

**Rural
development**



**Why reinvent the wheel?
Capitalising on regional policy
achievements in supporting
rural development**



October 2013



About the authors

Marie-Jose Zondag from Ecorys (NL) has more than 15 years' experience in territorial cohesion (evaluation, training, development and implementation at both project and programme level throughout Europe) and has a broad knowledge on rural development through, among others, several DG AGRI studies on rural development.

Bart van Herck from IDEA Consult (BE – part of Ecorys holding) has extensive experience of both territorial cohesion and rural development.

Published by the Joint Technical Secretariat of the INTERREG IVC Programme 2007-2013

Content advisory group: Magdalini Anagnostou, H  l  ne Berges, Silke Brocks, Nicolas Singer

Editorial advisory group: Nuala Morgan, Petra Polaskova

Editing: Richard Conlin, Paul Webster

Design and printing: ESN – European Service Network

Printed in October 2013

Photo credits: cover    IvonneW, iStockphoto

Printing and downloading of extracts from this brochure for public use is permitted provided that the source is quoted.

No content may be used for any commercial purposes.



Why reinvent the wheel? Capitalising on regional policy achievements in supporting rural development

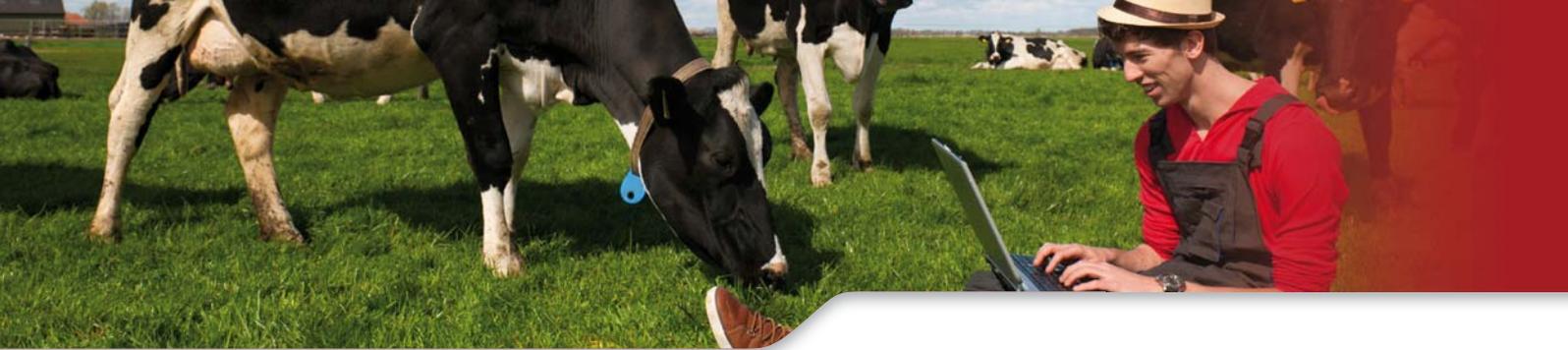
Rural development presents many new challenges but also opportunities for regional policymakers. In this context, the interregional cooperation programme, INTERREG IVC, has recently published the results of an important policy analysis, one in a series of 12, each focusing on a different policy theme. This brochure offers just a brief preview of what you can find in the report on 'Rural Development', which details a raft of tried-and-tested good practices and offers timely evidence-based policy recommendations.

Rural development: a strategic policy challenge

As developments in global production networks and increased urbanisation have changed the character of rural areas, rural development policy has widened its scope beyond mining, agriculture and forestry to

include tourism and niche manufacturers. There is an increasing awareness of the importance of rural areas, which possess assets that can help meet some of Europe's major socio-economic challenges.





Rural development: challenges at regional level

Rural Europe includes many of the most remote territories in Europe, with sometimes impoverished populations and marginalised communities, with insufficient public services and inadequate economic opportunities.

The rural regions in Europe face three major challenges:

- The need to stimulate growth and employment
- Depopulation and declining public services
- The need to better use natural resources and to protect the environment

Growth and employment

Generally, GDP per capita in rural regions is lower than in urban areas. However, the growth in the GDP per capita is higher in rural areas than in urban areas. Unfortunately, this growing GDP has not translated into new jobs.

