

OUTCOME OF AER QUESTIONNAIRE ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICIES IN THE EUROPEAN REGIONS *AER Committee 1, September 2009*

QUESTIONNAIRE OBJECTIVES

Both agricultural politics and rural development concern themselves with the same territory, but this single link is the limit of their connectivity. In actuality, agriculture was long the subject of a separate and privileged treatment in Europe, whilst rurality never possessed proper legitimacy and was loosely defined compared to agriculture or urban areas.

Rural development did not become politically autonomous until very recently. It was the Agenda 2000 that officially laid the foundation for the second pillar of the CAP. Constituting an important part of cohesion policy and strategy of spatial planning, the second pillar aims to encourage the diversification of the rural economy and improve the quality of rural life. It also aims to promote innovation and the sustainability of the European campaign. This policy still suffers from a severe lack of funding that is necessary to complete these ambitious challenges.

The European Commission's conference on 'Rural areas in action', which took place in October 2008 in Limassol, Cyprus, served as a starting point for activities carried out by the European Network for Rural Development (EN RD). This newly launched structure, bringing together policy-makers, administrators, academics and other key actors in the area of rural development, aims at facilitating a debate over the future of Common Agriculture Policy (CAP), focusing in particular on the added-value of its second pillar.

In order to reinforce AER's position on the future of CAP and thus enable us to defend it more accurately when it comes to issues regarding the EN RD and with regard to newly elected European Parliament and Commission, AER invited its member regions to take part in the survey on rural development policies in Europe. The objective of this questionnaire is to learn more about your region's rural development policies, namely how your region defines urban/rural areas, what economic sectors are present within its rural territories, as well as how European funds dedicated to the CAP second pillar are managed in your country (on a national or local level).

Finally, it also aims to identify the problems faced by regional authorities to develop and properly implement the rural development policies. Additionally it should reveal and allow for the exchange of innovative rural projects that can be adapted in other contexts.

RATES OF PARTICIPATION

36 European regions participated in the AER's survey, i.e., 13% of our member regions.

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|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Açores (P) | 9. Donegal (IRL) |
| 2. Alsace (F) | 10. Dolj (RO) |
| 3. Auvergne (F) | 11. Friuli-Venezia Giulia - FVG (IT) |
| 4. Békés (H) | 12. Ile de France (F) |
| 5. Berat (TR) | 13. Upper Austria (A) |
| 6. Brodsko-Posavska (HR) | 14. Hunedoara (RO) |
| 7. Călărași (RO) | 15. Balearic Islands (E) |
| 8. Carinthia (A) | 16. Karlovac (HR) |

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|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 17. Carinthia (A) | 27. Östergötland (S) |
| 18. Lika-Senj (HR) | 28. Pozesko – Slavonska Zupanija (HR) |
| 19. Limousin (F) | 29. Silésia (PL) |
| 20. Lesser Poland (PL) | 30. Somerset (GB) |
| 21. Medimurje (HR) | 31. East Sweden (S) |
| 22. Mureş (RO) | 32. Thurgau (CH) |
| 23. Nordland (NO) | 33. Tirana (AL) |
| 24. Norrbotten (S) | 34. SouthTyrol (IT) |
| 25. Oppland (NO) | 35. Västra Götaland (S) |
| 26. South Ostrobothnia (FIN) | 36. Västmanland (S) |

Among the regions that contributed to the survey, 24 countries are members of the European union, while the remaining 11 come from outside of the European Community.

RESPONSE SUMMARY

What sectors of economic activity are present in your region? What type of sectors?

The questionnaire brings to light a diverse range of economic activities at the regional level. The agricultural and food sectors are present in all the regions (independent of their geographic location) and constitute a significant contribution to the economies of certain territories.

