INTERREG IVC
analysis report

Rural development
Credits:

Experts for thematic capitalisation on rural development:

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“The contents of this work reflect the views of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the position of the INTERREG IVC programme. The authors are entirely responsible for the facts and accuracy of the data presented.”
Foreword: Capitalising on achievements

Over the last seven years, with the goal of improving regional policies, more than 2,000 public institutions across Europe have been learning from each other through cooperative policy learning in 204 interregional projects supported by the INTERREG IVC territorial cooperation programme.

The programme can now point to hundreds of examples of how a region or city has built on the experiences of their counterparts elsewhere to enhance their own policy and delivery strategies. A few examples:

- inspired by the approaches taken by the Welsh ECO Centre and an Educational Centre in the Dutch city of Sittard-Geleen, the Hungarian city of Vecsés developed educational activities on renewable energy and sustainability for its school children.
- after consulting the Spanish city of Paterna, the Latvian Daugavpils City Council was able to successfully modernise its soviet-era industrial parks, giving a major boost to business development.
- after consulting the Cypriot authorities, the Greek Region of Crete invested in water recycling and re-use schemes, applying the Cypriot models.

The policy learning enabled by the INTERREG IVC Programme is not just a paper exercise: it has helped, through 204 projects, almost 6,000 staff involved in regional policy to acquire new skills and capabilities, and it has led directly to the improvement of more than 400 policies. The programme was therefore determined to go a step further and share its tremendous wealth of policy experience and know-how even more widely.

The programme therefore asked 12 teams of experts covering 12 different fields of policy to analyse the achievements of its projects and to report back on ‘what works’. This report, which focuses on Rural development, is the fruit of their work. It showcases a selection of tried-and-tested policies and practices in rural development that have been shared through the INTERREG IVC programme, and which will be of interest to all EU regions. Policymakers and practitioners interested in this topic – whether working on regional, national or European scales – will also find policy recommendations tailored to them.

Cooperative policy learning makes sense. It makes sense because, in an era of tight budgetary constraints, local and regional authorities are seeking best value for money, and robust evidence can enhance the chances of policy success by eliminating the risks and costs of trial and error.

To take forward the programme’s key strategic task of sharing policy know-how, the new programme for 2014-2020, INTERREG EUROPE, is developing ‘Policy Learning Platforms’ which will stimulate a process of continuous policy learning among all interested regional policy stakeholders around Europe.

Michel Lamblin
Programme Director

Erwin Siweris
Deputy Programme Director
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Executive Summary

Among the 204 INTERREG IVC projects, nine focus on rural development. Each contributes to one of the three INTERREG IVC thematic sub-objectives, as can be seen in the table below. This report considers the lessons and insights from the achievements of these nine INTERREG IVC rural development projects. We selected innovative practices within the projects as they may be of particular interest to other rural regions and stakeholders.

Table 1: The nine rural development projects contribute to three INTERREG IVC thematic sub-objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stimulating entrepreneurship and SMEs in rural areas</th>
<th>Information society in rural areas</th>
<th>Employment, human capital and education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• B2N - Business to nature – economic development with environmental protection</td>
<td>• E-CREATE – e-skills of tourism related smes</td>
<td>• CESR – employment services in rural areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Robinwood Plus – entrepreneurship through participatory forest planning</td>
<td>• GRISI Plus – the use of GIS in rural areas</td>
<td>• Micropol – Smart Work Centres in non metropolitan areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ICER – innovative policies rural tourism</td>
<td>• DANTE – Rural tourism through ICT</td>
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Source: Ecorys

The approach used (chapter 1)

In the first chapter, we explain how we conducted the work: Firstly, we reviewed the activity reports and the websites of the projects and collected the necessary information and data. Secondly, we analysed the actions and the results of the different projects, making use of desk research, study visits, interviews and workshops. Finally, we selected the most effective and innovative practices for our report and formulated recommendations for other rural regions in Europe based on the selected good practices.

Link between policy, theory, and projects (chapter 2)

In the second chapter, we explain the policy objectives of the European Union. Firstly, we discuss the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy before focusing more specifically on rural development. Our main objective was to find out to what extent the selected INTERREG IVC projects are implementing the European 2020 objectives. This is a particularly relevant question because 50% of the total of jobs in the European Union are located in rural areas. We found that all projects contribute to the EU 2020 objectives.

Secondly, we explored recent findings in the literature on the competitiveness of rural areas, and especially recent insights into drivers and barriers. We investigated if the rural development projects address these drivers and barriers. We found coherence between theory and practice and concluded that all projects deal with one or more of the rural economic drivers and barriers identified in the literature.
Effective and innovative solutions for rural regions (chapter 3)

The third chapter represents the heart of the study and provides an aggregated thematic analysis of the nine INTERREG IVC rural development projects.

First of all, we analyse the thematic area of the projects and conclude that the projects focus on achieving three main effects:
- Stimulating growth and employment (mostly through ICT and rural tourism);
- Better use of natural resources;
- Improving the social and demographic balance (gender, age).

Although the intended effects are similar, we found that the instruments and actions in each project and region are different. To stimulate growth and employment for instance, we found different types of action, varying from the construction of Smart Work Centres (Micropol), to attracting new investments (ICER), to better use of ICT (e-CREATE).

Further, in chapter 3, we detail the outputs and results of each project. In total, the projects identified more than 150 good practices on rural development. We selected and present nine good practices that we think are relatively easy to transfer. Three interesting examples are:
- a marketing and business plan handbook for companies in tourism (e-CREATE);
- an assessment tool for the impact of SMEs on the environment (B2N);
- a free software to use for all regions wishing to develop web apps for tourist routes (e-CREATE).

When aiming to transfer a good practice, it is important to realise that a rural strategy as a whole cannot be copied/pasted. We therefore recommend that each rural region develop a specific approach, adapted to its own regional situation.

We also analysed the innovative character of the projects. We conclude that the projects are not ‘radical’—they do not discover new principles or push the frontiers of science. Nevertheless, they show some innovative features. The innovations have more affinity with social innovation. First, they are usually a new combination or hybrids of existing elements, rather than completely new concepts. Second, their practice involves cutting across organisational or disciplinary boundaries. Lastly, they leave behind dynamic new relationships between previously separate individuals and groups.

Recommendations for rural regions in Europe (chapter 4)

In chapter four, we formulate seven recommendations on rural development for policymakers. We base these recommendations on the findings in the analysis and the numerous recommendations made by the projects:

1. Build integrated solutions to achieve the ambitions of the Europe 2020 strategy;
2. Formulate a specialised offer for entrepreneurs;
3. Develop a diversification strategy for the rural region;
4. Invest in local and external partnerships;
5. Explore all types of innovation;
6. Recognise that ICT in rural areas is a pre-requisite for development;
7. Focus government on facilitating, rather than steering developments.
# Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
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<tr>
<td>AER</td>
<td>Assembly of European Regions</td>
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<tr>
<td>B&amp;B</td>
<td>Bed and Breakfast accommodation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRDT</td>
<td>Regional Committee for Tourism Development of Auvergne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSF</td>
<td>Common Strategic Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DG</td>
<td>Directorate General, European Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DG AGRI</td>
<td>Directorate General of Agriculture and Rural Development, European Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>EAFRD</td>
<td>European Agriculture Fund for Rural Development</td>
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<td>EIP</td>
<td>European Innovation Partnership</td>
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<td>ELARD</td>
<td>European Leader Association for Rural Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>ENRD</td>
<td>European Network for Rural Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>ERDF</td>
<td>European Regional Development Fund</td>
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<td>ESF</td>
<td>European Social Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU28</td>
<td>The 28 member states of the European Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>GIS</td>
<td>Geographical Information Systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and Communication Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAG</td>
<td>Local Action Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEADER</td>
<td>Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Economie Rurale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUTS</td>
<td>Nomenclature of Units for Territorial Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R&amp;D</td>
<td>Research and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RURACT</td>
<td>Rural Activities, initiative from AER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SME</td>
<td>Small and Medium-sized Enterprises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWOT</td>
<td>Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Threat</td>
</tr>
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1. Introduction and methodology

1.1 An introduction to this study on rural development

This report ‘capitalises’ the results of nine INTERREG IVC rural development projects. The notion of ‘capitalisation’ involves collecting, analysing and highlighting the invaluable, innovative, interesting and useful aspects of the work carried out within these projects, and of the knowledge gained as a result of project cooperation, with a view to their being used or replicated by other regions and stakeholders.

The INTERREG IVC programme enables regional and local authorities and other stakeholders to improve their policies, methods and capacities in different policy areas including innovation and the knowledge economy. The present capitalisation study covers nine projects that address the issue of rural development.

What exactly is rural development? Rural development generally refers to the process of improving the quality of life and economic well-being of people living in relatively isolated and sparsely populated areas. Rural development has traditionally focused on the exploitation of land-intensive natural resources such as agriculture and forestry.

However, changes in global production networks and increased urbanisation have changed the character of rural areas. Increasingly, tourism, niche manufacturers, and recreation have replaced resource extraction and agriculture as dominant economic drivers. “The need for rural communities to approach development from a wider perspective has created more focus on a broad range of development goals rather than merely creating incentives for agricultural or resource based businesses. Education, entrepreneurship, physical infrastructure, and social infrastructure all play an important role in developing rural regions.”

Rural development can also be characterised by its emphasis on locally produced economic development strategies. In contrast to urban regions, which have many commonalities between them, rural areas are highly distinctive from one another. For this reason, there is a large variety of rural development approaches across regions and the world.

This variety and these trends are also visible in the nine INTERREG IVC rural development projects. The projects focus on aspects such as innovation, research, and technology development, stimulating entrepreneurship and SMEs and stimulating employment, human capital, and education in rural areas.

3 Westport, Conn. (1996) “Rural development research: a foundation for policy” (1. publ. ed.). [u.a.]: Greenwood Press. ISBN 0-313-29726-
1.2 Methodology

The methodology used to analyse the results of the nine projects consists of three stages: data collection, analysis, and validation, as described in the figures below.

Figure 1.1 Approach used for the capitalisation of INTERREG IVC rural development projects

Data collection
(project database, interviews, document study)

- Rural development theory
- EU Rural policy
- The 9 INTERREG IVC rural projects

Analysis
(study visits, interviews, desk research, thematic workshops)

- Objectives, strategy
- Challenges
- Results, approaches

Validation
(publication, reports, presentations, thematic community)

- Good practices: innovative and effective approaches for rural regions
- Recommendations to projects
- Policy recommendations

Source: Ecorys/IDEA Consult

Figure 1.2 Activities undertaken for the capitalisation of INTERREG IVC rural development projects

Data collection

- Study of the INTERREG database and project websites (project application forms, progress reports, communication material).
- Collection of research and policy documents on rural development.
- Survey among the nine rural development projects
- Emails, interviews, and visits to the projects

Analysis

- Analyses of the data and comparison with EU policy and recent academic findings.
- Summary in grids to identify commonalities, differences, and complementarities between projects and to analyse effectiveness (results) and innovative approaches.

Validation

- Thematic workshops on 6 November 2012 and 20 November 2013 with representatives from the nine rural projects and representatives of rural networks (ELARD, ENRD) to discuss results, innovativeness, effectiveness, and to identify synergies.
- Presentations (Final conferences of the projects, EU Open Days, RURACT)
- Develop this report and a short publication
- Develop an awareness paper on the results and disseminate it

Source: Ecorys
Research questions

The report answers the following research questions:

1. What are the common features, challenges, difficulties or successes among the projects of the same topic?
2. In particular, do these projects have similar good practices in common? If yes, what are these good practices? Are they easily transferable to other regions? Can they be further disseminated for the benefit of other regions?
3. Did the partner regions find different solutions to the same issue?
4. Does one region have a particularly interesting or innovative practice or policy that merits being made available to other regions in Europe?
5. Has a project achieved a particular interesting result (e.g. in terms of good practices transfer or policies improved) which could be useful for the other projects in the same topic and more generally for other local/regional authorities dealing with that topic?
6. Have the participating regions identified core pre-requisites for the successful implementation of their regional policy in the area concerned?
7. Depending on the expert's knowledge, are there any possible synergies between the concerned projects and initiatives undertaken in other EU programmes?
8. Based on the findings of the analysis, can specific recommendations be made to individual projects which may not be aware of important practices / policies or which may be less advanced and experienced than other projects?
9. Based on the answers to all the above questions, what lessons can be learnt and what policy recommendations can be made for policymakers at regional, national and/or European levels?

1.3 Structure of this report

This report is divided into the following parts:

1. **Introduction** (this chapter 1) - gives a definition of rural development and describes the approach used.
2. **Policy context** (chapter 2) - provides background information on rural development, including the main EU policy objectives, the current focus of EU rural development policy, the future focus of EU rural development policy as well as trends in rural development throughout the EU.
3. **Analysis of the rural development projects** (chapter 3) - represents the heart of the study and provides an aggregated thematic analysis of the nine INTERREG IVC rural development projects. This analysis includes possible synergies between projects, similar issues faced, links established between projects within and outside the programme, project results and impact achieved and their relevance within the EU relevant policies). It provides details on interesting and innovative regional policies and describes nine identified good practices.
4. **Key policy messages and conclusions** (chapter 4) – outlines relevant findings for other regions in Europe and policy recommendations for the national and European levels.

Detailed descriptions of the analysed projects as well as contact details and some quantified information about the results of the nine projects are available at the annexes.
2. Policy Context: Rural development in a European perspective

This chapter describes the strategic focus of EU policy in general (2.1), the focus of EU rural development policy (2.2), the future of rural development policy (2.3) and the added value of interregional cooperation in the field of rural development (2.4).

2.1 Europe 2020: strengthening economic, social, and territorial cohesion

The main policy objectives and priorities of the European Commission are laid out in its Europe 2020 strategy, namely to strive for smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth. Investing in research, development and innovation, in resource-efficient and low-carbon technologies, education, and employment will benefit traditional sectors as well as high skills and service economies in both urban and rural areas. This will reinforce economic, social, and territorial cohesion throughout the Union.

More specifically, the Europe 2020 strategy lays out the following mutually reinforcing priorities:

- **Smart growth:**
  - research/innovation, mainly on climate change, energy, resource efficiency, health, and demographic change
  - the digital society
  - education and its match with the labour market needs

- **Sustainable growth:**
  - promoting a low-carbon economy, environmental protection, new green technologies
  - building efficient electricity grids
  - improving business environments
  - helping consumers make well-informed decisions

- **Inclusive growth:**
  - Fostering a high-employment economy, delivering social and territorial cohesion, which ensures:
    - more and better jobs
    - investment in skills
    - the modernisation of labour markets
    - benefits of growth reaching all parts of the EU

Table 2.1 Main objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy

Europe 2020 puts forward three mutually reinforcing priorities:

- Smart growth: developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation.
- Sustainable growth: promoting a more resource efficient, greener and more competitive economy.
- Inclusive growth: fostering a high-employment economy delivering social and territorial cohesion.

Source: Ecorys on basis of the Europe 2020 strategy from the European Commission

The relevance of these main objectives for rural areas are as follows.
Smart growth
Smart growth is stimulated through research, development and innovation, digital society and education:

1. **Research, development and innovation:**
   - R&D and innovation in areas related to climate change and energy and resource efficiency have specific significance for rural areas. The effects of climate change and environmental degradation are in particular being felt in rural areas and its main sector: agriculture. R&D and innovation offer great potential to tackle these challenges through a green and bio-based economy.
   - The INTERREG IVC projects among those analysed here focusing on smart growth are for example: ICER through its non-technological innovation in rural tourism and RURALAND through its diversification of the rural area (see Chapter 3 and Annex for more explanation on the projects).

2. **Digital society:**
   - Improving the accessibility and connectivity of rural economies through ICT is an important means to unlocking their potential. The INTERREG IVC projects DANTE, eCREATE and GRISI PLUS focus directly on this goal by exchanging good practices on ICT in rural areas.