As the primary sector continues to decline, there is a need to transform the economic structure of rural areas. The tertiary sector, particularly the tourism industry, is considered to have become the main driver for growth and employment.

Depopulation and a declining service level

Rural demographics have also been changing. Although a few rural areas are benefiting from the arrival of more affluent, mobile people choosing to move from urban centres to rural locations, most rural areas suffer from depopulation, particularly among the young and the economically active. Rural areas suffer from ageing demography, they have inhabitants with relatively low educational attainment, and mismatches exist between the supply of education and demand in the economy. The active population is also declining in rural areas, accompanied by a reduction in public services, which in turn has a detrimental effect on the sustainability of local communities and on future economic growth.

Better use of natural resources - protecting the environment

Environmental pressures and the unsustainable use of natural resources have had a huge impact on rural areas, as their economies largely depend on their natural resources. The effects of climate change and environmental degradation are being felt in rural areas and by its main sector - agriculture. There is consequently a pressing need to promote climate mitigation and energy & resource efficiency. At the same time, rural regions offer great potential to rise to these challenges through the development of a green bio-economy, and as potential supplier of renewable energies (water, wind, sun, biomass, etc.).





Meeting the challenges: good practices from INTERREG IVC

Among the 204 INTERREG IVC projects, there are nine that focus on rural development (see table 1). All the issues they address are related to the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy, especially to entrepreneurship, the information society and human capital.

All nine projects deal with the drivers for and barriers to rural development (see table 2).

Table 1: The 9 rural development projects contribute to 3 sub-themes

Stimulating entrepreneurship and SMEs in rural areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B2N - Business to nature – economic development with environmental protection • Robinwood PLUS – entrepreneurship through participatory forest planning • ICER – innovative policies rural tourism • RURALAND – diversify rural economy with innovative SMEs
Information society in rural areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • e-CREATE – e-skills of tourism related SMEs • GRISI PLUS – the use of GIS in rural areas • DANTE – Rural tourism through ICT
Employment, human capital and education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CesR – employment services in rural areas • Micropol – Smart Work Centres in non-metropolitan areas

Table 2: Overview of the projects in relation to key drivers and barriers for rural development

Key drivers (SEGIRA, 2010)	Projects
1. Natural resources and environmental quality	<i>ICER, B2N, Robinwood PLUS, RURALAND</i>
2. Sectoral structure of economy (dominant services)	<i>RURALAND (and all other projects that focus on tourism)</i>
3. Quality of life and cultural capital	<i>DANTE, GRISI PLUS</i>
4. Infrastructure and accessibility (good transport and ICT connectivity)	<i>Micropol, e-CREATE, DANTE, (RURALAND)</i>
5. Human capital, (entrepreneurial) capacity	<i>B2N, Robinwood PLUS, CesR</i>
6. Social and institutional capital, networks	<i>Most of the projects organise more intensive interactions between stakeholders in the region</i>
Key barriers (SEGIRA, 2010)	Projects
1. Demographic evolutions and migration	<i>RURALAND, GRISI PLUS, Micropol</i>
2. Infrastructure and accessibility (lack of transport and ICT connectivity)	<i>Micropol, RURALAND, DANTE, e-CREATE</i>
3. Sectoral structure of economy (dominant agriculture)	<i>e-CREATE, Robinwood PLUS, ICER, B2N, DANTE, RURALAND</i>



The challenges just described require new policy solutions designed by rural stakeholders themselves. The INTERREG IVC capitalisation exercise has highlighted a range of ongoing and finished projects that can provide a source of inspiration for rural areas around Europe. A selection of them is provided here:

Economic development

RURALAND: provided agri-food producers with training to develop networks with other producers, giving them a clearer vision and knowledge of what tourism means to individual companies and to the region as a whole. The purpose of the project was to increase the number of local tourism products, based on local food production and culture. The project also helped artisan producers of gastronomic products to develop tourism as part of their business.

B2N: focused on balancing economic development and entrepreneurship with preserving nature in vulnerable rural areas.

Robinwood PLUS is developing 'forest charters' aimed at enhancing forestry activities by sharing, developing and promoting local wood crafts and increasing the use of local timber. The approach is to promote strong interaction between the park and local community operators involved in tourism, economic and cultural forestry activities to create a network of private initiatives and public projects to meet the demands of the territory.