PRIMARY SECTOR	
Agriculture	All regions have varying degrees (see question #3)
Fishing	Aquitania, Donegal, Lika-Senj, Mures, Nordland, East Sweden, Upper Austria
Forest	Auvergne, Brodsko-Posavska, Donegal, Limousin, Östergötland, South Ostrobothnia, Upper Austria
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR	
Food	Aquitania, Alsace, Azores, Balearic Islands, Carinthia, Berat (beer, milk, olive oil, sausage), Brodsko-Posavska, Dolj, FVG, Hunedoara, Medimurje, South Ostrobothnia, Östergötland, Pozesko-Slavonska, Silésia, East Sweden, Tirana, Thurgau, Västra Götaland
Automobile / Transport equipment	Balearic Islands, Oppland, Silésia, Tirana, Thurgau
Wood - transformation / Carpentry / Paper production	Dolj, Balearic Islands, Brodsko-Posavska, Calarasi, Hunedoara, Mures, Pozesko-Slavonska Zupanija, Silesia, Västmanland
Ceramic and porcelain	Carinthia, Limousin, Silesia
Chemistry / Pharmacy / Health	Auvergne, FVG, Lesser Poland
Construction	Açores, Aquitaine (5,4% of domestic value added), Calarasi, Carinthia, Iles Baléares (11% of the economic activity in the region), Brodsko-Posavska, Donegal (14,3% of the active participation, 2006), Lika-Senj (13,7% of all the registered enterprises in the region), Medimurje, Mures, Pozesko-Slavonska, Silesia, Tirana, Somerset, Västra Götaland (6% of the active population)
Energy	Açores, Berat (fuel), Dolj, FVG (24,7%), Hunedoara, Nordland (fuel, gas), Tirana (fuel), Somerset, Västmanland
Renewable Energy	Calarasi, Medimurje, Mures (natural gas)
Electronic Equipment / Electrical	Auvergne, Carinthia, Östergötland, Limousin, Silesia
Mechanical	Auvergne (Auto and aeronautic industries, cutlery), Brodsko-Posavska, Carinthia, Dolj, FVG, Hunedoara, Lika-Senj (28,13% of the regional enterprises), Limousin, Lesser Poland, Oppland, Thurgau, Tirana, Silesia, South Tyrol, Västmanland
Metallurgy	Auvergne, Balearic Islands, Brodsko-Posavska, Carinthia, Dolj, FVG, Hunedoara, Karlovac, Małopolskie, Medimurje, Nordland, Pozesko-Slavonska, Oppland, South Ostrobothnia, Silesia, Tirana, Västra

	Götaland
Mining Sector	Açores, Berat (extraction of stones from quarry), Hunedoara, Nordland, Lesser Poland
TERTIARY SECTOR	
Tertiary Market	Aquitane, Azores (hotels, restaurants, services financial services, transport), Balearic Islands (80% of the economic activity in the region), Donegal (health/social – 12% of the active population, education – 8,2% of the active population, hotels – 6,8%, banking sector), Lika-Senj (artisanry, hotels, manufacturers), Calarasi (insurance, education, hotels, health, financial services, postal services, telecommunications, tourism, transport), Östergötland (communication services, financial services), Somerset (the most important sectors in terms of employment – hotels, education, financial services, public administration, health, transport), East Sweden (communication, financial services), Medimurje (recently, a great improvement in tourist activities), Nordland (business, education, training, R&D, transport, tourism), South Tyrol (retail, service sector), Västra Götaland (commerce and communication services – 19% of the active population, finances – 14% of the active population), Upper Austria (retail), Väjjö (communication, education, finances, health)
Real Estate	Azores, Lika-Senj
R&D / Innovation	Alsace (Biovalley)
TIC	Auvergne, Nordland, Medimurje

2. Where are these economic activities located? In rural or urban areas?

The answer to this question is particularly difficult to determine due to the lack of clarity surrounding the definition of rural areas. The results of the questionnaire show that the term "rural" encompasses many different meanings. Shaped by geography and history, the EU regions are characterized by an exceptional diversity. Some regions define themselves as entirely rural (In the region of Azores, rural areas constitute 99.6% of the total area; in Berat, 90% of the total territory, as in Medimurje and South Ostrobothnia), while the boundaries of that definition, as in Auvergne and Aquitaine, remain to be defined. The extreme wealth of agricultural activities and the varying degree of economic development in the EU regions lead us to accept that there is not one, but several definitions of ruralism.