3. **Education:**
   - Rural areas face significant demographic challenges, a relatively low educated population, and mismatches between the education programmes and courses available on the one hand and demand in the local economy on the other hand (people not being educated in the fields/skills that are needed). The initiative ‘Youth on the Move’ embedded in Europe 2020 strategy aims at improving education facilities and their linkage with the labour market.

Sustainable growth
The sustainable growth priority in the Europe 2020 strategy aims at re-strengthening the economy, particularly industry, while promoting resource efficiency and protecting the environment. One of the objectives identified under this priority is to develop more sustainable agriculture.

Improving the competitiveness of agriculture and related sectors can also be included in the new industrial policy. Furthermore, supporting SME development in new ‘rural’ sectors can contribute to the Europe 2020 goals, as many rural businesses are SMEs. The INTERREG IVC projects that address sustainable growth are, for example: Robinwood PLUS, enabling sustainable growth through a participatory approach in forest management, and B2N, stimulating sustainable growth through integrated planning.

Moreover, rural areas can potentially be a major supplier of renewable energies (water, wind, sun, biomass, etc.) both for themselves and for other territories. Yet, at the same time, rural and agricultural areas have specific energy needs, and sometimes have difficulty accessing the right, clean energy mix.

Inclusive growth
Inclusive growth aims to modernise the labour market, to invest in skills and to create more and better jobs. One of the main pre-conditions for rural areas to enable inclusive growth is the development of human capital. The INTERREG IVC project Micropol does this by developing smart work centres in rural areas.

Rural Europe includes many of the most remote territories in Europe, with their sometimes impoverished populations and marginalised communities, with insufficient public services and lack of economic opportunities. Specific investments in this area are therefore necessary. The INTERREG IVC project CesR facilitates the necessary investments by linking services for rural tourism in innovative ways.

Through such investments, rural areas can prove themselves as attractive life and work alternatives for people from metropolitan areas suffering from the crisis, looking for a quieter, cleaner, more pleasant and more community-based living environment.

2.2 EU policy on rural development

More than half of the population of the European Union lives in predominantly or intermediate rural areas. These regions produce 45% of the gross value added and provide 53% of the employment in the European Union. In terms of land use, rural areas represent 93% of the territory of the Union, with 20% of the population living in predominantly rural areas and 38% in significantly rural areas.4

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4 The data are based on the situation in 2012 (EU27, before the accession of Croatia).
European rural policy is making a real difference in Europe’s countryside, yet considerable development challenges do persist. Such concerns must be firmly addressed if rural Europe is to fully share in the ‘smart’, ‘sustainable’ and ‘inclusive’ growth advocated by the Europe 2020 strategy. A few of the main challenges are:

- Supporting the EU farm sector, which is still under immense pressure, enabling it to hold its ground in competitive global markets and remain one of the central props of the EU’s long-term food security.
- Helping to give economic gains in rural areas a sound environmental dimension. Even better care for natural heritage is needed to combat the development and impact of climate change.
- Sustaining the essential conditions for successful living in the countryside. Rolling out broadband internet access and setting up basic social services are just two examples of the many conditions that need to be addressed so that priority groups such as young people, families, and businesses can have a viable and attractive alternative to living in towns and cities.

Since its inception, rural development policy has focused on strengthening the competitiveness of the agricultural sector. Its emphasis on investment to boost competitiveness has enabled many farmers to learn new techniques, upgrade facilities, and carry out essential restructuring, thereby sharpening their competitive edge. In addition, rural development policy pays particular attention to protecting and improving the natural environment, helping to counter challenges related to biodiversity, greenhouse gas emissions, soil and water quality, and landscape preservation. Finally, rural development policy also incorporates continuous support for different types of job creation, as well as the provision of basic services in the countryside and the physical upgrading of local community facilities. These help to promote quality of life. In the European 2014-2020 Rural Development Programmes, the link with the EU 2020 strategy for growth is strengthened (see overview below). The 2014-2020 Rural Development Programmes will focus on:

1. Competitiveness of all types of agriculture and farm business
2. Food chain organisation and risk management
3. Restoring, preserving, and enhancing ecosystems
4. Resource efficiency and the shift towards a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy
5. Social inclusion, poverty reduction, and economy development in rural areas
### Figure 2.3 Rural development in a new framework for 2014-2020

#### 2.3 The added value of interregional cooperation for rural development

The added value of the INTERREG IVC programme compared to other EU initiatives lies in the exchange throughout Europe of good practices and experiences that enable regions to improve the effectiveness of their regional policy in the field of rural development. Without INTERREG IVC funding, the 95 partners of the nine projects would not have been able to improve their own rural development policies by learning from their partners’ good practices. Through all INTERREG IVC projects, a large number of good practices have become available which can be found at [http://www.interreg4c.eu/good-practices](http://www.interreg4c.eu/good-practices). See also chapter three and the annex of this report for more details on the nine projects.

More specifically, INTERREG IVC distinguishes itself from other programmes related to rural development by:

- **Disseminating best practices between local authorities on an international level** - and the fact that these local authorities (the civil servants) receive funding for site visits in order to better understand what can be done in rural development (for example by stimulating rural tourism) - without INTERREG IVC this exchange would most likely not be possible.

- **Bringing local and regional politicians together** in an international arena - we know that having an active policy for rural development at local, regional, and national policy levels will actually enable them to increase their expertise and interest regarding regional and local policy and will thereby stimulate the rural development of regions.

- **Improving the effectiveness of regional policies**. Exchanging on rural development and discussing common issues helps regional and local authorities to overcome the barriers in rural development and to strengthen their own policies by learning from other regions. The cooperation between regions and experts often continues after the INTERREG IVC projects.

- **Enabling transferability**. Regions and local authorities start working together on rural development policies thanks to INTERREG IVC. They actually transfer good practices to other regions. For example in the RURALAND project, Pazardzhik (Bulgaria) is cooperating with
Andalusia on optimising the Spa Potential of Pazardzhik. Regions are at varying stages of progress. To make sure that Pazardzhik can transfer the good practice of Andalusia (Spain), the Pazardzhik region receives help from Andalusia in drafting an implementation plan and transferring the good practice.

- **Supporting all levels of uptake.** What is innovative for one region can already be commonplace for another. INTERREG IVC enables regions to learn from each other. This is a key strength of the INTERREG IVC programme in comparison to other EC programmes as it is designed to engage and support all levels of take up, from the cutting edge to the replication of what is common practice to some. For example, having a support model for improving tourism accommodation (*ICER* project: Nattitude in Auvergne, France) may no longer be new in France, but it will be very helpful for other European regions.

- **Small funding for networking enables innovation.** Networking and exchanging experiences through INTERREG IVC enables regions to learn from other regions. They learn how to stimulate their own rural development and how to do this in an innovative way.
3. Analysis of the INTERREG IVC rural development projects

This chapter presents the analysis of the projects:

1. The analysis begins with an overview and description of the nine rural development projects (section 3.1). More details on the projects can be found in the annexes.

2. The analysis then focuses on common issues, solutions, and challenges in the projects and addresses the following questions:
   - What are the thematic areas of the projects? (section 3.2.1)
   - How do the projects relate to economic drivers and barriers presented in EU literature on rural development? (3.2.2)
   - What strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, or threats of rural areas do the projects focus on? (3.2.3)
   - What is the dominant strategic focus (is it defensive or offensive)? (3.2.3)
   - What are the results of the projects (how effective are they) and (under which conditions) can they be transferred? (3.3.1 and 3.3.2)
   - What synergy is possible between the projects or with other initiatives? (3.3.3)
   - How innovative are the projects? This part of the analysis looks at nine good practices. (3.4)

3.1 Overview of the INTERREG IVC rural development projects

Among the 204 INTERREG IVC projects, there are nine with a clear focus on rural development. The projects run in general for 36 months. Two projects were completed in 2012 (B2N and ICER). RURALAND and Robinwood PLUS ended in 2013. The remaining five projects are due to end in December 2014. The table below summarises the topics addressed by the projects. Further information on the objectives, activities, partners, budget, website, and duration can be found in Annex 3.

Table 3.1 Overview of the nine INTERREG IVC projects on rural development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>years</th>
<th>Full title (underlined) and objective of the project</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B2N</td>
<td>2010-2012</td>
<td>Business to Nature - Interregional Approach to SMEs and Entrepreneurship Policies in Natural Areas: To improve the effectiveness of regional development policies related to entrepreneurship and SME development. The focus is on SMEs that benefit from/depend upon the region’s natural attractiveness and have a particular potential for developing tourism-related economic activities by assisting them to develop and grow in a more innovative and sustainable way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICER</td>
<td>2010-2012</td>
<td>Innovative Concept of Eco-accommodation approach in rural Regions: To influence public policies aimed at supporting tourist project promoters and to make rural regions attractive to investors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RURALAND</td>
<td>2010-2013</td>
<td>Rural Development Players: To reinforce the efficacy and innovation of regional rural development policies aimed at economic diversification in rural areas in four thematic areas: investments, renewable energy, cultural and natural heritage, employment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robinwood PLUS</td>
<td>2010-2013</td>
<td>Apply participatory forest planning for sustainability (mini programme): To promote the multifunctional role of forests as a driving force for economic development, environment protection, and improvement of quality of life in rural areas, in accordance with the EU’s forest action plan and sustainability policies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DANTE</td>
<td>2012-2014</td>
<td>Digital Agenda for New Tourism Approach in European Rural and Mountain Areas: To ensure better integration of the ICT agenda into tourism policies dealing with mountainous and rural areas or Europe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-CREATE</td>
<td>2012-2014</td>
<td>Cultural Routes Entrepreneurship and Technologies Enhancement: To improve public policies aimed at promoting the competitiveness of business activities in rural areas, especially service-oriented companies along tourism routes (development of e-skills among tourism-related SME).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project</td>
<td>years</td>
<td>Full title (underlined) and objective of the project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRISI PLUS</td>
<td>2012-2014</td>
<td><strong>Geomatics Rural Information Society Initiative:</strong> To improve the effectiveness of and to modernize and enhance public rural development policies in partner regions by increasing the use of geographical information and geomatics tools by creating geportals for villages seeking to attract new inhabitants and businesses. These portals can provide information about regional practices aimed at welcoming newcomers, opportunities, and can be used to promote local tangible and intangible goods on the internet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CesR</td>
<td>2012-2014</td>
<td><strong>Cooperatives of Employment and Services in Rural areas (for the elderly and tourism):</strong> To identify and transfer public policies or instruments designed to create, reinforce, and safeguard employment opportunities in the services sector in rural areas by identifying: 1) effective public strategies for sustainable jobs in the field of home care services and lifestyle, 2) policies that encourage the creation of services in the rural tourism sector, 3) instruments designed to create a link between home care services and tourism services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Micropol</td>
<td>2012-2014</td>
<td><strong>Smart Work Centres in Non-Metropolitan areas:</strong> To improve the effectiveness of local and regional policies and instruments for the stimulation of growth and employment in non-metropolitan areas. This is achieved by improving the knowledge and strategies of local and regional governments on how to implement Smart Work Centres in order 1) to increase the possibilities and incentives for telework, 2) to support entrepreneurship and 3) to deliver public services.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Ecorys/IDEA Consult on basis of the Application Forms and websites of the INTERREG IVC projects*

### 3.2 Common issues, solutions and challenges identified within INTERREG IVC rural development projects

The analysis of the common issues and challenges identified within INTERREG IVC rural development projects consists of:

- **the thematic focus.** What is the main topic of the rural development projects? And how do they interrelate with INTERREG IVC objectives? (3.2.1)
- **the drivers and barriers** of rural development. Which barriers and drivers for rural development are being addressed by the INTERREG IVC projects? (3.2.2)
- **the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT)** of rural areas. To what extent do the projects actually deal with the SWOT of rural areas. (3.2.3)

#### 3.2.1 The thematic focus of the INTERREG IVC rural development projects

The INTERREG IVC rural development projects focus on three objectives, which correspond to the following three sub-themes of the INTERREG IVC programme: 1) stimulating entrepreneurship and SMEs in rural areas, 2) stimulating the information society in rural areas, 3) stimulating employment, human capital, and education (see figure below).
The nine rural development projects contribute to three sub-themes of INTERREG IVC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stimulating entrepreneurship and SMEs in rural areas</th>
<th>Information society in rural areas</th>
<th>Employment, human capital and education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- B2N - Business to nature – economic development with environmental protection</td>
<td>- E-CREATE – e-skills of tourism related SMEs</td>
<td>- CESR – employment services in rural areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Robinwood Plus – entrepreneurship through participatory forest planning</td>
<td>- GRISI Plus – the use of GIS in rural areas</td>
<td>- Micropol – Smart Work Centres in non metropolitan areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- ICER – innovative policies rural tourism</td>
<td>- DANTE – Rural tourism through ICT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Ruraland – diversify rural economy with innovative SME’s</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ecorys/IDEA Consult based on information from INTERREG IVC

Four projects aim to stimulate entrepreneurship and SMEs in several economic sectors in rural areas, two of them in tourism (B2N; ICER), one in forestry (Robinwood PLUS) and one in a variety of sectors (RURALAND). In addition, the use of the ICT to attract tourists (e-CREATE, DANTE), SMEs, or new inhabitants (GRISI PLUS) to the area is the main thematic focus for three of the projects. Lastly, both CesR and Micropol have a focus on employment, human capital, and education, their objective being to increase the appeal of rural areas for SMEs.

Economic development through tourism in INTERREG IVC rural development projects
When analysing the projects in more detail, the following observations can be made:

- **Tourism** (as a new economic driver) seems to be a dominant theme in two thirds of the projects (six of the nine);
- The motivation behind all the projects is **economic** (growth and employment in rural areas), but always in relation with social or environmental objectives (i.e. sustainable development);
- There is a focus in most projects on **endogenous development** (‘development driven from within the rural areas themselves’). The exogenous perspective and the relationship with surrounding urban areas, on the other hand, is less present in the projects, however, it is present in ICER and GRISI PLUS. This perspective can also be found in other INTERREG-projects such as Peri-urban (peri-urban parks) and URMA (partnership urban-rural).
- **The accessibility** of rural regions is not defined as being a problem of road infrastructure, but more in terms of internet and broadband connectivity.

As mentioned above, most projects focus on stimulating growth and employment (mostly through ICT and rural tourism), better use of natural resources, or social and demographic balance (gender and age). The overview below shows which instruments, actions, and good practices the INTERREG IVC projects use to stimulate development in rural areas.
Table 3.3 The instruments, actions and results in the INTERREG IVC projects structured per effect

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expected effects</th>
<th>Instruments / Actions / Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Growth and employment</td>
<td>• Supporting infrastructure: Smart Work Centres (<em>Micropol</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Diversifying the economy (<em>B2N</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Creation of new product combinations (<em>DANTE</em>) or services (<em>CesR</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Attracting new investments (<em>ICER</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Better use of ICT (<em>e-CREATE</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Develop supporting services to businesses (<em>GRISI PLUS</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Better networking and marketing (<em>ICER</em>: Nattitude)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better use of natural resources</td>
<td>• Better management of the resources (<em>Robinwood PLUS</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Assessment or regulation of SME activities related to nature (<em>B2N</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Action plans on clean technology such as biogas or renewable energy (<em>RURALAND</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and demographic balance: gender, young people</td>
<td>• Gender action plan (<em>RURALAND</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The use of GIS to attract new inhabitants and entrepreneurs (<em>GRISI PLUS</em>)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ecorys/IDEA Consult

3.2.2 Projects dealing with all key drivers and barriers to rural development

In 2010, DG AGRI published the first study at NUTS3 level, which, among other things, analysed developments in rural areas extensively and defined key drivers and barriers for rural development. This was achieved through extensive research in different regions on what is actually stimulating rural development (drivers) and what is keeping regions from being developed (barriers). For many rural areas, employment in the agriculture, agri-food and tourism sectors may be essential in accounting for local economic performance. However, there are a number of other, ‘less tangible’ factors that influence the growth performance of rural areas. All drivers and barriers are tackled by one or several of the nine INTERREG IVC projects on rural development, as shown below.

