas are taking on new functions, as highlighted by LAGs in their role as *observers of trans-communal potential*, as regards regional development and the development of landscapes, services, mobility, culture, etc.

Transfer of experiences and communication (internal, external, etc.) relates to the large amount of information about an area and the structures that support its population – all of which can be obstacles to citizen ownership. Leader provides strong support for the use of the media and the internet, events, knowledge sharing, and the strengthening of rural areas and their products, especially when these lack strong elements of differentiation.

The position of LAGs within a European Network of rural territories enables them to transcend their strong local roots. Transnational cooperation helps them widen their horizons and understand how to position their area at European level. This,

therefore, constitutes a strong added value in terms of acquiring and sharing experience, achieving critical mass and boosting their image.

Co-construction, participation, a trans-sectoral, trans-community approach, the mobilisation of partnerships, and

decision-making tools for elected representatives are all elements used by LAGs to implement their development strategies. These factors guarantee the improved governance of the area, greater transparency and, in many cases, greater accountability among local stakeholders and citizens.



Visit of a Cypriot delegation on the Cuestas territory.

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Onlookers appreciate the spectacle as sheep are led from the 'dehesas' in Southern Spain.

© Roberto Hernandez Yustos

The National Rural Network and Transhumance in Spain: A Safe Bet for Regional Development and Biodiversity

This feature article, taken from the Spanish NRN Magazine, was written by Raquel Cases Nagales, Technical Expert in Rural Development at the Spanish NRN, explains why the practice of transhumance is of great importance for the conservation of natural and cultural heritage in Spain.

The Spanish NRN promotes the revitalisation of transhumance, a practice that is crucial to the preservation of Spain's natural and cultural heritage, which after decades of decline and neglect is now designing its future in the 'White Book on Transhumance'.

As a result of the physical makeup of Spain, Europe's second most mountainous country, with its tall mountains surrounding expansive, arid plateaus and the Mediterranean climate's dry, sweltering summers, we can trace transhumance all the way back to the beginnings of livestock domestication.

Thus, all throughout the Spanish countryside, when the heat begins to dry out the pastures of the valleys and the plateaus, herders and their flocks travel hundreds of kilometres to take advantage of the green grazing land in the mountains until the snow turns them back towards the lands to the south.

So humans adapted to the rhythms of nature in search of otherwise under-utilised natural resources, creating a landscape and culture whose importance in the

preservation of European biodiversity is now being recognised. Spain boasts four of the nine biogeographic regions found in the European Union: Alpine, Atlantic, Macaronesian and Mediterranean - the latter with the largest continuous surface area on the planet. This is the home of over 50% of the habitats designated for priority protection in Europe, with over 80 000 distinct taxa, or 85% of the species of vascular plants recorded in the European Union and half of all European endemisms. With regard to fauna, Spain is host to approximately half of the estimated 142 000 species in Europe. Twenty per cent of Spain is grassland and grazing land, which depend on extensive stock-breeding and transhumance for their conservation and are recognised as priority habitats for the Natura 2000 network. The same can be said of the extraordinary pastures in the southeast of the peninsula, which are an example of humankind and nature living in complete harmony with one another.

The network of livestock roads are associated with transhumance and are a result of

its historical and economic importance to this country, with over 125 000 km of genuine environmental corridors from the winter pastures in the south to the mountain passes in the north. Moreover, they also enjoy the protection that comes with their status as public property (bienes de dominio público) of the Autonomous Communities, a unique designation at international level.

To all of this we can add the vital environmental services, which are important to quantify, even if they do not currently have much value on the stock markets, such as fertilisation provided by grazing, which prevents soil erosion, or the natural cleaning of mountains, which prevents wildfires. This is critical in our country - 75% of which is at risk of desertification. Additionally, transhumance uses relatively few consumables, like feed, compared to intensive stockbreeding, which makes it a key model for stockbreeding systems around the world, in terms of mitigation of and adaptation to climate change.