Often, the concept of ruralism is restricted to solely the population density. For example, Eastern Sweden defines a rural area as an area with less than 3,000 inhabitants.

Ruralism may also be linked to the notion of the landscape. Based on the criteria of the morphology of the terrain, the region of Friuli Venezia Giulia divides its territory into three categories:

1. The urban areas are constituted of 4 towns: 33% of the population, 2.8% of the territory, 1780 pers/km²
2. The semi-urban (or semi-rura) areas including planes and mountain planes: 61.8% of the population, 54.7% of the territory, 174 pers/km²
3. Mountainous areas: 5.8% of the population, 42.5% of the territory, 21,1 pers./Km²

Some regions are based on the criteria of employment within rural and urban areas (Balearic Islands, Dolj, Donegal and Calarasi). This method refers to the traditional division of activities between the town and the country- whilst industry and services are concentrated primarily in urban areas, agricultural production remains predominantly in rural areas.

The fervent discussion on «ruralism» also confirms the strategic dimension of this concept, particularly regarding the distribution of funds that are used for rural development. The case of

Somerset could be taken as an example. Although there is an official classification of the rural areas in the United Kingdom, the regional authorities often revert to their own definition in order to better direct financial aid to those rural areas that are in difficulty. The arsenal of notions that we have just presented makes a comparison of the economic performance of the different rural areas in Europe difficult. It is nevertheless possible to reveal some elements that are common to all regions.

Of course, the primary sector is present in all rural areas. Covered by many forests, some regions have developed timber-based industry, an important sector for workplaces and jobs (Brodsko-Posavska, Donegal, Limousin, Mures, Nordland, Östergötland, East Sweden). The timber is used in these regions for construction or for energy purposes. The fishery represents an important sector for the economies of maritime regions (Nordland).

Regarding industry, in rural areas you can find sectors based on the use of natural resources. It includes organic food, metallurgy, construction, and the mining sector.

Concerning the tertiary sector, the services that are the most readily available in rural areas are craft industry, tourism, and transport. The supply of social and health services are present in the rural areas of Växjö and Limousin regions.

URBAN AREAS	
Ceramic / Porcelain	Limousin
Chemistry / Pharmacy / Health / Biotechnology	Lesser Poland
Electronic Equipment / Electrical	Limousin, Östergötland
Mechanics	Brodsko-Posavska, Lika-Senj, Limousin, Lesser Poland, South Tyrol
Metallurgy	Brodsko-Posavska, Lesser Poland, Slavonska (city of Požega)
Wood Processing	Pozesko-Slavonska (city of Požega), East Sweden
RURAL AREAS	
Agriculture	All of the regions
Agro-alimentation	Brodsko-Posavska, Mures, East Sweden
Wood	Brodsko-Posavska, Mures, Östergötland
Construction	Donegal
Mining Sector	Pozesko-Slavonska Zupanija (areas that can be extracted from the quarry - municipality of Velika)
Mechanics	South Tyrol
Metallurgy	Donegal, Nordland
Electronics	East Sweden
Fishing	Nordland
Services	Nordland (tourism, transport), Växjö (health services)

3. What is the percentage of agricultural weight in your region?

The answers vary widely for this question (see table below). The agricultural weight in the regions is presented from the following different angles:

1. Weight of agriculture in total employment
2. Value added of agriculture in total output
3. Area devoted to agricultural production
4. Number of agricultural enterprises registered for the TVA

REGION	WEIGHT OF AGRICULTURAL SECTOR IN ECONOMIC ACTIVITY
Alsace	40% of the regional territory 1% of the working population