Key drivers for rural development

The key drivers that have the most positive effect on the development of rural areas are:

D1. **Natural resources and environmental quality**: This is seen as the most important driver for economic development. Having natural resources and a quality environment enable and attract tourism. Furthermore, natural resources provide the basis for industrial activity, ranging from water extraction and bottling to extractive industries (mining, stone quarrying) and commercial fishing. Examples of INTERREG IVC projects making use of natural resources and environmental quality to stimulate the rural area: *B2N* contributes to the protection of nature by making optimal use of business capacity when focusing on vulnerable areas. *Robinwood PLUS* makes use of the natural resources (forest management) to stimulate economic development.

D2. **Sectoral structure of the economy** (dominant services): Ensuring the diversity of the rural economy is considered as the second most important driver for rural development. Many rural economies include a good range of sectors, with tourism, agriculture, food and drink not surprisingly being predominant for the most part, but with additional sectors in construction, energy and services all figuring as significant economic drivers in many regions. Examples of INTERREG IVC projects focusing on diversifying the rural area: *RURALAND* addresses the diversification of rural areas. *ICER* focuses on innovative concepts for tourism services, making use of natural resources.

D3. **Quality of life and cultural capital**: The quality of life offered by rural areas and the cultural capital often associated with ‘rural life’ is a key attraction for adventurous entrepreneurs and industry. It is also a strong motivational factor for people who wish to stay in or are attracted to rural communities, although

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5 Ecorys, 2010, Study on Employment, Growth and Innovation in Rural Areas - SEGIRA
in practice it attracts more retirees of non-economic ‘value’ than it retains/attracts younger people who are more likely to contribute to economic growth. Examples of INTERREG IVC projects making use of quality of life and cultural capital to stimulate the rural area: e-CREATE stimulates cultural capital by developing ICT tools (e.g. cultural route apps). DANTE deploys concepts that promote ICT tools for rural tourism.

D4. Infrastructure and accessibility (ICT and transport connectivity). Having good access through road, rail, airport, and ICT accessibility is a driver for attracting people. Examples of INTERREG IVC projects making use of infrastructure and accessibility to stimulate the rural area: several projects seek to stimulate ICT connectivity: e-CREATE and DANTE both through ICT tools for tourism. Micropol stimulates the use of Smart Work Centres (ICT accessibility). GRISI PLUS stimulates the use of GIS in rural areas.

D5. Human capital, (entrepreneurial) capacity. Having the right people and entrepreneurial capacity in the region is a further driver for the development of rural areas. Examples of INTERREG IVC projects making use of human capacity and entrepreneurial capacity to stimulate the rural area: B2N contributes by stimulating entrepreneurship. ICER focuses on innovative concepts for tourism services. CesR stimulates by creating self-accommodation service networks.

D6. Social and institutional capital, networks. The availability of social and institutional capital and networks is the final driver for the development of rural areas. Examples of INTERREG IVC projects making use of social and institutional capital and networks to stimulate the rural area: GRISI PLUS makes use of the institutional capital to support entrepreneurs. ICER also makes use of the institutional capital to improve the tourism offer.

Key barriers to rural development

Although there are more key barriers, the following are the most important ones identified in the above-mentioned SEGIRA study commissioned by DG AGRI. For each barrier, we also indicate which INTERREG IVC rural development projects address them:

B1. Demographic change and migration. The flight of young people and an ageing population is a major and the most important obstacle for the development of the rural areas. Examples of INTERREG IVC projects dealing with demographic change and migration: RURALAND aims to remove the barriers to migration. GRISI PLUS focuses on attracting new inhabitants through the use of GIS in rural areas. Micropol stimulates the use of Smart Work Centres, thereby preventing emigration.

B2. Infrastructure and accessibility (poor ICT and transport connectivity). A lack of infrastructure and accessibility is the second most important barrier to growth, both in terms of accessing markets and in terms of being accessible for employment. Moreover, the relative slow speed of internet connection can be an obstacle for development. Examples of INTERREG IVC projects dealing with accessibility: DANTE aims to stimulate ICT tools for tourism. e-CREATE enables tourism by making use of ICT tools. Micropol stimulates the use of Smart Work Centres, thereby facilitating a better access to internet in rural areas.

B3. Sectoral structure of the economy (dominant agriculture). The third most important barrier is the relatively slow pace of change in rural economies, which is caused by the lack and loss of skilled workers. Examples of INTERREG IVC projects dealing with the lack of a strong and innovative economy: ICER and CesR provide instruments and innovative concepts for tourism services thus enabling a stronger economy. Robinwood PLUS aims for a more sustainable and multifunctional approach to forest management, thereby strengthening the region.

Based on this overview, we conclude that the project objectives are clearly coherent with the findings of studies on economic drivers and barriers to rural development. It is interesting to see that most of the INTERREG IVC rural development projects deal with all the economic drivers and barriers explored in the latest research on growth and employment in rural areas. Most of the projects deal with several economic drivers and barriers (especially RURALAND, given its wide focus). It is furthermore interesting to see that most of the projects follow a twofold approach: reducing the effects of the barriers and supporting the drivers at the same time.
3.2.3 Projects stimulate strengths and opportunities and avoid weaknesses of rural development

Another way of looking at the projects is through a SWOT analysis, outlining and detailing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of rural areas in Europe. The SWOT analysis allows us to provide an overview of the broad strategic focus of the projects, and shows how they seek to address the identified drivers and barriers.

When defining the projects’ strategic approaches, it is important to bear in mind that rural regions’ development strategies can focus on one or more of these aspects:
- Strengthening the advantages (strengths) of rural areas (and creating added value);
- Eliminating or remediating the disadvantages (weaknesses) of the countryside;
- Taking advantage of new developments and opportunities;
- Avoiding external threats facing the region.

The table below contains a SWOT analysis detailing the main characteristics as they appear in studies on rural areas in Europe. The SWOT analysis relates to the key economic drivers and barriers as described in the previous section. Most of the drivers are under strengths, while most of the barriers link to the weaknesses of the rural areas in Europe.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drivers</th>
<th>Barriers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strengths</strong></td>
<td><strong>Weaknesses</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeal of the natural environment and the cultural heritage (RURALAND, ICER, Robinwood PLUS, DANTE, e-CREATE)</td>
<td>Lower employment rate, loss of jobs (CesR, Micropol)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small firms, relatively high rate of self-employment (B2N)</td>
<td>Declining service level (RURALAND, CesR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fewer traffic jams</td>
<td>Underdeveloped infrastructure (roads, ICT, tourism facilities) (Micropol)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Traditional agricultural economy (&lt;-&gt; diversification) (DANTE, e-CREATE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Limited capacity of private and public authorities (Robinwood PLUS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of education, less innovation and expenditure on R&amp;D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ageing population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Opportunities</strong></td>
<td><strong>Threats</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of new technologies (RURALAND, DANTE, e-CREATE, GRISI PLUS, Micropol)</td>
<td>Climate change (RURALAND, ICER, Robinwood PLUS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism as a new economic driver (B2N, ICER, Robinwood PLUS, DANTE, e-CREATE, CesR)</td>
<td>Loss of biodiversity (Robinwood PLUS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing awareness of consumers for authenticity</td>
<td>Pollution</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ecorys/IDEA Consult

Based on the SWOT analysis, we conclude that:
- Six of the nine projects build on the strengths of the countryside, especially on:
  - the natural environment and the cultural heritage as a strength (six projects);
  - the high rate of self-employment in rural regions (one project).
- Seven projects aim to remediate the weaknesses of the countryside, especially:
  - the limited capacity of public and private stakeholders (three projects);
  - the lack/loss of jobs (two projects);
  - the declining level of services (two projects);
  - depopulation (two projects);
  - the underdeveloped infrastructure (one project);
  - the declining role of agriculture (one project).
- Three projects take more than one disadvantage into account.
- All nine projects take advantage of new developments and market opportunities:
  - the opportunities created by new technology (five projects);
  - tourism as a growing economic sector (six projects).
Three projects focus on current threats. More specifically, these projects deal with mitigating the impact of climate change.

Upon analysing the INTERREG IVC rural development projects, we conclude that all of them take advantage of one of two main opportunities: new technologies or tourism as a new economic driver. Two projects (DANTE, e-CREATE) do both. These opportunities are being used in combination with the strengths of the region, or to remediate certain weaknesses.

Table 3.5 Strategic focus of projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strengths</td>
<td>Offensive strategy</td>
<td>Adjusting strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weaknesses</td>
<td>Defensive strategy</td>
<td>Survival strategy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ecorys / IDEA Consult

Although it is difficult to put a clear label on the strategic focus of the nine rural development projects (because of the diversity within each project), we class the projects, broadly speaking, as follows:

- Mostly defensive (focusing on using opportunities and avoiding weaknesses): Micropol, CesR, GRISI PLUS;
- Mostly offensive (focusing on using opportunities and strengths): B2N, Robinwood PLUS, ICER;
- Mixed strategies (focused on dealing with both strengths and weaknesses and seizing the opportunities): e-CREATE, DANTE, RURALAND

3.3 The effectiveness and transferability of the INTERREG IVC rural development projects

Another element in the analysis is the effectiveness and transferability of the INTERREG IVC rural development projects:

- What are the results of the projects (how effective are they) (3.3.1)
- Under which conditions can they be transferred? (3.3.2)
- What synergy is possible between the projects or with other initiatives? (3.3.3)

3.3.1 The effectiveness of the nine INTERREG IVC rural development projects

We differentiate between two levels of effectiveness: firstly at project level and secondly for the broader public, including other regions.

1. At project level, the focus is on producing tangible and visible results that are the most relevant for the regions involved. This includes action plans for the region and actions that have a direct effect in the region. See also the left column in the table below.

2. Alongside the achievements that are relevant for the project partners, the INTERREG IVC projects also generate outputs and results that are relevant for other regions. Here, the focus is on capacity building and the transfer of knowledge that is of interest to other regions and a broader public. This might include a database of good practices and policy recommendations. See also the right column in the table below.
The effectiveness of the nine INTERREG IVC rural development projects has been summarised in the tables below. The first table includes the four projects that have been finalised. The second table is for the five ongoing projects that have not yet been finalised.

### Table 3.6 Overview of the outputs/results achieved by the projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Outputs/Results at project level</th>
<th>Outputs/Results relevant for other regions / broader public</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **B2N** | • 25 good practices identified  
• Six exchange studies  
• Successful diversification projects, e.g. creating additional employment and reducing the impact on the environment (e.g. the ecolodge Urmatur); Reducing the impact of SMEs on the environment (e.g. a green tourism certification in Sweden);  
• Regional strategies stimulating both biodiversity and local entrepreneurship. | • On-line database of good practices  
• Assessment tool for the impact of SMEs on the environment  
• Policy Influence Action Plan Framework  
• Policy recommendations on:  
  o Promoting and rewarding good practices  
  o Promoting and protecting the environment  
  o Managing business development and impacts  
  o Streamlining practices to support entrepreneurial communities |
| **RURALAND** | • Pilot actions in five regions  
• 28 action plans on different topics (biogas, local gastronomy, GPS guided tours, renewable energy, gender mainstreaming, etc.) | • Database with 21 good practices.  
• Final report with eight policy recommendations. |
| **ICER** | • 30 good practices were identified  
• Good practice experience exchange and transferring innovative concepts of the eco-accommodation approach to rural regions and public support policies for eco-investors | • Recommendations publication includes four main parts: supporting tourism eco-investors, dealing with potential investors, providing advice and guidance and fostering innovation in rural areas and supporting investments in rural areas. |
| **Robinwood PLUS** | • Better forest management in the participating regions;  
• 50 forest sites supervised (first diagnosis, then working groups and action plans) | • Integrative and multidisciplinary approach to forests. Policy recommendations on forest management |

Source: Ecorys/IDEA Consult on basis of the info provided by the projects
Table 3.7 Overview of the expected outputs/results of the projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>(Expected) outputs/results at project level</th>
<th>(Expected) Outputs/results relevant for other regions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **e-CREATE** | • 12 good practices identified aimed at fostering ICT in tourism related SMEs  
- 12 Implementation Plans endorsed by the relevant local or regional decision-making bodies  
- One interregional Demonstration Project with outcomes made available for commercial exploitation (open-data approach) | • Policy Recommendations to at least 80 decision-makers and key players in European rural development  
- Brochure ‘Apps and Laws’ (explaining how to handle legal issues using ICT for tourism promotion)  
- Free software to use for all regions who want to develop apps for tourist routes |
| **CesR** | • Creation of direct and indirect employment (services) and new self-catering accommodation services through:  
- Eight regional analyses – to identify good public policies  
- Preparation of the transfer of good practices – handbook targeting regional and local policymakers – and actual transfer of good practices  
- Six implementation plans (explaining how and when the results of the CesR project will influence regional public policies.  
- Establishing regional workgroups (support for successful transfer) | • Database of good practices (eight project partners + Malta) |
| **DANTE** | • Exchange knowledge for developing ICT projects in rural and mountain areas through learning instruments designed for the consortium;  
- Define eight implementation plans on adopting ICT tools for tourism  
- Ensure transfer in a light pilot action in a rural or mountain area, thereby ensuring the long-term impact of the eight implementation plans. | • Database of good practices  
- Recommendations  
- Pilot project resulting in software with many different functions:  
  - Front office: promotion of the rural regions;  
  - Back office: platform to exchange knowledge  
  - Interactive tools to capture reactions and suggestions from visitors. |
| **GRISI PLUS** | • 13 implementation plans to improve entrepreneurship in the rural region (one per partner region) and publication of one good practices guide  
- Successful transfer of at least five good practices  
- Identification and analysis of 10 good practices in each partner region  
- SOHO SOLO: 470 new inhabitants in the Gers region (France), in the last six years and 78 more vibrant partner villages with better managed services. | • Database of good practices  
- Recommendations |
| **Micropol** | • Case study collection of Smart Work Centres, a good practice guide, an implementation plan for self-sustainable Smart Work Centres  
- Young entrepreneurs stay in the region, thanks to new offices equipped with broadband connections. | • A policy recommendation document aimed at improving the use of the smart offices and employment of smart workers and to maintain employment in rural areas |

Source: Ecorys/IDEA Consult on basis of the info provided by the projects
3.3.2 The transferability of the nine INTERREG IVC rural development projects

After identifying and exchanging good practices, it is possible to transfer the good practice to another region. However, a simple copy/paste approach is generally not possible due to different institutional and cultural contexts in one region to another. It is challenging for rural areas to develop strategies specifically tailored to the regional situation and which identify particular niches that offer opportunities to promote the socio-economic development of the region.

The conclusions and recommendations below are for the regions considering transferring a good practice. The conclusions and recommendations are not specific for rural areas but can be applied for any region considering the transfer of a good practice:

We recommend/advise:

- that regions look at transferability both at policy level and at entrepreneurial level;
- that regions develop a tailored approach, adapted to the regional situation:
  - by proceeding step by step;
  - by first trying to understand the context (through analysis), then develop a vision, strategy and action plan;
  - by developing a plan working alongside the local stakeholders (co-creation);
  - by involving politicians;
- using a bottom-up approach, which has to be supported by politicians. Local initiatives should be supported (and not hindered) by governmental institutions;
- that regions ensure that the ‘exporting’ rural area (the region offering the good practice) and ‘importing’ rural area (the region applying to receive the good practice) have similar socio-economic features;
- when stimulating rural tourism by linking small-scale operators with hotels (where there is a menu of services that the client can purchase, as in CesR), regions should ensure the selection of appropriate target groups (families/organisations who provide good quality services, such as decorating, catering, etc.), thereby ensuring a high-quality profile for the rural tourism;
- regional or local authorities looking to stimulate rural development by providing small-scale offices (as is the case of Micropol):
  - should not only provide infrastructure, but also services;
  - should provide a mix of different activities in the offices;
  - should make use of existing buildings, this will strengthen the cultural heritage;
  - should not oversize, but start small and build the initiative up in stages.