A lack of generational transmission, modernisation and profitability of operations and the deterioration of the livestock roads have brought about the decline of this activity, which today is in critical danger of disappearing in the near future. Nevertheless, it continues to be the main economic activity in many rural mountainous areas, where physical factors limit other types of agriculture, sustaining the population and enabling the provision of basic services in these rural communities, such as schools and healthcare facilities.

For these reasons, the National Rural Network of Spain is actively contributing to the revitalisation and preservation of transhumance, recognising this holistic vision in the face of other more deeply entrenched views, which regard transhumance as something 'stuck in the past' with no relevance to the macroeconomic figures which influence a country's decisions. It is important to appreciate the fact that transhumance is a key factor in sustainable regional development and that it structures

our rural territory, in connection with preservation of our natural and cultural heritage.

Thus, since 2009, the National Rural Network has supported a Working Group on Transhumance and Extensive Stockbreeding, bringing together representatives from associations for transhumant pastoralists and herders, indigenous breeds, and environmental organisations, with representatives from the Ministry for the Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs (MARM) and the Autonomous Communities for issues related to Livestock Resources and Roads.



© Roberto Hernandez Yustos

This forum discusses issues of interest to transhumant pastoralists, such as meeting animal health requirements, or recognition of the quality of their products.

As a result, the Ministry of the Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs (MARM) has developed a transhumance support programme through the National Rural Network, funded in part by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), with an endowment of €1 600 000. This programme is providing support for herders who undertake seasonal migrations on foot, and conduct activities to raise awareness of the value of herders to society, from presentations and the development of educational materials for schools, to the now famous driving of the sheep through Madrid.

The National Rural Network also promotes transhumance by means of pilot projects for associations, funded in part by the EAFRD and the partnership projects implemented by Local Action Groups (LAGs), with €2.5 million

in funding. A good example would be the PASTOR project, coordinated by the Eastern Asturian Consortium LAG, with the aim of raising the image of herders as providers of public goods. One particularly noteworthy international partnership project is 'WOLF: Wild Life and Farmers', which involves Spanish LAGs along with others from Romania, Estonia and Portugal, and is taking initiatives to enable coexistence of extensive livestock operations with this wild canine. Among the pilot projects, we can note the 'Pastoralism, Transhumance and Biodiversity' project being implemented by the Mediterranean Mountain Foundation, which aims to foster a new job profile in

the information society, and the project being conducted by the Foundation for the Conservation of the Bearded Vulture, which is undertaking initiatives to save this species by promoting the extensive and transhumant pastoralism in the Picos de Europa mountains, on which this endangered species depends

Nevertheless, the biggest challenge taken up by the National Rural Network is the development of the

White Book on Transhumance, expected to be completed by the end of this year. Its development process included taking stock of all of the perspectives converging around transhumance, such as the environment, stockbreeding, health, livestock roads, regional planning, education for children of transhumant pastoralists, tourism and cultural heritage. The intention is to secure the real and effective participation of transhumant pastoralists as a group, a goal which has thus far been largely elusive, due to the sector's unstructured and geographically disperse nature. This document will outline the prospects for the future of this activity, designed with all the groups involved in the world of transhumance in mind, so that it will be socially and economically attractive and so continue to shape and preserve rural Spain's enormous natural and cultural wealth.

Raquel Casas Nogales

Technical Expert in Rural Development at the Spanish National Rural Network



Leader *in Action*



Local Action Groups (LAGs) are local public-private partnerships who work to promote the 'Leader' (bottom-up) approach to rural development in the EU. This section features some of the many LAG based activities and events, which have taken place recently.

NATURAMA participants shoot 'on location' in the Hungarian countryside.

Hungary: **Innovative Video Project Boosts Tourism Potential in Hungary**

An exciting LAG project in Hungary is using an innovative approach to making videos, to attract interest from tourists and locals alike, in the small rural community of Nagyvázsony.

