



## **RUR@CT - Transnational Steering Committee**

**08<sup>th</sup> December 2010 in Brussels**

### **Minutes of the meeting**

#### **I- Network news**

- I-A Member regions and partners
- I-B Capitalisation of good practices
- I-C Overall progress of the transfers
- I-D Examples of ongoing transfers in Limousin

#### **II- Methodological advice for the transfer of good practices**

- II-A Funding opportunities
- II-B Other advice

#### **III- Prospects for improvement / possible evolution**

- III-A Integration: moving into a 'targeted' capitalisation plan
- III-B Experimentation: widening capitalisation to test new models of GPs
- III-C Towards a new legal structure : the EGTC
- III-D Other possible actions

#### **IV- Position of the RUR@CT network on the 5<sup>th</sup> cohesion report and the 'Europe 2020' strategy**

- IV-A Conclusions of the 5th Cohesion Report
- IV-B RUR@CT statement on 'Europe 2020' and communication strategy

#### **Attached files:**

1. List of participants
2. Reminder: stages of the transfer of good practices
3. Sheet template for the Action Plan
4. INTERACT pilot network on article 37-6b
5. Questionnaire on the 2011-2013 guidelines (to be sent back by 3<sup>rd</sup> February)
6. Summary of the Conclusions of the Committee of the Regions about the joint consultation on the EGTC
7. 'Europe 2020 / 5<sup>th</sup> Cohesion Report' statement
8. Overall state of progress of the RUR@CT transfers in December 2010

19 people attended the steering committee, representing 12 partner Regions of the network in 7 EU member states (cf. *Annex 1*). Claude TREMOUILLE, Vice-President of the Limousin Region, set the agenda of the meeting: reporting on operational progress and network strategy, analysing the progress of the transfers of good practices and discussing the blocking factors and solutions. Finally, he mentioned new possible orientations for the network and its strategic positioning in the next three years.



## I- Network news

The steering committee provided an opportunity to take stock of the overall situation of the network, especially as regards the integration of Good Practices (GPs) into the database and the state of progress of the transfers. Three GPs from Limousin were presented as concrete examples.

### I-A Member Regions and partners

The network currently includes 62 Regions from 17 EU Member States. Among these Regions, 30 signed the RUR@CT charter and are therefore members (as importing and exporting Regions), while 32 are partners (as an observer or as exporting Regions). The network remains open to other regions interested to join as a member or a partner.

Among the 30 member Regions, 15 are involved in importing good practices, the transfer process being at different stages of advancement. These 15 Regions are considered to be the most active in terms of operational activities. The following table shows the indicative level of involvement of all 30 member Regions, keeping in mind that this classification can of course evolve over time (the ECOREGIONS project should allow new transfer opportunities and the membership of other Regions such as Picardie as a lead partner).

	<i>No ongoing transfer or opportunities not yet followed up (steps 1 or 2)</i>	<i>At least one transfer in progress, at an advanced stage (steps 3 to 6)</i>
<i>Moderate involvement in the strategic activities of the network</i>	East Flanders, Cheshire, Centre, Brescia, Cremona, Bacau, Extremadura, Gabrovo, Styria, Basse Normandie, Sardinia, Vienne, Aquitaine, Ader Sousa	Molisa, Pazardzhik, Corsica, Algarve, Salaj
<i>Strong participation and contribution to strategic activities (article 37-6b, territorial cohesion, Europe 2020)</i>	Bavaria, Opolskie, Eszak Alfold, Auvergne, Friuli Venezia Giulia	Limousin, Andalucia, Wallonia, Kainuu, Jämtland, Sicily

### I-B Capitalisation of new GPs

The RUR@CT database has now 125 good practices, including the last updates from the RURALAND project (INTERREG IVC). 51 new GPs will be added shortly from the following projects:

- ROBINWOOD (INTERREG IVC), a project aiming at enhancing forest resources ;
- IMMODI (INTERREG IVC), the objective of which is to disseminate good practices in e-government and e-health in mountain areas;
- RURALJOBS (FP7), a project for increasing employability in rural areas.

Moreover, each Region is free to add new good practices to the database by using the online form in the website CMS ([www.ruract.eu](http://www.ruract.eu)).