A specific challenge in the transfer of practice and knowledge is to reach regions that are not involved in interregional and transnational projects. We therefore recommend that the partners in INTERREG IVC projects involve (all) European member states in the dissemination of the projects’ final reports and publications.

3.3.3 Synergy between INTERREG IVC projects and with other EU initiatives

There are many initiatives related to rural development. Therefore, we explored synergy and potential synergy between projects and various initiatives. Synergy means that projects deal (partially) with the same topic in a complementary way. The projects make use of each other’s results or are involved in each other’s project. The identification of synergies is in effect a benchmarking exercise. For example: one project deals with the implementation of topic X whereas the other project deals with the policy development of topic X. The projects can help each other by showing the actual context/examples of the other project. This is for example the case between Micropol and ENGAGE: Micropol deals with establishing Smart Working Centres, whereas ENGAGE deals mostly with creating the policy at EU level to facilitate the creation of Smart Working Centres. ENGAGE can use the practical examples of Micropol to show how the practical implementation takes place; whereas Micropol can show through ENGAGE the importance and relevance of Smart Working Centres. This is synergy, which is already taking place. Next to this, there is potential synergy: synergy that is not yet taking place.

Existing synergies

There is currently already synergy between several projects within and outside the INTERREG IVC programme. To mention several examples of occurring synergy between the four more advanced projects with other projects in the field of rural development and rural tourism:
Micropol and ENGAGE (Enhancing Next Generation Access Growth in Europe) are clearly complementary and strengthen each other. Both are dealing with broadband in rural areas. Micropol deals with the realisation of Smart Working Centres throughout regions whereas ENGAGE focuses on the infrastructure development and developing a guide for broadband, together with the European Commission. Partners involve mutually in their project and can show the relevance of their project by referring to the other project. For Micropol, it helps to convince regional policymakers to initiate Smart Working Centres by referring to the fact that at EU level policy under development, as well as to promote the use of ICT in rural areas. In return, for ENGAGE it is very useful to be able to mention the examples of the Smart Working Centres as promoted by Micropol to show the need for the policy at EU level.

The synergy between ICER and CesR is because CesR is elaborating one of the elements of the ICER project: In CesR one of the models for developing self-sustaining tourism accommodation is explored and described in more detail. Even if the ICER project meanwhile finished, it is interesting for to show its spin-offs. For CesR, the ICER project provides the broader context.

Moreover, RURALAND has synergy with the INTERREG IVC projects IMMODI (Digital Mountains) and ECORegions. Partners have been exchanging information on their projects as this strengthened each other’s project.

Eventually, B2N features synergy with several INTERREG IVC projects, namely: RURALAND, ICER, CesR, DANTE, IMMODI, LOCFOOD, I-SPEED, DESUR, GreenInfraNet. These projects are all dealing with developing business in a sustainable way. B2N has also synergy with two ESPON projects L3LP (Three Cross countries Park) and PURR (Potential of Rural Regions) in which the development of businesses in a sustainable way is an element.

Potential Synergy between the INTERREG IVC rural development projects
There is a strong potential for synergy between projects, especially in the following three areas:

1. Potential synergy on improving rural tourism accommodation: ICER, CesR, RURALAND, DANTE, B2N
   ICER incorporates a very interesting tool designed to stimulate the improvement of tourism accommodation (Nattitude). Nattitude uses checklists to see where accommodation providers can improve services, and the chamber of commerce is guiding them in their improvements. CesR also focuses on the improvement of tourism accommodation but accomplishes this by offering a ‘menu’ of services to the guests. B2N includes examples of eco-lodges, such as the good practice “Urnatur” (see section 3.4.3. for a description).
   Furthermore, the RURALAND project has several good practices on rural tourism, such as the good practice “Gastur” in which small agri-food producers receive training with a view to improving networking with other producers. This is vital for tourism. The DANTE project offers possible synergy as both projects focus on ensuring the competitiveness of the tourism sector.

2. Potential synergy on using ICT for rural tourism: DANTE, e-CREATE
   Between DANTE and e-CREATE, there is a strong potential for synergy, since both projects aim at stimulating rural tourism by using ICT. There has already been some collaboration between the projects, but an exchange of practices and expertise still has to be carried out.

3. Potential synergy on using ICT in rural areas: Micropol, GRISI PLUS
   Micropol and GRISI PLUS could also stimulate each other although they have a different focus. In GRISI PLUS, new companies are being attracted to the rural area. In Micropol, it is more about providing Smart Working Centres. These are complementary actions. Therefore, exchange between the projects could be useful for both.

Potential synergy with other initiatives and projects
There is potential synergy with a variety of initiatives. The following provides some examples that seem most relevant for the INTERREG IVC projects on rural development:
1. Other INTERREG projects:

**Vital Rural Area** is an INTERREG IVB North Sea Region project. The project management structured the good practices in the 13 partner regions in a database, called Rural Power Pack. The Vital Rural Area project puts forward seven solutions for overcoming the problems commonly encountered in rural areas. Three of these solutions have a clear link with the three sub-themes of INTERREG IVC: education, broadband and digital services (Information Society), and SME-empowerment. The good practices in the database often have similarities with the INTERREG IVC projects. For instance, the concept of the innovation house comes close to the concept of the Smart Working Centres as promoted by Micropol.

2. Research projects on rural development (ESPON and FP7):

Synergy with research projects is possible because of a variety of reasons. The results of the studies can give context, provide evidence and show the importance of the INTERREG IVC project. Furthermore, the more practical exchange of the INTERREG IVC projects can provide useful case studies for the research projects. Some research programmes / projects:

- **ESPON** ([www.espon.eu](http://www.espon.eu)) finances research projects in all aspects of territorial cohesion. The ESPON Atlas for example contains all kinds of maps that are useful for showing the context / development in Europe. Several studies focus on rural development. Synergy could be possible with the following projects:
  - **EDORA** stands for “European Development Opportunities in Rural Areas”. In 2008-2010, the EDORA project studied changes in rural areas and increasing diversity in the European Union to develop a clear and consistent rationale for territorial cohesion policy by reviewing theoretical interpretations of rural change, regional patterns, and local processes.
  - **SEMGIRA** stands for Selective Migration and Unbalanced Sex Ratio in Rural Areas. In 2010-2012, this study identified reasons for and consequences of selective migration and unbalanced sex ratios in rural regions. Finally, strategies were developed to stabilise regions affected by demographic shrinkage and a shortage of young women.

- **Horizon 2020** in 2007-2013 7th Framework Programme ([http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/projects_en.html](http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/projects_en.html)). This major research programme finances research in nearly all themes. There are about 1 500 projects dealing with rural development. Two examples:
  - **C-BIRD** recognizes the diversity and complexity of rural areas across Europe. From 2014-2017, this project will investigate the innovative role of cooperatives, and related rural stakeholders (including academic institutions, commercial enterprises, NGOs, associations, etc.) in rural development as a useful tool to achieve such objectives and their importance in the ‘knowledge economy’. Five countries with strong agricultural cooperative sectors are involved: Spain, Italy, Ireland, Bulgaria, and Serbia.
  - In 2008-2012, **ERNEST** (European Research Network on Sustainable Tourism) addressed the issue of sustainable development in tourism through coordination and collaboration among regional research programmes.

3. Other EU funded projects such as LEADER:

Through the EAFRD it is possible to exchange experiences between Local Action Groups (LAGs). Examples can be found on the website: [http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/rdp_view/en/view_projects_en.cfm](http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/rdp_view/en/view_projects_en.cfm). We have selected the following two EAFRD projects as examples:

- **International Cultural Tourism.** A Lithuanian and a Finnish Local Action Group exchanged good practices and knowledge. The partners designed a framework to develop their tourist activities and addressed problems related to seasonality. Both regions prepared a goal-oriented framework to develop the tourist offer, which became the main reference for the organisation of new activities. They prepared a CD presenting the project partners, their regions, the firms participating in the project, the project results and the identified good practices.

- **Parks Protection II – Management, Protection and Economic Development of Protected Areas.** Three rural areas in Greece, Latvia, and the United Kingdom cooperated on finding a balance between their local economic needs and the necessity to manage in a responsible manner their available natural resources. The Partners agreed on a joint programme of ‘international educational weeks’, attended by trainees representing the target groups.
4. Rural networks such as ENRD, ELARD, RURACT.
Synergy is possible with a variety of networks acting in the realm of rural development. These networks can be useful for disseminating the results of projects or as information sources. Furthermore, it can be very useful to involve a network in the project as a representative of a certain target group or topic. With EUROMONTANA (www.euromontana.org) there is inherent synergy as the association is involved in the DANTE project as a partner. We think that the networks below have a strong potential for synergy with the INTERREG IVC rural development projects.

- The ENRD is the ‘European Network for Rural Development’ (www.enrd.ec.europa.eu) which is financed by DG AGRI to involve stakeholders on rural development; to connect, share and disseminate experiences of the national rural networks and enable improved implementation of the rural development programmes; and to provide feedback to the European Commission on the implementation of the rural development programmes. As a result, the regulations for 2014-2020 Cohesion Policy have taken over several recommendations from the ENRD.
- The ELARD (www.elard.eu) stands for ‘European LEADER Association for Rural Development’. This association aims to involve stakeholders from LEADER initiatives to connect, share, and disseminate experiences. LEADER is a European Union initiative to support rural development projects initiated at the local level in order to revitalise rural areas and create jobs.
- RURACT is an initiative of the Association of European Regions (www.aer.org). It stimulates benchmarking and exchange of information between rural development initiatives.

Ensuring successful and useful synergy
Having a potential for synergy does not automatically mean that there will be synergy. The projects indicated that most of their activities focus on running a successful project and ensuring good cooperation between the partners of the project. Synergy with other initiatives is therefore not always high on their priority list, unless this is a specific objective.

When is it useful to search for synergy and when will this be successful?
- A pre-condition is to have **time and budget** available. We recommend that applicants include in their proposal or action plan time and budget for dissemination, liaising with other organisations and initiatives in order to explore potential synergies.
- Synergy between projects can **strengthen the projects**. For example Micropol and ENGAGE clearly strengthen each other as they both deal with a different element of smart working centres / broadband in rural areas. In practice, this has given extra visibility for both projects.
- **A clear definition of what one would like to achieve** will help partners to have a targeted approach. Since there are so many initiatives, it is useful to discuss between the partners what kind of synergy they are looking for. Benchmarking? Visibility? Dissemination? Complementarity in the topic (widening of the scope)? Synergy at topic level, project level or partner level? If applicable, what type of activities are needed in the project to ensure an optimal synergy? We recommend thinking about these questions in the proposal phase to ensure that sufficient time and budget is allocated for the exploration and exploitation of synergies.

3.4 Innovative rural approaches

3.4.1 Innovative approaches of the INTERREG IVC projects

During the analysis, innovative elements in each project were identified. The results of this exercise are shown in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Innovative elements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| e-CREATE | ○ Use of tales relating to heritage (more attractive than just giving mere facts; offering a better selling scope)  
○ Merging of heritage, tourism and infrastructure investments  
○ Use of open source (see also transferability) |
| DANTE | ○ Use of bottom-up, open innovation and co-creation processes with rural entrepreneurs (e.g. family farms) and other stakeholders  
○ Creation of new products (e.g. slow farms)  
○ Application of open source software for ICT development |
3.4.2 Observations on the innovative character of the projects

Smart growth, stimulated through R&D and innovation, is a central ambition in the Europe 2020 strategy. This section reflects on the innovative character of the projects – and the question of whether the INTERREG IVC rural development projects are truly innovative - mostly by focusing on the traditional views of innovation (mainly in economic/technological terms), but also by considering other perspectives (mainly social).

In the traditional studies on economic and technological innovation, four types of innovation can be distinguished: product innovations, process innovations, marketing innovations and organisational innovations. When analysing the INTERREG IVC rural development projects, all these types of innovations can be discerned:

- **Product innovation** is the introduction of a good or service that is new or significantly improved with respect to its characteristics or intended uses. This includes significant improvements in technical specifications, components, and materials, incorporated software, user friendliness or other functional characteristics.

  *Example INTERREG project: CesR creates new products by bringing together entrepreneurs from different sectors (slow farms);*

- **Process innovation** is the implementation of a new or significantly improved production or delivery method. This includes significant changes in techniques, equipment, and/or software.

  *Example INTERREG project: e-CREATE uses new techniques and platforms such as open source;*

- **Marketing innovation** is the implementation of a new marketing method involving significant changes in product design or packaging, product placement, product promotion or pricing.

  *Example INTERREG project: DANTE makes heritage more appealing to tourists by telling stories.*

- **Organisational innovation** is the implementation of a new organisational method in the firm's business practices, workplace organisation, or external relations.

  *Example INTERREG project: Robinwood PLUS uses new public/private governance models for forest management.*

Although it is clear that there are practices illustrating the innovative character of the INTERREG IVC rural development projects, the question could be asked to what extent these practices are really new or innovative. Various methods are currently available to classify the scale of innovation intensity or to assess the economic impact of innovation (e.g. Souchkov Valeri, Triz; Coccia Mario, Ceris).

Although more research capacity and a detailed study is necessary to make a correct assessment of the good practices in the INTERREG IVC programme, we can already retain that the practices

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listed above are far from being ‘radical’, nor do they push the frontiers of science (as was the case for the X-ray or the photo-voltaic effect). The innovations listed in Table 3.8 do not discover new principles or create radically new functions (levels four and five in the model of Souckhov), but they seek to extend a function or principle to a new market (level three); a qualitative improvement within an existing function (level two) or a quantitative improvement or optimisation (level one).

In line with this observation, the INTERREG IVC rural development projects have more affinity with the social innovation theory of the ‘connected difference’, emphasising three key dimensions to social innovation.9 First, the projects are usually a new combination or hybrids of existing elements, rather than wholly new ones. Second, their practice involves cutting across organisational or disciplinary boundaries, and lastly the projects leave behind dynamic new relationships.

In general, the social innovation theory (innovation in public policy and governance) seems more appropriate for looking at the innovative character of the rural development INTERREG IVC projects. For Julie Simon (2012), social innovations can be understood as “new solutions (products, services, models, markets, processes, etc.) that simultaneously meet a social need (more efficiently and effectively than existing solutions) and lead to new or improved capabilities, assets and/or relationships. In other words, social innovations are both good for society and enhance society’s capacity to act.”

Five core features are essential if a practice is to be defined as being truly socially innovative: 1) novelty, 2) from ideas to implementation, 3) meets a social need, 4) effectiveness, 5) enhance society’s capacity to act. The table below explains each feature.

### Table 3.9 Overview of socially innovative elements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core elements</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Novelty</td>
<td>Social innovations are new to the field, sector, region, market or user, or are applied in a new way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) From ideas to implementation</td>
<td>As with innovation, there is a distinction between a social invention (developing ideas) and a social innovation (implementing and applying ideas). As such, a distinction is made between promising ideas (which may or may not become social innovations) and social innovations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Meets a social need</td>
<td>Social innovations meet a recognised social need. When not met, serious harm or socially recognisable suffering can be caused. For example when services are no longer available in a rural area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Effectiveness</td>
<td>Social innovations are more effective than existing solutions – they lead to better outcomes for beneficiaries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Enhance society’s capacity to act</td>
<td>Empowers beneficiaries by creating new roles and relationships, developing assets and capabilities and/or better use of assets and resources.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ecorys/IDEA Consult

For our purposes, this social innovation perspective corresponds to the way partners involved in the INTERREG IVC rural development projects should have adopted and integrated innovative approaches into their operations. While the projects have opted not to introduce radical changes to strategies or to focus on technological product innovations, they have sought to introduce incremental social innovation that offers practical and more effective (better outcomes for the beneficiaries) solutions for social needs in their region, thereby enhancing the region’s capacity to act. This enables the regions to identify and further develop specific niches, and to grasp socio-economic opportunities within these niches. For our purposes, this approach offers the best chance for attracting new, active people to the region, who, in turn, can contribute to further regional development.