Participatory Video (PV) is an approach, which has been widely used in international development, youth and social work. It involves the production of video using real people, to increase learning capacities and improve communication skills for community development. And in Hungary, the NATURAMA project - a growing network of 11 Leader LAGs, is working with Open University in the UK, to use this method to engage the community in a local tourism project. "PV is being used to document the process of developing local tourist trails, produce rich media for the trail users, and stimulate the interest of local people to participate in the project," says Dr. Gusztáv Nemes, a lead trainer with the project. "However, an even more important aim was to teach the use of PV in community development to NATURAMA members, so they can use it in their own work," he says. The training, which took place for one week in November 2011, included exercises on storytelling and interviewing, as well as camera skills. A practical approach was taken, with different film crews sent on location in the small village of Nagyvázsony, who then worked together to plan and edit their films. The participants in the programme were expected to be proactive and identify themes and ideas on which they would like more input. Base camp was set up

in a local pub, which provided refuge from the cold weather, as well as some welcome coffee – a fundamental staple for all budding film-makers! The end result saw the production of eight excellent short films about the local tourist trail, and lots of fun along the way. Participants blogged the whole project and have also cut together a behind-the-scenes documentary about the process. "I remember sitting in that pub and thinking about how we could keep the spirit of learning alive in our work. It was a really good experience for us, as well as the trainees and locals who took part," said Dr. Nemes. "I think the spirit was summed up best by one of the trainees who said that everyone has his/her own story, but PV becomes our common story," he said. Many Hungarian LAGs are now actively using video in their work and the project has been well received internationally, with lots of interest from other researchers and local development workers. "A number of new PV projects are being planned in other countries and we really look forward to further learning and sharing about PV in other places," says Dr. Nemes.

For further information on the NATURAMA project see the Blog site of the project (in English):

<http://naturamakov.blogspot.com/2010/11/what-were-doing.html>



LAG representatives from Sweden and the UK at the Atomium, in Brussels.

Sweden/UK: LAGs Visit Brussels

LAGs from Sweden and the UK visited Brussels on 23-24 November, 2011, in order to learn more about European structures and to place their own work in a wider European context. The visit, by Swedish Local Action Group Leader Linné and the Northumberland LAG, based in the North of England, is part of their shared commitment to increase their understanding about the EU and gain a wider perspective on how local development activity contributes to wider European strategic objectives. The partners have been working together since 2009, on topics ranging from forestry to traditional skills and handicrafts and they also regularly share information and collaborate on practical projects, thereby gaining an understanding of different cultural approaches. Tom Burston from Northumberland Uplands Leader said: "Our joint visit in November to the European Parliament, the ENRD Contact Point, DG Agri, DG Regio and the Swedish and UK farmers unions has helped the groups reflect on what we are doing on the ground and gain a clearer vision of what we are trying to achieve, in terms of the bigger picture". For further information, see the following websites: www.leaderlinne.se or www.nuleader.eu

Ireland: Active Citizenship Training



Rural Actors from Ballinasloe who completed the Active Citizenship Programme.

Local people in County Galway, Ireland have been benefiting from training sessions, organised by the Local Action Group 'Galway Rural Development', to enhance their local development skills. The five, three-hour training sessions, covered Project and Programme Planning Skills; Committee Management and Development Skills; Facilitation; Accessing Funding in a Changing Funding Environment; and Fundraising, Marketing and PR. One-to-one mentoring was also offered to participants, along with a Community Active Citizenship Toolkit, which included a fund and agency profile section, to help demystify the various levels of support and regulation.

This was the third such programme since 2009 to be offered in

different parts of the region. According to LAG member Ann Flynn, programme implementation in the area "relies on the ability of voluntary groups to take an active part in the decisions that affect them and so this training is helping ensure that they have the necessary confidence and skills to do so". For further information, see www.grd.ie

Germany: Leader Group Discusses Local Development

A local development group who administer the Leader programme in Odenwald, Western Germany, organised a seminar and workshop on 'Quality and Success in Regional Development' on November 8-9, 2011. The group - Interessen Gemeinschaft Odenwald (IGO) - along with over 200 interested individuals and organisations, have developed a strong regional development plan and have been working on establishing the region as the leading 'quality' region in Rhein-Main-Neckar. For further information, see www.region-odenwald.de

Pyrénées-Mediterranean Euroregion: **First LAG Meeting**

The Rural Network Languedoc Roussillon hosted the first meeting of rural actors from the Pyrénées-Mediterranean Euroregion, on 6-7 October, 2011. Over 130 participants from across the region – which covers Catalonia, the Balearic Islands, Languedoc-Roussillon and Midi-Pyrénées – attended the meeting, to exchange experiences about rural development policy, pre and post 2013, as well as to foster cooperation.