Rural tourism

ICER: developed 'Nattitude', a scheme to improve tourism accommodation and address the demand for more eco-responsible tourism. Nattitude sought to encourage the emergence of more than a 100 hotels, guesthouses, campsites that reflect a "Nature Attitude" trend that reconciles responsible consumption with more self-centred demands and behaviours.

CesR: focuses on stimulating employment in rural areas by enhancing self-catering accommodation through the provision of a 'menu' of services, such

as hairdressers, personal chefs, tour-guides, etc. Another benefit is that, since guests are able to make use of these services from the luxury of their own accommodation, transport usage during their stay is also reduced, thus cutting down on carbon emissions and noise pollution.

Using ICT to stimulate rural development

Micropol: tackles the loss of human capital from rural areas through the development of *Smart Work Centres*, which are designed to retain knowledge workers in the rural area by making use of state-of-the-art ICT, videoconferencing and other resources that support smart work / co-working.

GRISI PLUS: uses the latest interactive maps and web-based geoportals as tools that policymakers can use to better market their locality. These geomatic tools enable them to visually present a wide range of data and information (schools, hospitals, etc.), thereby making the locality more attractive, and better able to attract teleworkers and other potential new inhabitants.

e-CREATE: aims to increase policymakers' understanding of the potential of ICT and web tools and promotes the uptake of ICT among entrepreneurs in rural areas and along tourism routes. One good practice is *KULMIN*, which is a sophisticated smartphone application that provides cultural heritage information to tourists on the sites or monuments they are visiting.

DANTE: has also focused on ensuring the competitiveness of the tourism sector as well as developing tourism activities through the use of ICT, and is more relevant for regions suffering from the loss of human capital. In a context of increasing competition, DANTE aims to improve and diversify tourist services. It fosters locally driven innovation through intensive exchange among its members, and this is helping to create new tourist services and products. It is also promoting ICT services such as marketing channels for tourism providers, as well as for (potential) visitors.



Discover more about current rural development policy

The full capitalisation report on rural development includes a detailed analysis of the nine projects: their thematic and strategic focus, their outputs, their innovative character, how they relate to recent research findings on rural development and their effectiveness and potential transferability.

It provides invaluable insight into:

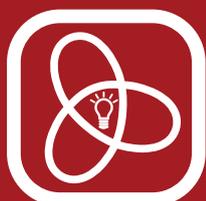
- trends in rural development from a European perspective;
- approaches used in tackling rural development policy challenges;
- experiences of several regions in developing rural policy using interregional cooperation;

- a wide range of good practice examples with proven results at local and regional level;
- lessons learnt from the analysis of the projects;
- current and potential synergies with other projects.

Finally, it makes a broad set of policy recommendations relating to important aspects of policy development and delivery, such as accessibility of rural areas, business diversification, stakeholder involvement, the building of strategic relationships and how rural development policy can play its role in both increasing the impact of and contributing to the Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

Download the full report from: www.interreg4c.eu/capitalisation

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



Renewable energy



Sustainable transport

Over the last seven years the INTERREG IVC programme has been enabling public institutions all over Europe – over 2000 in total – to ‘learn through cooperation’ across 204 different interregional projects aimed at improving regional policies.

In June 2012, the programme commissioned a team of thematic experts to analyse, benchmark, and capitalise on the wealth of knowledge generated by projects working on similar regional development issues. Altogether, 12 policy themes, ranging from innovation to the environment, have been covered. 12 reports are now available detailing the insights and lessons from this capitalisation process for the benefit of all regions across Europe.

In their presentation of the wide range of innovative good practices and policies improved by the projects, the reports offer a timely inventory of up-to-date evidence and experience to help regional authorities and interested stakeholders introduce or develop their regional policies. Policymakers and practitioners at all levels – regional, national and European – will find theme-specific recommendations tailored to them.

This brochure is a preview of the full-length report in the field of rural development.

The Interregional Cooperation Programme INTERREG IVC, financed by the European Union's Regional Development Fund, helps Regions of Europe work together to share experience and good practice in the areas of innovation, the knowledge economy, the environment and risk prevention. EUR 302 million was granted for project funding but, more than that, a wealth of knowledge and potential solutions are also on hand for regional policy makers.



www.interreg4c.eu