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9 Geoff Mulgan et. al. (2007): Social Innovation. What it is, why it matters and how it can be accelerated. [http://www.sbs.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Skoll_Centre/Docs/Social%20Innovation%20-%20What%20it%20is%20%20why%20it%20matters%20%20how%20it%20can%20be%20accelerated.pdf](http://www.sbs.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Skoll_Centre/Docs/Social%20Innovation%20-%20What%20it%20is%20%20why%20it%20matters%20%20how%20it%20can%20be%20accelerated.pdf)

3.4.3 Examples of how to stimulate rural development

The nine INTERREG IVC rural development projects identified many good practices. We selected and further analysed some good practices with a view to inspire policymakers on how to stimulate rural development. The topics vary from ICT, to rural tourism, to forest management, to attracting organisations to rural areas. Several criteria have been used to select nine good practices, i.e. one per project:

- They were considered the most innovative (Kulmin of e-CREATE);
- They have been transferred the most often between partners within one project (e.g. Gastur of RURALAND);
- They have a very interesting concept that is easily transferable (eg. Nattitude of ICER);
- They constitute the basis of the whole project (GOZO of CesR).

Table 3.10 Selection of nine good practices within INTERREG IVC rural development projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good Practice</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smart work centre</td>
<td>Micropol</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>Strengthening working facilities in rural areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KULMIN</td>
<td>e-CREATE</td>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>Use of ICT to unlock cultural heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soho Solo</td>
<td>GRISI PLUS</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>Better reception of SMEs and support to businesses in rural areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elwood</td>
<td>Robinwood PLUS</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>Stimulating the use of local wood and crafts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nattitude</td>
<td>ICER</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>Branding of ecotourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urnatur</td>
<td>B2N</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Ecologdes in rural areas (farming, tourism, wood hermitage and design)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOZO</td>
<td>CesR</td>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>Stimulating new tourist services concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bauernhofferien-</td>
<td>DANTE</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Bottom-up development of new touristic products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>InKnowCom</td>
<td>RURALAND</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Strengthening culinary rural tourism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ecorys

For each good practice, the following questions were answered:

- What is the innovative approach?
- How is it innovative?
- How it is transferable to other regions?
- When, where?
- Where can more information be found (contact details and web-link)

Smart Work Centre (SWC) Portes du Morvan (Micropol)

What is the innovative approach?

The approach involves making use of new technologies, especially high-speed broadband network connections, with a view to retaining ‘smart workers’ in the rural area.

How is it innovative?

The Smart Work Centre ‘Portes du Morvan’ approach combines different functions (business, training, meetings) as well as different users in order to tackle the loss of human capital in rural areas. This approach is implemented by utilising new technologies in rural areas and by making them more accessible for smart workers. This approach is not a common practice yet.
The Smart Work Centre ‘Portes du Morvan’ contains eight individual offices, equipped with furniture adapted for people with reduced mobility, shared spaces such as a meeting room and a video conference room, a public ICT-hub for the population (free access, training), as well as connections to the high-speed broadband network (FTTH fibre optic 100 Mb).

This good practice could be applied in regions that suffer from the a similar loss of human capital / brain drain. Some advice for regions that would like to apply this practice:
- To be successful, do not only provide infrastructure (offices, meeting and video conference rooms, and a high-speed broadband network connection), but also services (a public ICT-hub that offers free advice and training to professionals who want to improve their expertise in ICT tools)
- Try to provide a mix of functions (business, training, meetings);
- Try to renovate existing buildings;
- Do not make the centre too big, especially in very rural areas.
- Build up the initiative gradually.


More information
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Kulmin (e-CREATE)

What is the innovative approach?
The approach involves the digital dissemination of information about cultural heritage monuments and sites via smartphones. The information provided links areas or sites together to create cultural routes around foci of interest (road, path - car, boat, bike, feet). Digital communication can help to unlock the potential inherent in cultural heritage and can function as a resource for society and social development, as well as to optimise the potential of cultural heritage attractions and experience. The product has great attraction value and allows for local and regional wealth creation.

How is it innovative?
The aim of Kulmin is to use mobile phones for outreach activities to disseminate audio-visual information about cultural heritage monuments and sites. With the prevalence of smartphones, the audience now has an excellent tool to acquire information. Kulmin focuses on the cultural heritage monuments and sites in people’s everyday environments and aims at increasing the understanding of cultural heritage. It can be used to enhance user-experience and promote tourist attractions, economic development, and experience-based business development based on cultural heritage monuments and sites. It can form a basis for enhancing local values based on the appreciation and protection of cultural heritage monuments and sites, which is made much easier through the integration of ICT. Kulmin is a complete framework for the digital dissemination of cultural heritage and includes the following features, integrated into a seamless user interface:
o The website www.kulmin.no, where all information and communication is available, searchable and ready to be shared on social networks, such as Facebook and Twitter.

o A web application for smart phones, which is at the heart of the system. It contains information about the historical monuments and sites marked on maps that can be sorted alphabetically, according to category, or as an overview.

o Each historical monument and site has its own info-page including guidance in the form of text, video and audio, picture galleries, maps, information on opening times etc.

At the cultural heritage monument or site, a sign displays information about the monument; i.e. traditional mediation, and a QR code. By scanning the code with a smartphone or by entering the system’s address (m.kulmin.no) into the browser, the user immediately gets access to the digital system. Kulmin can also be used regardless of location. The system has clear lists of sites, and maps showing where to find them. Through Kulmin’s website www.kulmin.no, the public can share experiences using the comment box, or easily share videos, photos, and maps with others via social media.

Understanding of the cultural heritage of people’s daily surroundings is part of a conservation strategy to increase the appreciation and value of the cultural heritage, with a view to increasing respect and thus improving protection as a result.

It is particularly interesting for regions that are heavily dependent on the tourism industry and SMEs, especially, for regions that have a high concentration of cultural heritage monuments. However, it is important that regions have reliable 3G / Wi-Fi coverage.

The project was implemented in Norway in the county of Sør-Trøndelag in November 2010.

Sør-Trøndelag fylkeskommune (South Trøndelag County Authority)
Kristin Prestvold
Postboks 2350, Sluppen, 7004 Trondheim, Norway
http://www.kulmin.no

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**Soho Solo (GRISI PLUS)**

**What is the innovative approach?**

The approach is to encourage the installation and integration of independent home workers in rural regions close to the Atlantic coast.

The Soho Solo staff is there to welcome newcomers and support them with their business creation projects and to develop new activities in the Gers. The project ambitions include:

- Helping to create and/or grow businesses (consulting, mentoring and information services, help to obtain funding, etc.);
- Creating a network, where people can easily get into contact with Soho Solo villages and the local environment (Information on housing and local services aimed at facilitating relocation);
- Providing people that are interested in developing their business in the Gers area with information about the local and regional economy.
The Soho Solo project offers customised support and a range of services designed to meet the needs of the self-employed such as a support team, a club, partners, training, and meetings in the rural area.

This good practice could be applied in similar regions looking to increase their human capital through initiatives designed to encourage people to develop their business in the rural area.

The Soho Solo project was implemented in the Gers province, which is situated in the heart of the South West of France, near the Pyrenees and the Atlantic Ocean. The project was implemented during 2006-2008.

More information

http://www.soho-gers.net

### Elwood (Robinwood PLUS)

#### What is the innovative approach?

The approach involves enhancing local woods by sharing, developing and promoting local woodcrafts and local timber use.

#### How is it innovative?

The aim of Elwood is to encourage a strong interaction between the Aveto Natural Park and the local community operators involved in tourism, and economic and cultural activities linked to the forestry system, thereby creating a network of private initiatives and public powers to meet the needs of the area. This is achieved by:

1. **Sharing:**
   - local crafts with young people;
   - knowledge between craftsmen, and between craftsmen and other local wood professionals;
   - the importance of using local wood.

2. **Developing:**
   - by the identification of wood workers’ needs;
   - by combining local wood transformers and implementing common and efficient tools;
   - by identifying new products or strengthening traditional ones;
   - by encouraging local public bodies to create new local markets.

3. **Promoting:**
   - by organising common and large-scale marketing campaigns;
   - through exhibits, fairs etc. among citizens, tourists and people from other territories and among local stakeholders;
   - by encouraging young people who have the potential to become the craftsmen of tomorrow.

#### How it is transferable to other regions?

Useful for regions with similar environmental and socio-economic situations looking to revitalise rural areas through sustainable forestry.

Elwood has been created in cooperation between four organisations:

- The regional natural Park of Aveto (Liguria, Italy) where the project was implemented,
The regional natural Park Périgord-Limousin (lead partner – Limousin, France),
- The regional natural Park of Portofino (Liguria, Italy)
- The municipality of Siculeni (Hargitha, Romania).

Parco Naturale Regionale dell’Aveto (Regional Natural Park of Aveto)
Paolo Cresta (director of the Park),
+39 0185340311, dir.enteparcoaveto@libero.it
Via marè 75/A 16041 Borzonasca (Ge)
http://www.parks.it/parco.aveto/Eindex.php

Nattitude was initiated by the Regional Council of Auvergne, which aims at enhancing the appeal of Auvergne. The idea is to encourage the emergence of a range of tourist accommodation that reflects a ‘Nature Attitude’ trend where people aim to consume responsibly while at the same time not letting go of their ‘self-centred’ interests.

Nattitude aims to create a range of accommodation choices (hotels, B&Bs, self-catering holiday homes, campsites, holiday villages) in keeping with both the natural qualities of Auvergne (and its potential in terms of activities), and fulfilling the expectations of today’s clientele (well-being, environmental respect, discovery of the destination etc.). The project has set itself the task of emphasising the value of the existing offer and encouraging the creation of new accommodation, with the identity of Auvergne as the underlying theme. To achieve this, a selection and development process has been put in place involving all the stakeholders of the tourist sector (Departmental Tourism Board, Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Regional Nature Parks, etc.). This common approach aimed at pooling the resources and energies at work in the region reflects the ‘Nattitude state of mind’ and has remained its strength ever since its creation. This joint work has led to the development of an evaluation grid organised around six main areas:

1. Exceptional sites (villages of character, emblematic natural sites, etc.) far from any kind of pollution;
2. Authentic and/or unusual architecture respecting the site and the local heritage;
3. Environmental awareness (local consumption, local material, recycling, etc.);
4. Well-being (specific equipment and/or services);
5. Integration of the local economy (Nattitude establishments choose local service providers);
6. Conviviality and quality of service.

Nattitude adopted a questionnaire approach based on over 150 criteria related to six main themes. Each accommodation business that is interested in being part of the Nattitude initiative has to complete this questionnaire. After filling in this questionnaire, there are two possible scenarios:

1. The accommodation does not meet the minimum requirements. In this case, Nattitude proposes a customised assistance, the aim of which is to help it to improve its performances and ultimately become part of the Nattitude group. If the business is finally accepted, it will benefit from advice and a personalised follow-up/monitoring as well as from promotional and commercial support offered to Nattitude members.

2. The accommodation meets the minimum requirements. In this case, it immediately benefits from the advantages Nattitude offers to its members.

Nattitude members are provided with various supporting tools including:

- **Advice and personalised assistance:** A document for progress is compiled for new businesses on an individual basis and details their evaluation, while suggesting practical solutions (advice, technical tools, financial support etc.) to improve the services they offer.
- **Financial support:** Regional subsidies (which can vary depending on the type of accommodation) are attributed after evaluation of the project applications to determine those most in line with the Nattitude approach.
1. The Nattitude toolbox
   o **Technical days:** Based on the principle of ‘healthy’ emulation and the network effect, these themed days (interior design, responsible well-being, short supply chain, eco-labels, commercial strategy, quality policy etc.) bring together all the different parties (Nattitude members and accompanied businesses). They are an opportunity to boost the network with new ideas (put forward by internal experts) and to enhance the discussions via the internal best practices within the network (e.g. eight technical days were organised in 2010)
   o **Technical guides:** The guidebooks are a logical follow-up of the technical days to summarise and supplement the topics discussed during the days.
   o **The directory:** This directory is compiled jointly by the businesses, the institutional stakeholders, and professionals, and its main aim is to help the service providers find sub-contractors that share the Nattitude ‘spirit’.

2. A real promotional and commercial advantage (As well as the practical support offered, the Nattitude members also benefit from a greater promotional visibility and a real commercial advantage.)
   o **Specific promotional tools:** A presentation leaflet (available in French and English) targeting professionals (tour operators, press etc.); a postcard (in French and English) targeting the general public and directing to the website; a video presenting the Nattitude approach and spirit; a specific brochure (in French and English) listing all the accommodation businesses that have adopted the approach; specific pages on the CRDTA’s general public website www.auvergne-tourisme.info; priority integration into all the CRDTA’s marketing actions in France and abroad; participation in specific public and professional tradeshows in France and abroad.
   o **Specific affinity partnerships** Creation of gift boxes specifically designed for Nattitude accommodation.

This overall approach applied by the Regional Council of Auvergne is a practical and innovative response to the demand for a qualitative offer of eco-responsible tourism accommodation reflecting the image of the new Auvergne. It demonstrates that a public strategy can guide and support private projects in the sector of accommodation thereby increasing the overall quality of the supply and reducing its impact on the environment.

It can be used in regions that are heavily dependent on the tourism industry and which would like to adjust their services to the current demand for eco-responsible tourism accommodation.
### When, where?

The project started in 2008 and is being implemented by the regional Council of Auvergne and Auvergne Regional Tourism Development Board, France.

### More information

Auvergne Regional Tourism Development Board
Michèle POURCHER, michele.pourcher@crdt-auvergne.fr
www.pro.auvergne-tourisme.info

### Urnatur (B2N)

#### What is the innovative approach?

Urnatur is a small-scale ecolodge, certified by the Swedish eco-tourism brand Natures Best as being high quality and responsible eco-tourism. Urnatur works with the tourism industry in the construction of wood hermitages for holding conferences, events and offering a retreat and a calm place surrounded by beautiful nature. The project also works with farming - i.e. promoting traditional grazing, mowing techniques, and the pollarding of trees. Nature conservation is another important part of the work of Urnatur. Furthermore, the project is developing the design brand Urnatur that will focus on hand-printed cloth etc. Urnatur lodges offer a combination of calmness and beautiful surroundings to their guests. It is a forest hermitage, carrying a “luxury-is-simplicity” message. Among the wide variety of activities run by the farm, tourism generates the lion’s share of the turnover and this enables the farm and all the conservation projects to be run. If Urnatur was only a traditional farm, its annual turnover would be approx. EUR 10 000, by combining it with tourism, this figure exceeds EUR 100 000.

### How is it innovative?

This small-scale eco lodge is certified as high quality and responsible ecotourism with neutral or positive environmental impact. The enterprise also has a very positive impact on the biological, visual, and cultural values in the natural area. The enterprise manages the cultural landscape in a traditional way, with grazing, mowing, and pollarding, and thereby preserves the biological and cultural values for the future. Urnatur is working towards promoting biological/biodiversity values, visual impact and recreational value, cultural heritage and environmental values.

The eco lodge is located in a valuable natural area. The management of the pastures and meadows as well as the pollarding of trees are helping to fulfil the national environmental objectives of ‘a varied agricultural landscape’ and ‘a rich diversity of plant and animal life.’ The Rural Development Programme for Östergötland promotes economically, ecologically, and socially sustainable development in rural areas. One contribution is to support local businesses by coaching and giving grants for new businesses and businesses with fewer than ten employees. Another relevant policy is the Regional Development Plan for the region of Östergötland including the action programme for Culture and the action programme for Enterprises.

### How it is transferable to other regions?

The Urnatur practice is easily transferable to many valuable natural areas in Europe who would like to transfer their farm or natural area into an eco lodge. Also the variety of activities taking place at Urnatur can be inspirational on how to make an eco lodge profitable and sustainable.
### Urnatur

The Urnatur practice comes from the Östergötland province in Sweden and was started in 2007. Urnatur did benefit from small investment grants when the business was first set up but is now run on a fully commercial basis with no public support.