Over 130 LAG representatives from the Pyrénées-Mediterranean region attending the Languedoc Roussillon meeting.

Four case study visits were presented on the revival of the olive oil industry in Roussillon; eco-tourism in the Canigou Massif; economic development via cultural heritage in Villefranche-de-Conflent; and wine-based cultural tourism in Bélesta. In addition, the Rural Network Languedoc Roussillon produced a detailed online directory of all Leader LAGs within the region, in three languages (French, Spanish and Catalan). Cooperation projects were also discussed on a range of activities including agriculture, the promotion of local products, business and entrepreneurship, services, culture, heritage, tourism, the environment, renewable energy and ICT. A full list of cooperation offers is available in the *Leader Gateway* section of the ENRD website.

Estonia: **Pärnu Bay Partnership Supports Mushroom Festival**

The Traditional Tihemetsa Mushroom Exhibition, in Estonia, which took place on 10-15 September, 2011, was extended to a five-day event with support from the Pärnu Bay Partnership LAG. The event celebrated the Estonians' rich mushroom culture and incorporated mushroom picking trips, lectures and food workshops culminating in a Mushroom Fair and party on 15 September, 2011. The event is part of the Leader supported initiative 'Romantic Rannatee', which promotes a 250km mushroom path along the Estonian coastline, with services and activities en route. See www.rannatee.ee for further information.



Visitors examining the diversity of Estonian mushrooms presented at the Seene-Festival.

Poland: **'Leader After 2013' Conference**

Over 120 delegates came together in Koźęcin, Poland, to discuss Leader in the context of the 2014-2020 Programme, on 3-5 October, 2011. Mihail Dumitru, Director for Rural Development within the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, told the conference that the Leader approach will continue to be an important tool of rural development policy after 2013. He also stated that the role of the Local Development Strategies should be strengthened in future programmes. In addition, a greater focus on promoting an active approach to capacity building and strengthened participation of the private sector in partnerships is required. For further information, see www.leaderafter2013.eu.



Delegates discuss Leader After 2013 in Koźęcin.

England: **Leader—Now and the Future**

The English National Rural Network (RDPE) hosted a conference to discuss the future of Leader, on 14-15 November, 2011. Themes discussed included practical approaches to Leader delivery until the end of the programme, evaluating the Leader approach, and post 2013 policy developments. Some 150 people from LAGs and organisations, involved in using the Leader approach, attended the meeting, where ideas and information were exchanged on how to maximise opportunities for rural areas and their local communities. In addition, participants discussed the different models developed by LAGs to manage remaining delivery and how best to communicate the benefits of their activity to their rural areas. For further information, see www.rdpnetwork.defra.gov.uk

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Rural Focus

EU rural development is a multi-faceted area, incorporating a diverse range of issues from forestry to rural finance or 'new challenges' like climate change. In this edition, we 'focus' our attention on EU Rural Development Policy after 2013.

EU Rural Development Policy After 2013

New proposals for reforming the CAP after 2013 were announced in October, 2011. The proposals included a *draft regulation*¹ covering support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). As we begin the 50th anniversary of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy, we take a look at the EU's evolving Rural Development Policy – its successes and the challenges yet to be met, as well as how it will develop after 2013.