### I-C Overall progress of the transfers of GP

82 transfer opportunities - based on 43 GPs - have so far been initiated. These figures show that 1/3 of the 125 capitalised GPs are likely to be transferred.

With regard to the development of these 82 transfer opportunities since the last Steering Committee



(in June 2010), it is noticeable that there is a significant progress to stages 3, 4 and 5 (see table below). These stages are decisive in the transfer process since they require a specific budget (costs related to logistics, on-site visits, methodological and technical expertise to draw up the action plan).

	May 2009	Nov. 2009	June 2010	Dec. 2010
Stage 1 = Identification of good practice	12	9	6	5
Stage 2 = Contact with the exporting Region	19	20	62	21
Stage 3 = Field visit and practical training	0	6	11	<b>32</b>
Stage 4 = Policy validation	0	1	1	<b>8</b>
Stage 5 = Drawing up the action plan	0	1	2	<b>16</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>82</b>

The number of transfer opportunities has now stabilised (82) and more than half of them (56) are at an advanced stage. This is mainly due to the RURALAND project (INTERREG IVC), which provides an appropriate programmatic framework to organise and finance the various operational stages of the transfer process.

#### **I-D Examples of ongoing transfers in Limousin**

There are 10 ongoing transfers of GPs in Limousin, each of them being at different stages of progress. Six action plans are likely to be funded under the INTERREG IVC programme and 4 under article 37-6b of Regulation 1083/2006.

The following GPs were presented as case studies to illustrate concretely the methodological approach of the transfer process.

##### *GP no. 1: « E-teams in schools »*

This is a project on environmental education exported by the city of Heidelberg (Baden-Wurttemberg, Germany). Among 50 high schools in Limousin, 25 have shown great interest in “E-teams” and 20 attended the preparatory meeting. 7 people participated in the on-site visit to Heidelberg, and then the action plan was developed and validated by the participating schools. The synthesis meeting has been scheduled for January 2011 and will be followed by a launch event in June 2011.

##### *GP no. 2: « Intergenerational housing »*

This project aims at meeting specific housing needs and enable young adults and the elderly to carry on living together in rural areas. After a consultation within the territories of Limousin, 5 of them have shown interest in this GP, including the town of Bonnac La Cote for which an on-site visit was organised in Opprebais on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2010. After an approbation of the town council, a detailed feasibility study has been launched for a total cost of € 40.000; 40 per cent of which being funded under the ERDF Operational Programme for Limousin (article 37-6b). This study is expected to assess the economic viability of the project.

##### *GP no. 3: « Ullforum »*

The objective of this project is to structure the wool sector at regional level by improving its quality and creating a platform for exchange between all the actors of the sector so that the local wool is better exploited. A field visit was held on 21<sup>st</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup> September with a 7-person delegation of political representatives, agricultural specialists, craftsmen and wool experts. This project will make it possible for the industry to move from a patrimonial logic to an economic one. The action plan is being developed with concrete guidelines, structured on wool production, processing and marketing.



## **II- Methodological advice for the transfer of GP**

The stages of the transfer of GPs were clarified with regard to the Action Plan as well as the possibilities to finance these transfers.

Stage 1 (identifying the good practice) and stage 2 (contacting the exporting Region) don't cause particular difficulties. However, the further stages are much more complicated to organise. This is the reason why many detailed explanations have been provided on key actions to be implemented by the importing Region in order to ensure the smooth functioning of stages 3-5 of the methodological guide (on-site visit, political validation, action plan).

These details on the next stages of the transfer are available in *Annex 2*. A sheet template for the action plan is also available in *Annex 3*.

### **II-A Funding opportunities**

Two alternatives have been reminded with regard to funding opportunities: on the one hand INTERREG IVC for the preparation of the transfer of GPs and on the other hand Article 37-6b of Regulation 1083/2006.

This article allows the financing of cooperation activities within the regional EDRF Operational Programmes. It can cover both the preparation of the transfer and the implementation of GPs in the territory and makes it possible to finance capital expenditures that are not eligible under INTERREG IVC.