Aquitania	9% of the domestic added value 5,6% of the regional added value 1,5M ha of farmland
Auvergne	3,3% of the regional added value 6,3% employment rate 60% de la surface
Azores	9,6% of the added value (2004)
Bekes	12,00%
Berat	65,00%
Brodsko-Posavska	6,44%
Calarasi	33% of regional GDP
Carinthia	3,4 % of working population
Donegal	6,7% of the working population
Dolj	78,9% of the total surface 15% of the added value
Friuli Venezia Giulia	2,3% of regional added value
Hunedoara	38% of economic activity 39% of the total surface
Iles Baléares	1,1% of regional GDP
Karlovac	2,9% of enterprises registered in the region 0,91% of working population (Source: FINA, 2007)
Lika-Senj	3,1% of enterprises registered in the region (2007)
Limousin	3,8% of regional added value 7% of working population
Malopolskie	60,00%
Medimurje	59,45% of working population 35% of regional GDP
Mures	2 nd most important sector of economic activity in the region
Nordland	7% of working population
Oppland	5%
Ostrobothnia du Sud	10% of working population
Pozesko-Slavonska Zupanija	4% (2003)
Somerset	17% registered enterprises 2,2% of working population 2,4% of regional GDP 6% of national GDP

Silésie	1,6% of regional GDP
Eastern Sweden	2-3% of working population
Tirana	21% of working population (ensemble avec les secteurs de la construction et de transport)
Thurgau	Relation of agriculture & food sector to the rest of economy is between 1:10 and 1:12
Upper Austria	6,4% of working population
Växjö	2,80%
Västra Götaland	1% of working population

4. What is the ratio of rural to urban population?

Since there is no uniform definition of rurality, some regions have difficulties answering this question properly. Generally speaking, the ratio of urban to rural population ranges from 7% in Alsace to 100% in Somerset (according to each region's classification system for the rural areas).

REGION	RATIO OF RURAL POPULATION TO URBAN POPULATION
Alsace	7% - rural population (February 2009)
Aquitaine	30% - rural population
Auvergne	750,000 people in urban areas /600,000 people in rural areas Ration: 0,8
Açores	Rural area population = 241,763 people (2001)
Bekes	65% - urban population 35% - rural population
Berat	Figures not available
Brodsko-Posavska	54.49% - urban population 45.51% - rural population
Calarasi	61% - rural population 39% - urban population
Donegal	24.8% - urban population 75.2% - rural population
Dolj	Total population: 712,187 people Urban population: 382,108 people. (53.6% of the region's population) Rural population: 330,079 people (46.4%) Ratio urban/rural population: 0.86
Friuli Venezia Giulia	33% - urban population 61.8% - hill-dwelling population 5.8% - mountain area-dwelling population

Hunedoara	21% - rural population 76.9% - urban population
Balearic Islands	Ratio: 0.42 (2007 – according to the OECD criteria)
Karlovac	70% - urban population 30% - rural population
Lika-Senj	33.6% - urban population 66.45% - rural population
Limousin	61% - people living mainly in urban areas 39% - people living mainly in rural areas
Malopolskie	1,620,769 people. – urban population 1,653,858 people. – rural population
Medimurje	80% of the population live in mainly rural areas, 2008
Mures	48.8% - urban population 51.2% - rural population
Oppland	2/3 of the region's population
South Ostrobothnia	60% - rural population (According to the definition used by the Finnish authorities)
Pozesko-Slavonska Zupanija	74.5% - urban population 25.5% - rural population
Somerset	100% - rural population (According to the definition used by the region, 2007)
Silesia	900,000 people live in rural areas, 21% of the population, 116 people/km ²
South Tyrol	35% rural, 65% urban population
East Sweden	35% - rural population
Thurgau	60% rural, 40% urban population
Upper Austria	57% rural, 43% urban population (2001)
Växjö	Urban population: 77%
Västra Götaland	25-30% of the region's population (According to the different definitions of the rural areas)

5. What is the average age of the population in your rural areas?

Figures are unavailable for the following regions: Alsace, Aquitaine, Auvergne, Brodsko-Posavska, Carinthia, Hunedoara, Oppland, Lesser Poland, Västra, Götaland (the average age concerns the whole population of the region without making any distinction between the urban and rural populations), South Tyrol, Thurgau. For those regions who have separate statistics for urban and rural areas, the average age differs strongly, ranging from 32.7 years in the region of Tirana to 69 (?) years in Békés.