**More information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Håkan Strotz and Ulrika Krynitz</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sjögetorp, SE-599 91 – Ödeshög - Sweden</td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:hakan@urnatur.se">hakan@urnatur.se</a>, <a href="mailto:ulrika@urnatur.se">ulrika@urnatur.se</a></td>
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<td><a href="http://www.urnatur.se">http://www.urnatur.se</a></td>
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### GOZO (CesR)

**What is the innovative approach?**

Aimed at the creation of clusters of self-catering accommodations for holidaymakers, the project emphasises the creation of sustainable work places by unlocking the potential of tourism.

**How is it innovative?**

This practice involves companies that manage clusters of self-catering accommodation properties also offering a wide range of additional services that their clients might choose to use during their holiday. This à la carte menu includes services such as masseuses, hairdressers, personal chefs, house cleaners, tour-guides, hiking-guides. Upon arrival at their holiday accommodation, clients get a list of services that they may wish to use during their stay together with a price list. Most of the time, self-catering accommodation are farmhouses in rural areas and the provision of these services stimulates employment and opportunities in the rural area. Another benefit of this practice is that, since guests are able to make use of these services from their own accommodation, transport usage during their stay is also reduced thus cutting down carbon emissions and noise pollution.

**How it is transferable to other regions?**

The format of this practice is not particularly difficult to apply and thus would not prove difficult to transfer. In order for it to be a success, however, the management must ensure that the staff providing the services are adequately qualified and trained. This good practice is transferable to regions that depend on rural tourism.

**When, where?**

The company Baron Group in Gozo started this initiative in 2009. Co-financing rates: 34% EU Funds, 6% National Funds, 60% Private Funds.

**More information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ministry for Gozo - Eco-Gozo Regional Development Directorate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anthony Zammit, <a href="mailto:anthony.b.zammit@gov.mt">anthony.b.zammit@gov.mt</a>, <a href="mailto:info.eco-gozo@gov.mt">info.eco-gozo@gov.mt</a></td>
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<td><a href="http://www.eco-gozo.com">www.eco-gozo.com</a></td>
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**Bauernhofferien (DANTE)**

**What is the innovative approach?**

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<th>Result GP: continuous open innovation &amp; co-creation</th>
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<tr>
<td>- <a href="http://www.bettundbox.de">www.bettundbox.de</a></td>
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<td>- <a href="http://www.heuhoferien.de">www.heuhoferien.de</a></td>
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<td>- <a href="http://www.landreiselust.de">www.landreiselust.de</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>- <a href="http://www.kinderLanderlebnis.de">www.kinderLanderlebnis.de</a></td>
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</table>

*Source: DANTE*

The improvement and diversification of tourism services is a continuous process, especially when it comes to facing the increasing competition in holiday and leisure destinations. The project focuses on enhancing the competitiveness of the tourism sector as well as on the development of tourism activities through the use of ICT.

**How is it innovative?**

New rural tourism services must be continuously innovated to preserve tourist attention and to increase the number of visitors to rural areas. Especially for Lower Saxony, where tourism is an important economic sector, employing about 340 thousand people and generating a turnover of EUR 15 billion. The Rural Leisure Association has therefore developed a procedure for bottom-up innovation through intensive exchange among all members on new products and services. This good practice helps the members of the Association to create new tourism services and products together or individually. The ICT infrastructure and the staff of the Association support the development of new products and (leisure and holiday) services for farm holidays in the rural area. New ideas and outputs match the needs of members and guests and are oriented towards the target group. The purpose of Bauernhofferien is to provide its members with the possibility of developing projects together, inventing offers to target groups and being present on the market altogether.

The essence of the continuous development of new rural tourist business concepts is:

- A bottom-up approach: trust-based innovation that begins and ends with the rural entrepreneur (family farms);
- Peer-learning: facilitate peer-learning processes between entrepreneurs;
- Continuous co-creation: facilitating open innovation processes by creating, together, (triple-helix) new business concepts for rural entrepreneurship;
- Open source: using developed (ICT) infrastructure facilitates business development and is free to share.

ICT services are an important tool and marketing-channel for members of the Association as well as for (potential) visitors. Since ICT is of strategic importance for the Association, the Association is prepared to invest time and resources in the development of new ICT tools and applications. Currently, Bauernhofferien is experimenting with online booking systems, self-employed data care and independent, up-to-date presentation. The development and use of open source software is the next step in this process.

With their strong purchasing power, tourists help to animate rural areas and to reduce human capital loss. Furthermore, increasing rural tourism can counterbalance the decline in activities and income from primary agricultural sources in rural areas. Thus, small villages can be preserved, regional awareness can become even stronger, and traditions can be sustained and passed on to future generations.
### How it is transferable to other regions?

This project is a good example for rural regions that are suffering from the loss of human capital and in particular for those areas that are heavily dependent on tourism.

**Practical Advice:**
- Build success through cooperation and networking. Cooperation can strengthen and increase the range of services offered;
- Always follow up a good idea provided by anyone and perfect it;
- Avoid conflicts with different interest groups and stakeholders, transform a disadvantage into an opportunity, and share this with everyone.

### When, where?

The farmers’ association ‘Bauernhofferien A.G.’ (Federal Society for holiday and rural tourism of Lower Saxony, in short: Rural Leisure Association) was founded in November 1972. Today it counts 400 members and 200 partners in the federal state of Lower Saxony (Germany). The budget of the association amounts to EUR 161,936. This association is supported with about 50 % financed by fees of members and 50 % by public funds. The good practice is being developed together with InKnowCom, an independent Dutch foundation for applying bottom-up open innovation co-creation processes for stimulating sustainable innovation and corporate social responsibility.

### More information

Bauernhofferien (Federal Society for holiday and rural tourism) of Lower Saxony
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Elke Boggasch (manager), Tel. 00 49 4231 96650, info@bauernhofferien.de

InKnowCom, POBox 40, 9750 AA Haren (Gn) The Netherlands,
Irmgard Starmann (director) info@inknowcom.eu

### Gastur (RURALAND)

#### What is the innovative approach?

Gastur combines the creation of enhanced value of endogenous agri-food products with the use of short supply channels. Small agri-food producers were provided with training in order to give them the skills they need to improve productivity and networking with other producers in the area, thereby creating a mutual benefit.

#### How is it innovative?

The purpose is to increase the number of tourism products in district Jämtland (Sweden) as a whole, both in terms of local food production and in terms of culture, in order to make the district a beacon of gastronomic tourism in northern Europe, offering a number of well-defined, high-quality, varied tourist products. The products are environmentally, socially and financially sustainable. This good practice is structured around the preparing of an inventory of small-scale food producers currently based in the district and a review of their status as potential tourism entrepreneurs.

In order to achieve its aims, the project includes training for the producers, providing them with a clearer vision and knowledge of what tourism means to individual companies and to the region as a whole. Within a period of one year, with technical support, the project aims to create a structured method that is both efficient and easy to use by artisan producers of gastronomic products wishing to develop tourism as part of their business.

**Implementation of the best practice**

The work has been divided into three ‘work packs’ (WP):

1. The first work pack contained an inventory of currently existing small-scale food producers in the county, as well as a review of their status as potential tourism entrepreneurs. The essence of the work was to develop a useful and simple method designed to increase the number of tourism products based on artisan food production. (1WP)
2. The second work pack included the training of the producers. Efforts were made to develop an effective methodology for product development (2WP)
3. The third work pack included research by external expertise (ETOUR, the European Tourism Research Organisation) to ensure the quality of the project. (3WP)
Gastur focuses on creating enhanced value of both the tangible and intangible heritage in rural areas through the promotion of endogenous products and the development of knowledge of these areas through actions aimed at the local population and persons who have come from outside the territories. Apart from the intangible benefit obtained from greater knowledge and recognition of the environment in which they live, these actions produce an economic benefit for local inhabitants and, consequently, lead to an increase in the quality of their lives, as they can preserve their customs and traditional expertise.

This good practice could be transferable to regions that are looking to develop sustainable tourism; that suffer from population decline; with a relatively undeveloped agricultural sector; that need to strengthen the network of regional entrepreneurs. Gastur already includes a good example of how and to which regions this good practice could be transferred. Three RURALAND partner regions (Andalusia, Kainuu and Salaj) have recognised the potential for adaptation of this good practice in their own territories and have already designed a pilot action. Furthermore, the exporter of Gastur, Jämtland, has signed collaboration agreements with both importing regions, Kainuu and Salaj, thereby guaranteeing future collaboration after the RURALAND project has concluded.

Gastur started in September 2010. This good practice is conducted by the region of Jämtland (Northern Sweden).

Jämtlands läns institut för landsbygdsutveckling, JiLU (Jämtland County Council Institute of Rural Development)
Dag Hartman
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The above nine good practices show in more detail how the nine rural development projects:

- deal with economic development in a sustainable way (B2N, RURALAND),
- stimulate economic development and vital villages through ICT (Micropol, GRISI PLUS),
- stimulate rural tourism (ICER, CesR), stimulate rural tourism through ICT (e-CREATE, DANTE),
- stimulate entrepreneurship through forest management (Robinwood PLUS).

The next chapter presents conclusions and key policy messages.
4. Key Policy Messages: Use for other regions, lessons learnt and recommendations for national and European level

This chapter provides policy messages, conclusions, and recommendations for the local, regional, national and European levels.

Lessons learnt from the nine INTERREG IVC projects on rural development

Among the 204 INTERREG IVC projects, nine focus on rural development. All of these nine projects aim to improve the effectiveness of regional/local rural development policy. This is achieved by exchanging experiences, identifying good practices and, where possible, transferring the good practices to other regions. This report capitalises on the achievements of these projects. We analysed the results that were available up to early 2014 (two projects closed in December 2012, two in 2013 and five of the nine projects will end December 2014).

The nine INTERREG IVC projects:

- mainly aim to diversify rural areas through tourism (RURALAND and B2N by exchanging a broad range of rural development initiatives; ICER, CesR, DANTE and e-CREATE by stimulating tourism; Robinwood PLUS through forest management).
- focus on using/stimulating ICT to enhance rural connectivity (Micropolis by developing Smart Work Centres to facilitate employment, GRISI PLUS uses ICT to facilitate rural life and work and to attract new inhabitants to villages, DANTE and e-CREATE both use ICT to stimulate rural tourism).
- all focus on sustainable development and economic development and pursue all the aims of Europe 2020.
- mostly focus on stimulating development rather than tackling economic barriers.
- deal with all the main economic drivers and barriers of rural development as reported in the latest EU research on growth and employment in rural areas.

Generally, we can characterise the nine INTERREG IVC rural development projects by two basic features with regard to their foundations and aims:

First, across the projects, we see as the general aim of their activities to boost the rural economy and employment while preserving or even strengthening the specific social and natural/environmental quality of rural areas. The general hypothesis is that this combination can shape rural sustainable development, which in turn contributes to Europe’s targets for smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth. The projects therefore do indeed contribute to the Europe 2020 objectives.

Secondly, we see that the analysed projects take as their starting point the fact that the development of rural areas is not only necessary for their local population, but is also beneficial to Europe’s economy as a whole. Generally, rural areas are considered to offer essential, endogenous assets that can help meet some of the great European socio-economic challenges (e.g. safe and healthy food, preservation of the natural environment, climate change mitigation / energy).

Three main effects, multiple strategies and instruments

Apart from their individual objectives, the projects consequently aim to contribute to the EU objectives laid out in the Europe 2020 strategy.

In the table below, we show in the first column the main effects that the projects target; the second column illustrates how several strategies and instruments are used to achieve the intended effect.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expected effects</th>
<th>Instruments / Actions / Results</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Growth and employment</td>
<td>• Supporting infrastructure: Smart Work Centres (<em>Micropol</em>)</td>
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<td>• Creation of new product combinations (<em>Dante</em>) or services (<em>CesP</em>)</td>
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<td>• Attracting new investments (<em>ICER</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Better use of ICT (<em>e-CREATE</em>)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Develop supporting services to businesses (<em>GRISI PLUS</em>)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Better networking and marketing (<em>ICER: Nattitude</em>)</td>
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<td>Better use of natural resources</td>
<td>• Better management of the resources (<em>Robinwood PLUS</em>)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Assessment or regulation of SME activities (<em>B2N</em>)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Action plans on clean technology like biogas or renewable energy (<em>RURALAND</em>)</td>
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<tr>
<td>gender, young people</td>
<td>• The use of GIS to attract new inhabitants and entrepreneurs (<em>GRISI PLUS</em>)</td>
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Source: Ecorys on basis of the info from the projects

All the projects improve the quality of life and ‘liveability’ of local communities through relatively small-scale interventions (e.g. the eco-lodge Urnatur under *B2N*). On this level, most of the projects can already report significant achievements in their own partner regions, even if they are still ongoing and the full extent of their effects is not yet known.

For instance, *GRISI PLUS* has managed to attract 50 new families to the Lead partner’s region, and the *ICER* project has resulted in new investments and an increase in tourism in the region. Other projects have generated outputs that directly support their localities, such as the introduction of working groups to supervise 50 forest sites (*Robinwood PLUS*), smart offices and workers to maintain local employment (*Micropol*), as well as 28 local action plans and five pilot actions on different topics (renewable energy, gender mainstreaming, local gastronomy and GPS guided tours) (*RURALAND*).

To ensure the long-term impact of the results, we recommend that regions firmly ‘embed’ the project within the region. Building strategic alliances between the different rural partners will broaden the projects’ scope, help to build capacity within the project and turn the direct short-term effects into a long-lasting, sustainable impact on the regional socio-economic situation. In practical terms, this means participating in or building (ICT) tourism networks or forming links with research and innovation centres in adjacent towns and deploying ICT. Strengthening rural and urban-rural networks and capacity building through interaction is stressed as a policy priority for the coming period.

The projects obviously aim to have long-term effects, and a number of them include provisions for this built into their foundations. For instance, the good practice Nattitude within the *ICER* project has a clear networking approach, which aims to benefit the whole Auvergne region and which can easily be transferred to other regions. Actions undertaken within the *Robinwood PLUS* project are also encouraged to involve, on a continuous basis, the local tourist, business and cultural stakeholders linked to the forestry system, with a view to creating a public/private network to meet the needs of the local area. Furthermore, the projects *Micropol* and *GRISI PLUS* seek to ensure the sustainability of their efforts by establishing themselves as nodes around which regional networks can be developed.

Clearly, projects and measures with a relatively limited scale can often make a direct difference to the local community (directly involved partners), and work as catalysts for wider community development (throughout the region).

**Recommendations to improve the effectiveness of rural policy**

Based on our analysis, we have drawn seven recommendations for policymakers to improve the impact of policy in rural regions.

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Source: Ecorys on basis of the info from the projects
1. **Build integrated solutions to achieve the ambitions of the Europe 2020 strategy**

Rural areas offer particular opportunities to link smart and sustainable growth. As they depend substantially on natural resources for their economic activity (e.g. agriculture), rural areas should pay close attention to integrating sustainability into their development strategy. Besides, due to the lower number of inhabitants, facilities and services in rural areas can be more profitable if they accommodate different types of users. In the INTERREG projects, many examples can be found of Integrated solutions, focussing on different target groups and combining both social and economic objectives. For instance, Smart Working Centres combine incubation facilities for entrepreneurs with meeting facilities for the local community (*Micropol*). It is clear from this that rural regions are a natural and prime habitat for building integrated solutions and realising the ambition of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

2. **Formulate a specialised offer for entrepreneurs**

Young people or new businesses will be attracted to rural regions when a specialised offer and environment for these target groups is created, e.g. by concentrating knowledge resources or by offering specialised services. More specialised products and services allow regions to stay competitive in a more global economy. Promotional strategies for rural regions will be more effective, if they include a convincing offer for entrepreneurs or young families. This recommendation is in line with the smart specialisation strategic approach as prescribed by the European Commission. The logic of smart specialisation suggests that each region has its own specific regional economic system and can build on its territorial characteristics. The smart specialisation concept can be applied in all types of regions. For instance, rural regions can modernize their agri-food or tourism sectors by investing in ICT, design, marketing, new distribution channels, whilst regions in industrial transition can stimulate cooperation on the frontiers of two sectors/clusters, such as health and ICT, design and furniture, optronics in machinery and equipment, or can support the diversification of SMEs, e.g. from automotive to mobility.