A **pilot network** has been set up to advise on funding opportunities under article 37-6b, following the activities previously organised on this issue (INTERACT seminar in October 2009, RUR@CT training in June 2010, INTERACT Compendium in September 2010),

Launched and financed by INTERACT, this network gathers Regions with more or less experience in this area: Limousin (FR), Thuringia (DE), Northern Sweden (SE), Hordaland (NO), Campania, Veneto and Basilicata (IT).

The purpose of this network is to provide technical assistance on how to use this article in order to promote synergy between territorial cooperation and regional programmes of objectives 1 (convergence) and 2 (competitiveness) through the transfer of GPs.

This collaborative space is open to RUR@CT member Regions that will have the opportunity to participate in upcoming seminars on this subject. A scoping meeting was held in Erfurt (Thuringia, Germany) on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2010. A more detailed description of this network is included in *Annex 4*.

***Regions interested in participating in this pilot network are invited to mention it in the questionnaire attached in Annex 5.***

### **II-B Miscellaneous**

#### *Link between politicians and administrative services*

The pair work between politicians and administrative services is a key to the successful transfer of GPs. In Limousin for instance, each transfer was supervised by both an elected representative and a technical service. It may be useful to set up a regional steering committee to ensure that the transfer process is better understood and integrated into the internal workings.



#### *Time required for the transfer*

The preparatory meeting should be organised at least 3 weeks to a month before the on-site visit. This means that the identification and mobilization of partners (team transfer) must start well in advance to inform them and to invite them to the preparatory meeting.

As regards the development of the Action Plan, Limousin planned 10 consultant days, but this work may last two to three months depending on the nature of the project and the number of contact persons in order to complete the action plan sheets (*Annex 3*).

### **III- Prospects for improvement / possible evolution (2011-2013)**

The functioning of the RUR@CT network can be oriented in two directions: the *integration approach* and the *experimentation approach*.

Both require a more demanding collaborative working method, which means to restructure the network through a legal status that would have a greater visibility in the institutional landscape: the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC).

#### **III-A Integration : moving into a “targeted” capitalisation plan**

The transfer of GPs currently works as follows: ‘connecting a need to a GP’, that is to say that Regions consult the database and select a GP that is going to be related to a need.

Among the 300 GP initially identified through a benchmarking, 125 were analysed (Fact Sheets 1 & 2), 82 have been selected for a possible transfer and 56 are being adapted with the drawing up of an action plan.

In the long run, the aim would no longer be ‘to connect a need to a good practice’, but rather ‘to connect a good practice to a need’ (‘customised’ service). Thus, if a Region with a specific need doesn’t find any suitable good practice in the RUR@CT database ([www.ruract.eu](http://www.ruract.eu)), the network would provide an appropriate solution to this need through an additional benchmarking work as well as a targeting on other databases (outside RUR@CT).

This targeted and complementary benchmarking would help to identify 2 or 3 GPs from which only one would be selected for transfer purposes (Fact sheets 1 & 2) in order to be capitalised.

The network could thus be more efficient and more consistent, but this new method requires a more demanding and better focused mode of governance with shared resources and a shared budget.

#### **III-B Experimentation : widening capitalisation in order to test new models of good practices**

In case a Region doesn’t find any good practice adapted to its needs – neither in the RUR@CT database, nor through the complementary benchmarking work described above – new models of good practices could be experimented through a collaborative system of governance such as a ‘Living Lab’.

This method could involve Regions from the RUR@CT network sharing similar needs as well as other economic actors (companies, users), universities and research labs in order to jointly elaborate and test new good practices.



This would be a “pure” innovation process with a mainly multilateral approach (see p. 22 of the RUR@CT methodological guide).

The operational implementation of both new components (integration and experimentation), would require the setting up of a new legal structure with more specific operating rules. The RUR@CT network is currently based on a very flexible mode of governance, which is considered as an advantage (no bureaucracy), but this flexibility is also a barrier for some very active Regions of the network which may strive for greater partnership – a more formalised and more ambitious one, all the more as the funding from the Limousin Region cannot be sustained after 2013. .

The EGTC statutes seem to be adapted to this modus operandi. The Auvergne Region expressed agreement on this point and showed interest on the principle of an EGTC. The Nord Pas de Calais Region also recognised the relevance of such an approach whose objectives were considered ambitious.