Emphasised by a rural exodus of the youth, the ageing of the rural population in Western Europe contributes to a shortage of the workforce and, consequently, to declining agricultural revenues for these regions.

REGION	AVERAGE AGE OF THE POPULATION IN RURAL AREAS
Azores	Divided by age: 0-14 years: 21.4% 15-24 years: 17.0% 25-64 years: 48.6% > 65 years: 13.0%
Bekes	69 years
Berat	45 years
Brodsko-Posavska	Figures not available
Calarasi	40.5 years
Donegal	Divided by age: 0-14 years: 23% 15-29 years: 19.3% 30-44 years: 21.1% 45-65 years: 23.6% > 65 years: 11.6%
Dolj	42.7 years Males: 40.8 years Females: 44.6 years
Friuli Venezia Giulia	Divided by age: 0-14 years: urban areas – 29.5%; planes - 65%, mountains - 5% 15-39 years: urban areas – 30.5%, planes – 63.8%, mountains – 5.7% 40-64 years: urban areas – 32.3%, planes – 61.8%, mountains – 5.9% > 65 years: cities – 36.7%, planes – 57.4%, mountains - 6%
Hunedoara	Rural areas show significant demographic decline due to migration and an ageing population
Balearic Islands	Divided by age: 0-14 years: 16.03% 15-64 years: 70.14% > 65 years: 13.83%
Karlovac	> 60 years - 16% 0-14 years - 17%
Lika-Senj	43 years (2001)
Limousin	< 20 years - 20% 20 - 59 years - 52% > 60 years - 28%
Malopolskie	Figures not available
Medimurje	37.6 years (2001)
Mures	~ 68.93 – 76.16 years
Oppland	Males – 78.2 years Females – 82.7 years (rural and urban areas together)
South Ostrobothnia	~ 50-60 years
Pozesko-Slavonska Zupanija	~ 37.5 years

Somerset	~ 41.1 years (2001) The proportion of people aged 15-24 living rural areas is declining
Silesia	Males – 37.4 years, Females – 40.5 years 12.6% of the active population (1,5M) works in the agricultural sector, the forestry sector, and the fishing sector. The employment rate in the primary sector in Silesia is the highest in Poland.
East Sweden	The principal age groups: <20 years and 35-65 years
Tirana	~ 32.7 years
Thurgau	Divided by age: 0-19 years: 23,1% 20-39 years: 25,5% 40-64 years: 36,5% 65-79 years: 10,8% >80 years: 4,2%
Upper Austria	41,1 years in cities 39,2 years in the suburbs 39,5 years in rural areas 39,2 years in peripheral rural areas
Växjö	~ 42 years
Västra Götaland	~ 47.7 years (rural and urban areas together)

6. What type of infrastructure is present in the rural territory of your region? Train, other public transportation, etc.?

The types of infrastructure systems present, and the extent of their development, vary widely from region to region. Some regions have multiple transportation systems including railways, extensive road networks, and airports (i.e. the regions of Aquitania, Limousin, and Silesia). These extensive networks ensure that the rural areas remain connected to the rest of the regional territory and contribute to its economic development.

Regarding the development of its transportation infrastructure, Aquitania is a remarkable example. Situated in the centre of the Atlantic arc, on a major North-South circulation axis, the region benefits from a very dense transport network. Nevertheless, communication between Aquitania and the Eastern regions of France can be problematic because of its distant location and due to the presence of a mountain chain dividing the regional territory down the middle. Improving accessibility to Aquitania, most specifically from the Eastern regions of France, remains an important objective to achieve. Reinforcing the current transportation system is one method of accomplishing this goal; even though the region already benefits from the existence of 6 TGV stations, local authorities are mobilising resources to extend the railway system. Furthermore, Aquitania is also increasing its efforts to develop multimodal platforms (5 large platforms combining rail and road, 5 highways, with access to Paris, Clermont-Ferrand, Toulouse, Bayonne, and Montpellier). The region also wishes to extend its transport network toward the coast. Concerning air transportation, the region is home to three airports (Bordeaux- Mérignac, Biarritz- Anglet, and Bayonne et Pau- Pyrénées) that allow Aquitania to remain well connected to the majority of French and European regions.