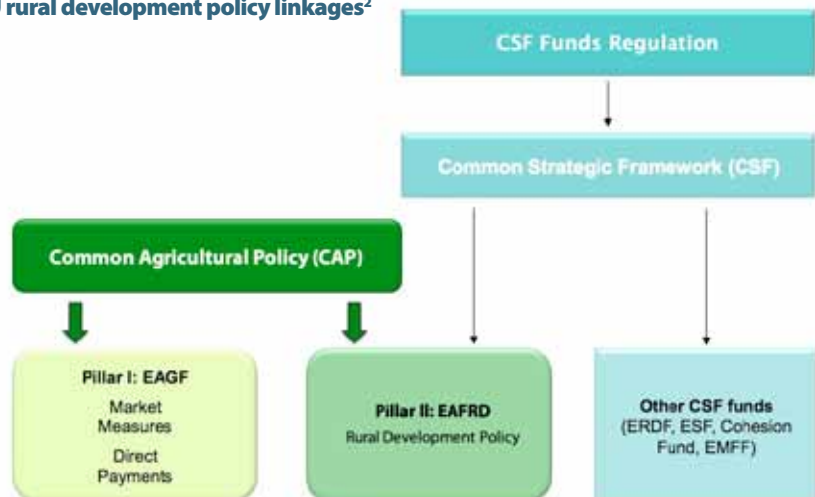
Prior to the year 2000, elements of a Rural Development Policy were embedded in the CAP. However, with the re-organisation of the CAP into two pillars – a separate and specific rural development policy emerged. Both pillars are complementary, the first one covering direct payments and market measures and the second one covering mainly multi-annual rural development measures. And so it is within this context that EU Rural Development Policy, now operates. This evolution has helped the policy to adapt to and reflect key EU priorities.

Its emphasis on the importance of investment has enabled many rural citizens, from farmers to rural entrepreneurs to learn new techniques, upgrade facilities and carry out essential restructuring, thus sharpening their competitive edge. In addition, very substantial provisions for the good of

the environment are helping to turn the tide with regard to the so-called 'new challenges' of biodiversity, greenhouse gas emissions, soil and water quality, and landscape preservation. Rural development policy has also embraced the need to support different types of job creation, as well as the provision of basic services in our countryside. And of course all of this contributes to improving 'quality of life' – crucial for sustaining thriving rural communities.

These positive policy contributions are making a real difference in Europe's countryside, but considerable development challenges remain. Such concerns must be firmly addressed if rural Europe is to fully share in the 'smart', 'sustainable' and 'inclusive

EU rural development policy linkages²





© Tim Hudson

growth' contained in the EU's Europe 2020 strategy. One of the main challenges relates to the EU farm sector, which is still under immense pressure. For example, issues linked to threats such as price volatility requires a robust response if EU agriculture is to remain competitive and maintain its position as the core of the EU's long-term food security strategy.

Environmental threats, though reduced, have for the most part not yet been reversed. Hence, considerable resources are still required to combat climate change and preserve our natural heritage, as well as capitalise on the potential economic gains which the environmental sector offers rural areas. Finally, the progress already made in laying down the essential conditions for attracting people to live in the countryside, must be sustained. Rolling out broadband internet access and setting up basic social services are just two examples of what still needs to be addressed, so that key target groups such as young people, families and businesses, can have viable and attractive alternatives to living in towns and cities.

What the Future Holds for Rural Development

So what does this mean for the future of EU Rural Development Policy? The new EAFRD proposal contained in the new proposals for the CAP after 2013, builds on rural development policy's CAP foundations and is closely aligned to the Europe 2020 strategy for growth for the next decade. Detail from the [EU's multiannual financial framework²](#) for 2014-2020 notes that funding for rural development policy should be maintained at current levels, namely €14.6 billion per annum for the full 2014-2020 programming period. Future funding will ensure that rural development policy continues to go about its business with an evolving approach to match the changes taking place around it. In particular, key aspects of the new proposals include:

- Improved coordination between EU funds in the service of Europe 2020 objectives through: a Common Strategic Framework (CSF) for EU funds, assisting coordination of development action in rural areas; a common Regulation for CSF funds, harmonising certain rules and provisions; Partnership Contracts (PCs), and assisting coordination at national level;
- A new framework for assisting the smooth and effective operation of all RDPs through 'ex-ante conditionalities' (necessary conditions for the effective use of EU support) and provisions for a performance reserve for each RDP, to reward good progress against selected targets;
- Improved strategic programming through: quantified targets set against clear EU priorities for rural development policy, linked to Europe 2020 objectives; a more flexible relationship between measures, combinations of measures and objectives/priorities; the option to design thematic sub-programmes, so as to address more closely the needs of particular types of areas (e.g. mountain areas) or particular groups (e.g. young farmers) within a national or regional programme; the option to design thematic sub-programmes, so as to address more closely the needs of particular types of areas (e.g. mountain areas) or particular groups (e.g. young farmers) within a national or regional programme;
- A simplified menu of measures with improved visibility, scope and conditions and also offering more possibilities in fields such as knowledge-transfer, risk-management and various forms of cooperation (e.g. commercial, environmental);
- Greater potential for local development, with a 'start-up' kit for Leader and clear provisions for capacity-building, as well as the possibility of combining different funds for an integrated local development strategy;
- Support for the European Innovation Partnership (EIP) for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability, which will help bridge the gap between cutting-edge research and practical farming to achieve a stronger and more sustainable farm sector;
- A reinforced networking approach, through the ENRD and two specialist networks (the 'Evaluation Expert Network' and the new 'European Innovation Partnership Network').

Further details of these new developments can be found in the ENRD Publication 'Short Guide to the European Commission's proposals for EU Rural Development after 2013', available to download from [publications page](#) the ENRD website.

1 http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-post-2013/legal-proposals/com627/627_en.pdf
 2 http://ec.europa.eu/budget/biblio/documents/fin_fwk1420/fin_fwk1420_en.cfm



© Raluca Barbu

EAFRD Projects

The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) co-finances an array of rural development projects, across the EU. In each issue we select a few projects that we hope you find interesting and inspiring!

Conserving High Nature Value Grasslands in Transylvania

Traditional agricultural methods, practiced on a family farm in Romania are helping preserve flora and fauna, in one of the most biodiversity-rich areas in Europe.

The Bangala family, who run a cattle and sheep farm in Brasov County, Romania, are implementing a five-year environmental management plan, which commits them to using

only non-intensive farming techniques for its duration. For example, only natural, organic fertiliser can be used, which can never exceed 30kg/ha of nitrogen. Ploughing, rolling and re-seeding are prohibited and mowing is controlled to reduce risks to insects, birds, flowers, animals and other species. In return for their efforts, the family receives funding from the Romanian RDP's High Nature Value

(HNV) Agri-Environment Scheme, amounting to €3 276 per year. This money enables them to provide employment to seven local people for hay making and shepherd duties. In addition, the project has also allowed the family to diversify into rural tourism, as well as produce quality traditional meat and dairy products...demonstrating the real added value of agri-environmental projects.

Innovative Bus Project Tackles Mobility Issues in Germany

An innovative rural development project in the small town of Kipsdorf, Saxony, Germany, is transforming the lives of those local residents with mobility issues.

Mr. Frank Komar, a driver with Sr. Monika's nursing home in Kipsdorf, has been transporting residents to an occupational therapy clinic in a neighbouring town, for over ten years. However, passengers with wheelchairs were uncomfortable with having to be carried on and off the bus. Now thanks to co-funding from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), Mr. Komar has installed a special lift in the bus, which allows for easy wheelchair access. Local resident

Karin Kriegler says the bus has made a huge difference to her life and that of her husband Klaus, who suffered a stroke some years ago. 'The nice thing is that you can make a real journey and my husband is cared for,' she says. In total, the EAFRD contributed €23 800 towards the cost of installing the lift, accounting for 50% of the overall cost. And Mr. Komar feels this project could easily be replicated in other countries. 'People are getting older, and this project fills a niche here in Kipsdorf. But this clientele can be found all across Europe', he says.

To watch a 'Video Postcard' on this project, log on to the RDP database on the [ENRD website](#).



© ENRD Contact Point

Protecting Energy Efficiency on the Farm in Sweden

A vocational training project in Sweden is using EAFRD support to promote the energy efficient driving of farm machinery, farm profitability, and climate action at farm-level.