### **III-C Towards a new legal structure as an EGTC**

The EGTC – European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation – is a legal instrument which aims at facilitating and promoting cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation among its members. Within the RUR@CT framework, an EGTC would gather mainly regions being the most active in the transfer of good practices and willing to “go further”.

One should keep in mind the risk of excessive bureaucracy inherent in the setting up and the functioning of an EGTC (for instance, because a new membership requires the agreement of the Member State concerned). However, the EGTC structure has the advantage of formalising the territorial cooperation between the network members, with a pooling of resources (technical, human and financial) including through Article 37-6b, which may be a possible source of funding.

The challenge is to develop a more accurate partnership framework for Regions with more ambitious objectives (through the components integration / experimentation). The risk of bureaucracy should be avoided by setting out flexible operating rules and through a strong commitment from partners from the very beginning.

In this context, it is desirable that each Region interested in the setting up of an EGTC already informs its political representatives about this prospect in order to anticipate the issues that may arise.

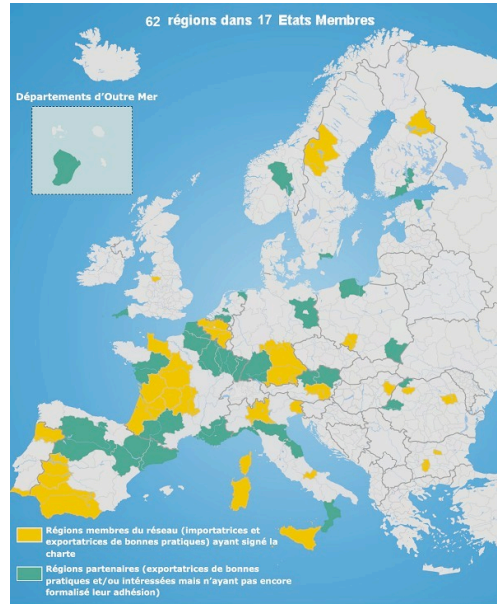
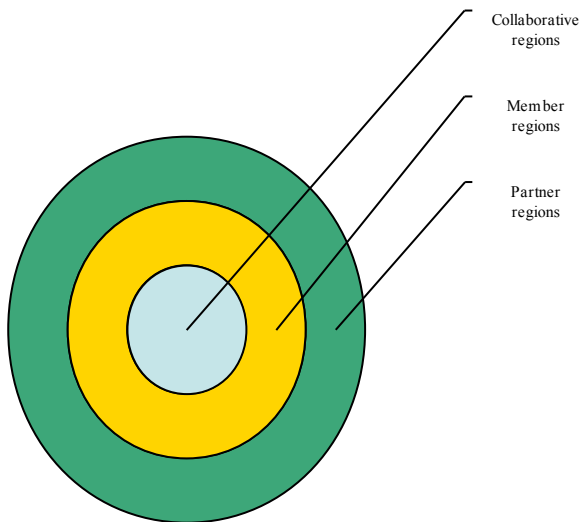
In terms of procedure, the timetable would be as follows:

- Detailed analysis of the conditions and requirements of EGTCs: 1<sup>st</sup> semester 2011
- Presentation of the overall framework (objectives, activities, operations): consultation in June 2011
- Preparation of detailed statutes: 2<sup>nd</sup> semester 2011
- Presentation of the statutes and budget: consultation in December 2011
- Official launching of the procedure in the 1<sup>st</sup> semester of 2012.

It would be the first EGTC in the context of interregional cooperation since all EGTCs hitherto founded were for the purpose of cross-border cooperation.

The RUR@CT network will therefore evolve into a partnership structure with variable geometry and increase its operational and strategic involvement:

- ‘Partner’ Regions with an export function or an observer status;
- ‘Member’ Regions with an import/export function. These regions would formalise the commitment to support transfers of their good practices to other regions by signing the charter.
- At the core of the network, ‘Collaborative’ Regions with the same function of ‘member Region’ plus a more ambitious partnership framework (integration / experimentation) within the EGTC structure.