3. **Develop a diversification strategy for the rural region**

There is a need to emphasise business diversification as a means for businesses to resist the negative trends affecting agriculture and rural areas, to exploit strong inherent resources in new ways, and to adapt economic capacity. Successful rural SMEs are small scale, but do tend toward multiple business activities, not limited to a single sector. Such SMEs draw upon distinct regional characteristics, and focus on important niche markets (examples: *RURALAND, ICER and e-CREATE*). Apart from this, it is recommended that sufficient attention be paid to the renewal of the existing industrial production facilities in the region. As the role of traditional industrial sectors declines, all areas, including rural ones, need to consider how the specific assets and resources present within these sectors can be redeployed to the region’s benefit.

4. **Invest in partnerships**

The effect of rural development projects remains sometimes relatively limited in scale and reach. Creating partnerships helps to upscale the impact of the projects.

- **a.** We recommend that rural regions continuously reinforce local partnerships between public and private local stakeholders (including NGOs) from the region.

- **b.** At the same time, contemporary rural development will benefit from strategic cooperation and mutual relationships with different types of stakeholder. We recommend that rural regions open up to external stakeholders, to bring in new flows and resources from other contexts that will help to catalyse local development processes. In the increasingly diverse and complex rural and urban economies, urban-rural flows and interrelations are becoming ever more important. By mutually benefiting from each other’s strengths and efforts, stakeholders and regions will actively participate in the increasingly integrated dynamics of smart specialisation at the EU-level.

- **c.** More specifically, we recommend that rural stakeholders build strategic relationships and networks with relevant knowledge centres in any shape or form, within or outside of the region (e.g. ENRD, ERRIN). These will provide the necessary complementary competences and skills to further develop their activities, and enhance the effectiveness of such activities for the region.
5. **Explore all types of innovation**

The INTERREG rural development projects focus not so much on technical innovation but merely on social innovation and the development of practical and effective solutions for their region’s social needs. Analysing the INTERREG projects, we found that rural regions can introduce four different types of innovation:

- **Product innovation**: which is the introduction of a good or service that is new or significantly improved with respect to its characteristics or intended uses. Example: CesR: creating new products by bringing together entrepreneurs from different sectors (slow farms);
- **Process innovation** is the implementation of a new or significantly improved production or delivery method. Example: e-CREATE: the use of new techniques and platforms such as open source;
- **Marketing innovation** is the implementation of a new marketing method involving significant changes in product design or packaging, product placement, product promotion, or pricing. Example: DANTE: making heritage more appealing to tourists by telling stories.
- **Organisational innovation** is the implementation of a new organisational method in the firm’s business practices, workplace organisation, or external relations. Example: Robinwood PLUS: new public/private governance models for forest management.

6. **Recognise that ICT in rural areas is a pre-requisite for development.**

ICTs are an essential tool for improving the accessibility of rural areas, and for facilitating the development and maintenance of internal and external networks. ICT application will certainly help to unlock the potential of rural areas and make them more attractive places to live, work, and visit. This is widely understood by the rural community and is achieved by several projects (DANTE, e-CREATE, GRISI PLUS, Micropol). However, it should be understood that this is merely a pre-requisite for regional development. ICT is important for all rural areas, but it must be made clear that it will not make the decisive difference in their economic development (at most a temporarily advantage). To result in economic or social effects, the opportunities of ICT must be fully integrated into new products and services.

7. **Focus government on facilitating, rather than steering developments**

Policy should focus on facilitating and stimulating the involvement of private partners for innovative and sustainable approaches. This can be done by allowing/supporting ideas to grow instead of creating rules and stimulating businesses to improve by providing advice, support, or finance.

Facilitating the process also means involving private stakeholders as much as possible, and to attract private financial investments in rural development projects. At the same time, it is important to be selective in dealing with private investment. As rural development projects generally take a relatively long time to produce optimal results, and require long-term efforts to generate a return on investment, the focus should be placed on investors explicitly looking to bring the region forward through **sustainable, long-term investments**. Certain private investors might not be very familiar with all the features specific to a rural setting. They would therefore benefit from intensive interaction and continuous dialogue among all the stakeholders, to provide them with advice and guidance on the specifics of rural characteristics.
5. Annexes

Annexe 1: Rural development projects overview

9 projects:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project acronym</th>
<th>Project name</th>
<th>Detailed topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B2N</td>
<td>Business to Nature - Interregional Approach to SMEs and Entrepreneurship Policies in Natural Areas</td>
<td>Promotion of entrepreneurship in underdeveloped areas (mainly rural areas)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CesR</td>
<td>Cooperatives of Employment and Services in Rural areas</td>
<td>Reinforcing sustainable development in rural areas (care services, tourist services and jobs sharing)</td>
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<tr>
<td>DANTE</td>
<td>Digital Agenda for New Tourism Approach in European Rural and Mountain Areas</td>
<td>The role of Information Society in the tourism economy of rural and mountain areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>e-CREATE</td>
<td>Cultural Routes Entrepreneurship and Technologies Enhancement</td>
<td>Development of e-skills among tourism related SME (ICT and web-based customer relation tools)</td>
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<td>GRISI PLUS</td>
<td>Geomatics Rural Information Society Initiative PLUS</td>
<td>Increasing the use of geographical information and geomatic tools in rural areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICER</td>
<td>Innovation Concept of Eco-accommodation approach in rural Regions: Public support policies for eco-investors</td>
<td>Development of SMEs in rural areas with a strong environmental aspect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Micropol</td>
<td>Smart Work Centres in Non-Metropolitan areas</td>
<td>Implementation and management of Smart Work Centres (SWCs) in non-metropolitan areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robinwood PLUS</td>
<td>Apply participatory forest planning for sustainability</td>
<td>Promotion of entrepreneurship in forest product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RURALAND</td>
<td>Rural Development Players</td>
<td>Enhancement of competitiveness of rural areas with innovative and sustainable SMEs</td>
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</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Project acronym</th>
<th>Number of partners(^{11})</th>
<th>Country of the LP(^{12})</th>
<th>ERDF funding (€)</th>
<th>Total budget (€)</th>
<th>Starting date</th>
<th>Ending date</th>
<th>Type of project</th>
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<td>2 117 553</td>
<td>01/01/2010</td>
<td>31/03/2013</td>
<td>RIP</td>
</tr>
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</table>

\(^{11}\) Representing 22 Member states + Norway
\(^{12}\) LP: Lead Partner
\(^{13}\) RIP: Regional Initiative Project
**Indicators - as of end 2013**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project acronym</th>
<th>End date</th>
<th>No. of regional / local policies and instruments addressed</th>
<th>No. of good practices identified by Regional Initiative Projects</th>
<th>No. of regional / local policies and instruments improved or developed</th>
<th>No. of good practices successfully transferred within Regional Initiative Projects</th>
<th>No. of staff members with increased capacity (awareness / knowledge / skills) resulting from the exchange of experience at interregional events</th>
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<td>26</td>
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*Projects (RIP) do not always result in the transfer of good practices, but they always have to identify good practices with view to improving policies*

---

**Partner legal status**

- Bodies governed by public law: 53%  
- Public Authorities: 47%

**Public Authorities Governance level**

- Local Public Authority: 47%  
- Regional Public Authority: 36%  
- National Public Authority: 60%

* Bodies governed by public law: e.g. Regional and local development agencies, Public universities etc.*

**Number of partners per country**

- Italy, France: 11  
- Spain, Poland, Slovenia: 7  
- Ireland, Hungary, Finland, Greece: 4  
- Latvia, Bulgaria, Portugal, Romania: 3  
- Sweden, United Kingdom, The Netherlands: 2  
- Cyprus, Estonia, Malta, Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Switzerland: 1  
- Other countries: 0

---

*Numbers of partners in specific countries are approximate and subject to change.*
Annexe 2: Rural development project partners Map
Annexe 3: Rural development projects factsheets

Promoting entrepreneurship in underdeveloped areas (mainly rural areas):

B2N

Business to Nature - Interregional Approach to SMEs and Entrepreneurship Policies in Natural Areas

PROJECT DETAILS

Priority: Innovation and the knowledge economy
Theme: Entrepreneurship and SMEs

TYPE OF INTERVENTION

Type of intervention: Regional Initiative Project
Duration: 01/01/2010 - 31/12/2012
Website: www.business2nature.eu

BUDGET

Total budget: EUR 1 893 084
ERDF contribution: EUR 1 495 691

PARTNERSHIP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Institution, Town</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>Polish Tourism Development Agency, Warszawa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>Office of the Marshall of the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodship in Olsztyn, Olsztyn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>Institute for Economic Development of Ourense Province (INORDE), Ourense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Östergötland County Administrative Board, Linköping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>Perugia Province, Perugia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>Regional Committee for Tourism Development of Auvergne, Aubiere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>Cyngor Sir Powys County Council, Llandrindod Wells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>Grand Paradis Foundation, COGNE (AO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>Development Association of Alto Tâmega’s Region, Chaves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>Veliko Tarnovo Municipality, Veliko Tarnovo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>Local Development Centre Pivka, Pivka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>Warmia and Mazury Regional Development Agency JSC Olsztyn, Olsztyn</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Business to Nature (B2N) project was launched in January 2010. The partnership consisted originally of 11 public institutions from nine countries (Bulgaria, France, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom). The Bulgarian partner withdrew at the halfway stage. The total budget was EUR 1.89m of which EUR 1.49 ERDF contribution.

In the first year (2010) the project partners reviewed and evaluated SMEs policies with regard to environmental requirements and constraints. In the second year (2011), a good practices database was developed (good practices were identified and analysed). In the final year (2012) the partners prepared the final report containing policy recommendations as well as road maps with a view to transferring good practices and enhancing local policies. The final conference took place on 9th and 10th October 2012 in Powys (UK).

The focus of the B2N project was twofold:

• Balancing economic development with preserving natural areas;
• Stimulating entrepreneurship in vulnerable rural areas.

B2N’s main objective was to improve SMEs and entrepreneurship policies in all the partner regions. This was achieved by supporting the creation of new businesses, enhancing innovative SMEs, promoting higher added value services and improving business skills, thereby enabling the creation of more and better jobs.

During the three stages of the project:

• eight study visits, three workshops and two seminars were organised;
• reviews and papers were published, including the final project document published in September 2012 with good practices and recommendations;
• good practices were identified. The B2N website has a good practices database with 45 good practices from different project partners. At the final conference, Urnatur (eco-lodge in Sweden) was demonstrated as one of the best of all the good practices identified within the project, reflecting B2N idea in a perfect way.
Enhancing the competitiveness of rural areas with innovative and sustainable SMEs:

RURALAND

RURAL DEVELOPMENT PLAYERS

PROJECT DETAILS

Priority: Innovation and the knowledge economy
Theme: Entrepreneurship and SMEs

TYPE OF INTERVENTION

Type of intervention: Regional Initiative Project
Duration: 01/01/2010 - 31/03/2013
Website: www.ruraland.eu

BUDGET

Total budget: EUR 2 117 553
ERDF contribution: EUR 1 627 098

PARTNERSHIP

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Institution, Town</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>Regional ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture, Sevilla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>Regional Council of Limousin, Limoges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>Rural Foundation of Wallonia, Namur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Jämtland County Council Institute of Rural Development, Ås</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>Pazardzhik Regional Administration, Pazardzhik</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>SICILIAN REGION, PALERMO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>ODIANA – Development Association for the Baixo Guadiana, Castro Marim</td>
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<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>Office for regional and agricultural development in Corsica, BASTIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>Joint authority of Kainuu Region, Kainuu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>Salaj county council, Zalau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Region of Jamtland, As</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lead partner:
Regional ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture
TABLADILLA S/N
41071, Sevilla
SPAIN
Ten regional authorities (at Nuts-2 level) from nine different countries participated in the RURALAND project: Spain, Sweden, Finland, Romania, Bulgaria, Italy, Portugal, France and Belgium. The project ran from January 2010 until March 2013 and had a total budget EUR 2.1m including a EUR 1.6m ERDF contribution.

The main objective of the RURALAND project was to reinforce the effectiveness and innovation of rural development policies with a view to promoting the economic diversification of rural areas, through regional cooperation, the exchange of knowledge and identification of good practices, thereby promoting better cohesion and balance between European regions. The specific objectives were to:

- Bring together and compare the experiences of different regions by implementing rural development policies and good practices;
- Promote innovation that contributes to the sustainable development and territorial cohesion of rural areas (an objective in line with the Gothenburg strategy);
- Stimulate the transfer of experience;
- Provide the necessary tools for the emergence of innovative projects in key areas for rural development (objective in line with the Lisbon strategy).

In order to reach this objective, a methodological approach was defined, which, as well as including the activities that are traditionally carried out in cooperation processes (seminars, studies, web site, etc.), included activities and tasks related to the transfer of experiences in four key areas in rural development: economic competitiveness, new technology and renewable energy, new employment, ICT and services to the population, natural and cultural economic enhancement.

During the first semester, 57 good practices were identified in the territories and a total of 20 good practices were exported. In the 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} semester, the 20 good practice sites were visited, resulting in 45 exchanges and 28 action plans confirmed and launched during the 4\textsuperscript{th} semester. The 20 good practices can be divided into four thematic areas (more than one possible):

- Promotion Economic Sectors of Rural Areas (10 GPs)
- New technologies and renewable energy sources (10 GPs)
- Services, ICTs and employs for rural population (10 GPs)
- Natural and Cultural Heritage (11 GPs)
Developing SMEs in rural areas with a strong environmental aspect:

ICER

Innovative Concept of Eco-accommodation approach in rural Regions: Public support policies for eco-investors

**PROJECT DETAILS**

Priority: Innovation and the knowledge economy  
Theme: Entrepreneurship and SMEs

**TYPE OF INTERVENTION**

Type of intervention: Regional Initiative Project  
Duration: 01/01/2010 - 31/12/2012  
Website: www.icerproject.eu

**BUDGET**

Total budget: EUR 1 799 250  
ERDF contribution: EUR 1 410 572.5

**PARTNERSHIP**

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Ireland</td>
<td>Shannon Development, Shannon, Co. Clare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Hungary</td>
<td>South Transdanubian Regional Development Agency, Pécs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Spain</td>
<td>Provincial Government of Valladolid, VALLADOLID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Finland</td>
<td>Lahti Region Environmental Service, Technical and Environmental Department, City of Lahti, Lahti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Malta</td>
<td>Ministry for Gozo, Victoria, Gozo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Slovenia</td>
<td>Regional Development Agency Mura Ltd., Murska Sobota</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Lead partner:  
Regional Committee for Tourism Development of Auvergne  
Parc Technologique La Pardieu,  
7 allée Pierre de Fermat CS 50502  
63178, Aubiere  
FRANCE
The ICER project brings together **seven partners** from seven EU Member states (Finland, France, Hungary, Ireland, Malta, Slovenia and Spain). The project ran from January 2010 until December 2012 and had a total budget of EUR 1.8m including EUR 1.4 m in ERDF contribution.

The **overall objective** of ICER was to create more effective policies in rural areas in the tourist sector aimed at attracting eco-investors. The project addressed a territorial policy issue of shared relevance for all partner regions and sought to provide tangible results so as ensure the project’s long-term effects beyond 2011. There were four **sub-objectives**:

- To attract more private investors in rural areas;
- To share experience of policies and instruments in order to create innovative concepts in the tourist sector;
- To disseminate widely the results of the project in each partner territory and to the community of potential beneficiaries;
- To overhaul public policies in order to offer new development solutions to economic players and investors.

In order to **reach the objective**, the first activity of each partner was to analyse the public practices aimed at attracting investors to the region’s accommodation and services sector. When doing so, partners not only identified good practices to share with other partners during the study visits, but also become fully aware of the needs and shortcomings of the regions. The study visits allowed the sharing of good public policy experiences with all partners. The meetings with local investors aimed to identify their most important needs to be addressed by public authorities. At the end, all the recommendations were collated into a ‘public policies recommendations book’ targeted at public policymakers.