The project aims to show farmers how simple improvements in driving style, such as regularly checking and changing tyre pressures according to the load on the tractor and prevailing field weather conditions, has benefits for both the environment and farm profitability. In fact, between 10-15% of fuel can be saved through the 'eco-driving' of tractors, combine harvesters or other farm vehicles. Some €23 000 in EAFRD funding was received for activities, which began

with the collection and documentation of available knowledge and experience on the theme of eco-driving in agriculture. This was then applied to the development of a professional 'training-of-trainers' course in the 'economical driving' of agricultural machinery. Currently, at least ten instructors are being trained to lead farm-level training courses throughout Sweden, beginning with a course in the Swedish county of Jönköping. It is estimated that eco-driving would greatly contribute to the agricultural industry reducing emissions by 10-15% in 15 years, saving €60-70 million in agricultural costs every year.



© Sören Dahm, RFE Konsult

Transnational Cooperation: Project Improves School Catering in Belgium and France

An exciting transnational cooperation (TNC) project has been launched between Local Action Groups in Belgium and France, which aims to dramatically improve the standard of collective catering in their communities.

The project, which is entitled 'Local products in collective catering – myth or reality' will demonstrate that cafeteria food can be healthy, nutritious, cost-effective and support local food producers! The Belgian LAG Transvert is the lead partner, cooperating with le Pays de Lafayette, Auvergne, Communauté de communes du Langeadois, France. One particularly interesting element is the

project's emphasis on transforming the dining experience in schools, by encouraging school-boards to implement their 'local food' programme for a trial period, with support provided for sourcing local producers, drawing up menus etc. According to project leaders, catering is at the heart of communities and is as much a social as dietary issue. They add that adopting their programme provides health, local development, educational and environmental benefits for the entire community.

This TNC project started in September 2012 and will run until Dec 31, 2013.



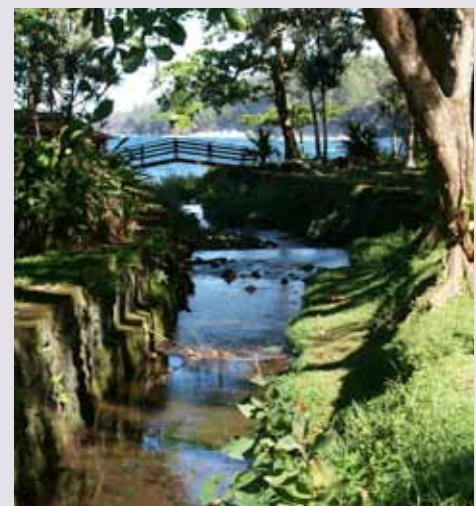
© Vandersteen Joelle

Small-Scale Energy Production from Wood in La Réunion

A small scale bioenergy project in the French island of La Réunion, is evaluating the potential for developing a local industry based on producing gas from wood.

The Regional Energy Agency of Réunion (ARER) is implementing the project, which evaluates conditions for the development of a new industry for producing energy from wood. The operation focuses on four potential sites, located in the upper region of the island, and plans also include the setting up of two trial units for the process of 'wood gasification'. The project is being carried out in six phases,

including initial studies as regards feasibility, the supply of resources (including necessary equipment), the setting up of a renewable energy plant, heat development studies, the recovery of by-products (ash and other waste) and of course the development of small-scale industries (based on an analysis of local geography). The project, for which EAFRD funds contributed €252 000, has already completed a number of wood gasification installations, creating a number of jobs created in each of the trial sites. In addition, project leaders are already evaluating potential for expansion in the region.



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Country Focus

In each issue of ENRD Magazine, we focus on a particular EU Member State - but from a rural development and agricultural perspective.

Belgium

Belgium has a population of 10.4 million and with a GDP higher than the EU 27, it is also one of the world's biggest commercial nations in the world. Of particular advantage is Belgium's central position at the crossroads of Europe, reinforced by the high productivity of its workforce. Of course, its capital city Brussels, hosts the headquarters of the European Union and is a virtual polyglot of international institutions including serving as the European Headquarters for NATO.

The agricultural industry in Belgium has evolved to become a very powerful sector, with productivity ranked amongst the highest in Europe. Although agriculture occupies less than 2% of the active population, it remains an important area of economic activity, as well as engaging about half of Belgium's land surface. Therefore, its impact on the evolution of the Belgian rural landscape is considerable.