On an operational level, the expected outcomes of an EGTC would be as follows:

- Improving governance and strengthening the partnership (in terms of efficiency and visibility);
- Facilitating the transfer process of good practices (adapted and customised service based on a targeted capitalisation according to each Region's needs)
- Rationalization of resources and pooling of means (efficiency and financial flexibility for greater operational and strategic activities).

***Member Regions interested in setting up an EGTC are invited to fill in the questionnaire attached in Annex 4, to be sent back by 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2011.***

A legislative revision of the EGTC statutes is planned for 2011 – in this regard, adjustments to broaden and facilitate the use of this legal structure are being expected. In this context, the Committee of the Regions launched a consultation about the EGTC from May to July 2010 in partnership with INTERACT and the European Commission. The consultation aimed at collecting improvement suggestions about the functioning of this legal structure.

The conclusions of the consultation are available online, a summary of which is available in *Annex 6* (to read the full version please click [here](#)).

### **III-D Other possible actions**

#### *Communications*

- The current communication materials (website, flyer, newsletter) have to be updated and improved. The methodological guide in particular shall be completed on the basis of the experience gained in the transfer processes. It seems necessary to be more accurate about the roadmap and more cautious about some key stages of the transfer.
- Design of new communication materials (CD-ROM, video, roll-up posters)
- Organising seminars, symposia and press conferences on strategic issues



#### *System of carbon offsetting*

The establishment of an effective carbon offsetting mechanism due to travels (on-site visits / meeting and seminars) should be analysed. After having verified the eligibility of such a system to EU structural funds, it could be realised within the EGTC and among other member Regions on a voluntary basis.

### **IV- Position of the RUR@CT network on Europe 2020 and the 5th cohesion report**

The 5<sup>th</sup> report on economic, social and territorial cohesion was published on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2010 and a consultation has been launched by the European Commission with an opportunity to make a contribution by 31 January 2011.

The RUR@CT network proposes to answer the consultation on the basis of the statement “Europe 2020” (proposed by Bavaria and validated recently), bringing complementary elements.

#### **IV-A Conclusions on the 5<sup>th</sup> cohesion report**

The report makes the following proposals to improve the EU cohesion after 2013:

##### *Enhancing the European added value of cohesion policy*

- Reduced priorities targeted on the strategy Europe 2020
- A ‘common strategic framework’ for EARDF, ERDF, ESF, IFOP...
- A ‘development and investment partnership contract’ within a regional Operational Programme defining a few investment priorities
- Improved evaluation systems with impact studies as well as clear and measurable performance indicators

##### *Strengthening governance*

- Introducing a new strategic dimension: territorial cohesion
- Reinforcing partnerships with a local development approach

##### *Simplified and more rational procedures*

- Better management & coordination
- More efficient financial control system
- Less administrative constraints

#### **IV-B RUR@CT statement on Europe 2020 and communications strategy**

The text proposed by Bavaria focuses on the role of rural areas in the “Europe 2020” strategy. The idea is to rely on the RUR@CT network to spread this message to the EU authorities and remind the necessity to take account of the specific needs of rural areas in order to enhance their potential for innovation, employment and energy and to contribute fully to the objectives of the “Europe 2020” strategy.

The Rural Foundation of Wallonia suggested including specific examples of RUR@CT GPs to illustrate concretely each of the five strategic objectives contained in the text. This proposal was considered relevant, but its feasibility is compromised by the short deadline of this consultation and the lack of time to collectively identify and select those GPs in a limited timeframe.



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In order to give greater visibility to this statement, a press conference should be held on 31 March 2011 at the same time as a forthcoming plenary session of the Committee of Regions. This press conference could mobilise members of the European Parliament (Danuta Hübner), the Committee of Regions (Michel Delebarre) and political representatives of some RUR@CT Regions (Limousin, Bavaria, Opolskie , Eszak Alföld). These four Regions have proposed to help to organise this event (institutional contacts, press, speakers and logistics). In this regard, more precise information will be released shortly.

***The new version of this statement will be sent on 17th January. The RUR@CT members are required to submit their amendments, suggestions or comments – if any – by 24<sup>th</sup> January 2011. After this date, the text will be considered as validated and officially transmitted to the European Commission on behalf of the network.***