**Thirty good practices** were identified, and the partners worked on the examples for a potential transfer. The policies or instruments developed tackle various issues, such as the carbon footprint of accommodation, tax incentives, strategies to attract investors, innovative tools, business networking and clusters, sustainable management initiatives or specific marketing strategies.
Promoting entrepreneurship in forest products:

Robinwood PLUS

Apply participatory forest planning for sustainability

PROJECT DETAILS

Priority: Innovation and the knowledge economy
Theme: Entrepreneurship and SMEs

TYPE OF INTERVENTION

Type of intervention: Regional Initiative Project
Mini-programme: Yes
Duration: 01/01/2010 - 31/12/2013
Website: www.robinwoodplus.eu

BUDGET

Total budget: EUR 3 063 464
ERDF contribution: EUR 2 358 322.67

PARTNERSHIP

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Finland Joint authority of Kainuu Region, Kainuu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>France Regional Council of Limousin, Limoges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Romania Harghita County Council, Miercurea Ciuc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Italy Regional Government of Calabria, Catanzaro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Finland Regional Council of Kainuu</td>
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Lead partner:
Liguria Region - Environment Department
Via D'Annunzio 111
16121, Genova
ITALY
Robinwood PLUS

Five partners from four different countries participate in Robinwood PLUS: Finland, France, Italy and Romania. The project runs from January 2010 until December 2013. The total budget is EUR 3m including EUR 2.36m ERDF contribution.

The main objective of the project is to promote the multifunctional role of forests as a driver for economic development, environment protection and quality of life improvement in rural areas, in line with the EU Forest Action Plan and sustainability policies.

The main objective incorporates four sub-objectives:

- to improve regional and local policies related to rural development based on forestry with a view to increasing their ability to address multi functionality as well as to enhancing the competitiveness and innovation of both existing and potential forest-based business seen as multipliers of growth in rural areas;
- to improve governance and to increase the ability of policymakers and administrators to promote rural growth through sustainable forest management and SMEs involvement;
- improve general information on forestry, the multifunctional role thereof and on sustainability
- establish an international online social network of regional and local governments applying sustainable forestry which can continue exchanging successful practices on their own.

To reach these objectives, the project focuses on the exchange of experience by project partners and sub-project beneficiaries on participatory forest planning used as a tool for sustainable land management and rural development. The project will start with the systematisation of best practices and information, will continue with experience exchange and will finish with generating other results and lessons (regional and local) which will inform guidelines for the application of quality PFMP and policy recommendations on forestry economy development for the regions (and EU policies), which will then be disseminated. The communication activity runs in parallel and stimulates further exchange and the uptake of the results outside project areas. The outcomes are key for the launch of the new regional ERDF programmes 2014-2020.

The project started in March 2010 with the identification of 25 good practices (five for each region). The partner identified the key themes on which to base the call for sub-project proposals that was launched in October 2010. 56 application forms were received (46 eligible). In step two (project selection), seven proposals were received, five of which were eligible and their implementation started from October 2011:

<table>
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<td>ELWOOD</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>SHARE-WOOD</td>
<td>Information and environmental education</td>
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<tr>
<td>DESTINATION MOUNTAIN</td>
<td>Tourism development on forest land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FORMARIE</td>
<td>Planning and management of forest resources</td>
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</table>
Developing e-skills among tourism related SME:
(ICT and web-based customer relation tools)

e-CREATE

Cultural Routes Entrepreneurship and Technologies Enhancement

**PROJECT DETAILS**

**Priority:** Innovation and the knowledge economy

**Theme:** the Information Society

**TYPE OF INTERVENTION**

**Type of intervention:** Regional Initiative Project

**Duration:** 01/01/2012 - 31/12/2014

**Website:** www.e-create-project.eu/

**BUDGET**

**Total budget:** EUR 1 917 546

**ERDF contribution:** EUR 1 312 969

**Norwegian contribution:** EUR 118 042

**PARTNERSHIP**

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<th>Country</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>1 Germany</td>
<td>Ministry of Regional Development and Transport Saxony - Anhalt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Czech Republic</td>
<td>Ústí Region, Usti nad Labem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 France</td>
<td>Niverlan, Nevers cedex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Italy</td>
<td>Province of Modena, Modena</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Hungary</td>
<td>West-Pannon Regional Development Company, Szombathely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Germany</td>
<td>TRANSROMANICA Association, Magdeburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Italy</td>
<td>Lombardy Region - General Directorate for Culture, Milan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Portugal</td>
<td>VALSOUSA - Association of Municipalities of Sousa Valley, Lousada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Poland</td>
<td>MARR - Malopolska Regional Development Agency, Krakow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Poland</td>
<td>Upper Silesian Agency for Entrepreneurship Promotion Co., Katowice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Norway</td>
<td>Sor-Trondelag County Authority, Trondheim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Ireland</td>
<td>Donegal County Enterprise Board, Letterkenny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Spain</td>
<td>Castilla and Leon Regional Authority, Valladolid</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Partners of the e-CREATE project include local and regional public authorities (or institutions acting as public equivalent bodies on their behalf) from nine EU Member states (Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Spain) as well as one partner from Norway. The project started in January 2012 and will close in December 2014. The total budget is EUR 1.9m including EUR 1.3m ERDF contribution and EUR 0.12m Norwegian contribution.

The key objective of e-CREATE is to enhance the capacity of policymakers to support the development of e-skills among tourism related SMEs, thereby enabling them to make good use of modern ICT and web-based consumer relation tools.

The main activities of e-CREATE include an assessment and publication of good practices, the organisation of Interregional Capacity Building Workshops and the formulation of Policy Recommendations. In addition, a demonstration project is implemented, which aims at developing and testing an open-source application for mobile devices.
Reinforcing sustainable development in rural areas: (care services, tourist services and jobs sharing)

CesR

Cooperatives of Employment and Services in Rural areas

PROJECT DETAILS
Priority: Innovation and the knowledge economy
Theme: Employment, human capital and education

TYPE OF INTERVENTION
Type of intervention: Regional Initiative Project
Duration: 01/01/2012 - 31/12/2014
Website: http://cesr-project.eu/fr/

BUDGET
Total budget: EUR 1,378,280
ERDF contribution: EUR 1,109,067

PARTNERSHIP

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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Institution, Town</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  France</td>
<td>Regional Committee for Tourism Development of Auvergne, Aubière Cedex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  Czech Republic</td>
<td>Olomouc region, Olomouc</td>
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<tr>
<td>3  Poland</td>
<td>Institute of Geography and Spatial Organization - Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw</td>
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<tr>
<td>4  Cyprus</td>
<td>TROODOS DEVELOPMENT COMPANY, Eyrichou, Nicosia</td>
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<tr>
<td>5  Spain</td>
<td>County Council of Granada, Granada</td>
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<td>6  Latvia</td>
<td>University of Latvia, Centre for European and Transition Studies, Riga</td>
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<tr>
<td>7  Slovenia</td>
<td>Regional Development Agency Mura Ltd., Murska Sobota</td>
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<tr>
<td>8  Ireland</td>
<td>Cork County Council, Cork</td>
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The CesR (Cooperatives of Employment and Services in Rural areas) project started in 2012 with eight partners from eight different EU Member states: the Czech Republic, France, Cyprus, Ireland, Poland, Spain, Slovenia and Latvia. The project ends in December 2014. The total budget is EUR 1.38m including EUR 1.1m ERDF contribution.

The main objective is to develop policy instruments aimed at creating or reinforcing sustainable employment, so that people in sparsely populated areas can make a living from their work and stay in their home areas. The CesR project enables its contributors to exchange experience – and ultimately transfer good practices between them – in the sectors of care services, tourist services and job sharing.

CesR partners aim to create favourable conditions for the development of the neglected market of tourist services in self-catering holiday homes. In-house services like meals preparation, daily cleaning, babysitting etc. are underdeveloped in this specific kind of tourist accommodation. However, various examples in Europe show that the demand exists.

At the same time, a skilled but under-employed human resource is available in rural areas. Part-time and precarious contracts prevail in the sector of home-care services.

CesR partners have to identify and promote easy solutions to help accommodation owners find and employ the relevant people, for example by sharing working time with other tourist businesses and home-care services companies.

After analysing the existing policies in the involved regions, the partners will identify the best of these policies and practices and evaluate their transferability. The most important aspects of these policies as well as methods for transfer will be collated into a handbook available online on the project website and sent not only to local and regional policymakers in the eight regions involved but also to thematic national and European networks.
The role of Information Society in the tourism economy of rural and mountain areas:

DANTE

Digital Agenda for New Tourism Approach in European Rural and Mountain Areas

**PROJECT DETAILS**

**Priority:** Innovation and the knowledge economy  
**Theme:** the Information Society

**TYPE OF INTERVENTION**

**Type of intervention:** Regional Initiative Project  
**Duration:** 01/01/2012 - 31/12/2014  
**Website:** danteproject.eu/

**BUDGET**

**Total budget:** EUR 2 222 042  
**ERDF contribution:** EUR 1 728 295

**PARTNERSHIP**

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<td>Deutschland</td>
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<td>Slovenia</td>
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<td>University of Ljubljana, Ljubljana</td>
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<td>Poland</td>
<td>Regional Development Agency Bielsko-Biała, Bielsko-Biała</td>
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<td>Italy</td>
<td>METROPOLI, Firenze</td>
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The DANTE network involves 13 partners covering a wide geographic area (Italy, Spain, Greece, Germany, Poland, Slovenia, France and the Netherlands). The project started in January 2012 and will close in December 2014. The total budget is EUR 2.2m including a EUR 1.7m ERDF contribution.

The DANTE network will optimise eight current and innovative regional good practices that demonstrate the benefits of the Information Society for the competitiveness of the tourism sector in disadvantaged areas. Through an interregional cooperation framework, DANTE will promote a knowledge sharing process that will:

- Exchange the knowledge gained by more advanced regions in the development of regional ICT projects for rural and mountain areas through learning instruments designed for the consortium;
- Support eight European Regional and Local Governments and Agencies to define an effective plan able to address the challenges of the tourism economy in their rural and mountain areas, thanks to the adoption of ICT tools and methodologies;
- Demonstrate the feasibility of the transfer projects, through a light pilot action in a rural or mountain area
- Spread the benefits achieved among the consortium to external organisations

At the end of 2014, DANTE will produce (a) a good practices catalogue presenting the good practices analysed, the pilot action and guidelines, and (b) eight implementation plans for developing information society and tourism.
Increasing the use of geographical information and geomatics tools in rural areas:

GRISI PLUS

Geomatics Rural Information Society Initiative PLUS

**PROJECT DETAILS**

**Priority:** Innovation and the knowledge economy  
**Theme:** the Information Society

**TYPE OF INTERVENTION**

**Type of intervention:** Regional Initiative Project  
**Duration:** 01/01/2012 - 31/12/2014  
**Website:** www.grisiplus.eu

**BUDGET**

**Total budget:** EUR 1 629 550  
**ERDF contribution:** EUR 1 328 737

**PARTNERSHIP**

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<td>France</td>
<td>Gers Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Gers CCI), AUCH</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>West Regional Authority, GALWAY</td>
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<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>LARNACA DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT AGENCY, Voroclini</td>
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<td>Malta</td>
<td>Local Councils’ Association, Balzan</td>
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<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>Sinergija development agency Ltd., Moravske Toplice</td>
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<td>Romania</td>
<td>The regional development agency centru, Alba Iulia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>National association of municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria, Sofia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>Tartu Science Park, Tartu</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Territorial Initiative for Employment and Entrepr.of Sintiki-Iraclia (TIEE-SI), Livadia Sintikis</td>
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<td>Greece</td>
<td>Region of Crete, Heraklion</td>
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</table>

Lead partner:  
Gers Chamber of Commerce and Industry  
(Gers CCI)  
Place Jean David - BP 10181  
32004, AUCH  
FRANCE
GRISI PLUS brings together 14 partners from 11 Member States of the North, South, East and West areas, thus covering a large part of the EU territory (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Malta, Romania and Slovenia).

The project started in January 2012 and will close in December 2014. The total budget is EUR 1.6m including EUR 1.33 ERDF contribution.

The main goal of the GRISI PLUS project is to improve the effectiveness, modernise and enhance public rural development policies in the partners’ regions by increasing the use of geographical information and geometric tools.

To achieve this goal, partners exchange experience as well as identify and transfer good practices in two areas of common interest relating to the revitalisation of rural territories:

- increasing the appeal of rural territories in order to attract new inhabitants,
- promoting local tangible and intangible goods and services,

The aim of the project is to transfer five good practices successfully, inform 13 public policies, and increase the skills of 42 staff members through direct involvement in the project.
Implementing and managing Smart Work Centres (SWCs) in non-metropolitan areas:

Micropol

Smart Work Centres in Non-Metropolitan areas

**PROJECT DETAILS**

**Priority:** Innovation and the knowledge economy  
**Theme:** Employment, human capital and education

**TYPE OF INTERVENTION**

**Type of intervention:** Regional Initiative Project  
**Duration:** 01/01/2012 - 31/12/2014  
**Website:** [www.micropol-interreg.eu](http://www.micropol-interreg.eu)

**BUDGET**

**Total budget:** EUR 1 891 598  
**ERDF contribution:** EUR 1 484 522

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**PARTNERSHIP**

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<tr>
<td>1 Denmark</td>
<td>North Denmark Region, Aalborg Øst</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Netherlands</td>
<td>Province of Drenthe, Assen</td>
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<td>3 Hungary</td>
<td>West-Pannon Region- and Economy Development Supplier Public Nonprofit Ltd., Szombathely</td>
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<td>4 Slovenia</td>
<td>BSC, Business Support Centre Ltd, Kranj, Kranj</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 United Kingdom</td>
<td>Northumberland County Council, Morpeth</td>
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<td>6 Italia</td>
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<td>7 Hungary</td>
<td>Public Foundation for the Development of Industry, Budapest</td>
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<td>Riga Technical University, Riga</td>
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<td>Niverlan, Nevers</td>
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<td>10 Estonia</td>
<td>Estonia Advice Centres, Tallinn</td>
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<td>11 Spain</td>
<td>Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Jaen, Jaen</td>
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</table>

Lead partner:  
North Denmark Region  
Niels Bohrs Vej 30  
9220, Aalborg Øst  
DENMARK
The Micropol project started in 2012 and will end in December 2014. Eleven partners from ten different countries are involved in the project: Denmark, The Netherlands, Hungary, Slovenia, United Kingdom, Italy, Latvia, France, Estonia and Spain. The project has a total budget of EUR 1.89m including an ERDF contribution of EUR 1.48m.

The project aims to tackle the loss of human capital in rural areas. Qualified people move to the big cities in search of job opportunities in the knowledge economy. They leave behind them formerly thriving communities, which then suffer from problems of depopulation with little possibility for development and growth.

The objective of Micropol is to exchange experience and good practices on Smart Work Centres (SWCs). SWCs are facilities located in rural or suburban areas, which offer shared flexible office spaces, ICT facilities and other resources supporting telework and flexible work patterns. Among the main benefits are reduced commuting time and reduced environmental pressure, improved work/life balance, better access to an international market of knowledge-based telework and the possibility of living in rural areas while retaining high-quality jobs in the knowledge economy traditionally linked to metropolitan areas.

Through a series of thematic seminars as well as a survey and study visits, the project partners contribute to the improvement of knowledge, skills and strategies for the use of SWCs in rural development and employment policies.

The project results include a case study collection, a good practice guide, regional implementation plans for self-sustainable SWCs and a policy recommendation document for internal and external dissemination.
INTERREG IVC Thematic Capitalisation

Innovation systems
Innovation capacity of SMEs
Eco-Innovation
Creative Industries
Entrepreneurship
E-government services
Demographic change
Rural development
Climate change
Energy efficiency
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