Rural development in Belgium is managed on a decentralised basis by the two main administrative regions of the country – Flanders and Wallonia, each of which has responsibility for rural development policy. Flanders is located in the northern part of Belgium, with a population of about six million people, covering a territory of 13 522km² of flat undulating land. About 41% of its population resides in peri-urban areas (particularly Brussels). One quarter of the land area serves urban functions and the remaining three quarters can be characterised as open space. Wallonia is located in the southern part of Belgium, with a population of 3.4 million, comprising a territory of 16 844km². The density of population is 201 inhabitants per km² and 50% of the population live in rural areas.

There is one National Strategic Plan, which provides the overall framework for rural development policy in Belgium. For each administrative region there are separate Rural Development Programmes (RDP), Managing Authorities and Paying Agencies.

The main strategic objectives for rural development in Belgium are similar in both Flanders and Wallonia, primarily focusing upon improving the competitiveness of the agri-food sector by improving skills and encouraging investment. Other key objectives include improving the environment, diversifying the rural economy, increasing rural employment opportunities, preserving rural heritage, maintaining quality landscapes, protecting traditional rural villages and enhancing quality of life in rural areas.

As in all Member States, a rural network aims to facilitate networking and communication between all rural actors. From an organisational point of view, there are two regional rural networks in Belgium, with the Flemish Network acting as contact point for the ENRD.

For further information on Belgium in this issue of ENRD Magazine, please see the NRN Focus section, as well as a special article on Leader in Wallonia featured in the *Over to You* section. In addition, an interesting Belgian Rural Development Project is featured in our Project Profiles pages and as always for more information visit our website at <http://enrd.eu.europa.eu>

Out & About

Smile, you're on camera!
Some of our favourite photos of all the networking activities you've been involved in, over the last few months.



© Narda van der Krogt, De Lynx

Dutch NRN Conference...

All colours of the rainbow at the Dutch Annual Conference in Drenthe, Groningen, on 24 November, 2011. From left to right: Forien Kuijper (NRN); Josien Kapma (associate NRN member); Dorine Rüter (NRN); Vera van Vuuren (LAG Kop van Noord Holland); Rob Janmaat (NRN); and Rita Joldersma (NRN).



© Judit Torok

Networking in Northern Ireland...

Attendees at the Networking Across the Clusters event, hosted by the Rural Network Nireland, in Belfast, Northern Ireland. From left to right: Keith Morrison, DARD; Teresa Canavan, Rural Network, NI; Judit Torok, ENRD CP; and Pauline Keegan, DARD.



© Judit Torok

Discussing Local Development...

Jean Michel Courades, DG AGRI (left) discusses Better Local Development Strategies with Ryan Howard, South and East Cork Aea Development Ltd., (SECAD) at the FG4 meeting in Portugal.



© Dorrine Rüter, ETC Adviesgroep

Down on the Farm...

Farmer, Dirk-Jan Stelling chats with Martine Vonk and Paul Smit on a recent trip to his farm in De Bilt, Holland, for a municipality officer's meeting on Sustainable Food Policies, on 6 September, 2011.



© Judit Torok

Visiting a Local Liquor and Jam producer

Visiting a local liquor and jam producer in Lisbon, Portugal, October, 2011. From left to right:

Avraam Papamichael, LAG manager, Larnaca District Development Agency; Françoise Bonert, Luxembourgish NRN; Judit Torok, ENRD CP; and Jan Beekman, manager Programme Landelijk Gebied (PLG) Hoogeland and Lag member.



© National Rural Development Network SR

Family Fun at Agricultural Fair in Slovakia

Rural citizens from across Slovakia, as well as the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, attended the International Agriculture and Food Fair at the Agrokomplex, Nitra, Slovakia in August 2011.



If you have a question you would like answered, write to our ENRD experts at info@enrd.eu!

Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

Q: *How many LAGs are there in European Union?*

A: 2,308

Q: *How can I change my LAG's details on the LAG database?*

A: *By visiting the 'My Local Action Group' section in the MyENRD section of the ENRD website:*

https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/myenrd/myenrd/en/login_en.cfm.

For any questions related to your log-in details, please contact:

MyENRD@enrd.eu

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