As seen in the region of Medimurje, the geographical advantage of border regions helps contribute to the development of transportation infrastructures. Situated between three countries: Croatia, Hungary, and Slovenia, and benefiting from the proximity of Austria, the region has experienced rapid development of its international railway system (specifically the Budapest- Rijeka/Split line).

The development of maritime and air liaisons between islands and other parts of the regions is considered to be a priority for many maritime communities. For this reason, to promote regular, safe, and high-quality maritime transportation to passengers and to create conditions that will lead to the reduction in maritime transportation costs the government of Açores has implemented a number of legislative actions.

Meanwhile, certain regions face serious problems due to a lack of or even total absence of certain infrastructure systems. The railway system in Békés suffers from insufficient lines, bad quality, and congestion. Railway networks and public transportation systems by road are almost nonexistent in the rural areas of the region. Limited accessibility to infrastructure networks constitutes a major obstacle to the development of these territories, not only because it hinders the speed and regularity with which products can be delivered or exported from these areas, but also because it impedes social cohesion (by blocking access to healthcare facilities, educational institutions, and other services).

In the region of Auvergne, the road network (highways) is limited to only one part of the territory (a North-South dorsal, A71-A75, and one transversal East-West, A89), which restricts access to and from the Departments of Cantal and Haute-Loire. Poor maintenance of the railway network limits service to rural areas and there are no TGV lines in the region. To solve this problem, and to promote territorial cohesion, Auvergne is launching initiatives in favour of car sharing and demand-based transport offers. This type of transport is also encouraged in the region of Donegal through their regional scheme for rural public transport. More economically efficient, and better adjusted to demand, the minibus network also serves the regions of Silesia and Somerset. Because of difficulties regarding profitability, public transportation is underdeveloped in South Ostrobothnia (therefore, there is large use of private transportation).

Road networks also suffer from poor quality in the rural zones of Västra Götaland. In order to re-integrate rural territories into the region and connect them to the urban centres, the region hopes to refurbish other navigable options such as the Vänern Lake and the Göta älv river. The regional strategy also seeks to guarantee reliable Internet access for all households by 2009 (at 2Mb/sec).

In order to facilitate and improve upon correspondences within their territories, certain regions (Dolj, Hunedoara) have launched large programs to modernize their road and railway networks. At the same time, the maintenance and refurbishment of infrastructure networks face many obstacles. In Karlovac, the unclear statutes on railroad ownership pose many problems for the modernisation of the system. It seems that privatization of the railway network is an unavoidable step in rebuilding the system, especially for the potentially high-use tourism lines that lead to Split and Rijeka.

7. What types of services are present in the rural territory of your region? Transportation, schools, commerce, postal services, artisan workshops, companies (what size)?

Rural zones face a common problem: that of long-term, quality job creation in the long-run. As our survey has shown, the gap between urban and rural areas continues to grow. Although rural areas represent 93% of the EU territory, the per capita income is almost twice as low compared to urban areas. In the countryside, the tertiary sector tends to be dominated by the public sector and private services remain underdeveloped.

As the regions of Auvergne, Békés, Donegal, FVG, Hunedoara, Limousin, South Ostrobothnia, and Växjö have stated, the number of schools in rural areas are diminishing. Commerce is grouped around a limited number of centres, as are important services. Many post offices are closing, or are transferring their responsibilities to small grocery stores or petrol stations. The region of Västra Götaland has shed light on another problem- petrol stations closing down due to non-compliance with new European safety standards. As a result, in some cases, individuals must drive 20 km to reach the closest petrol station. Carinthia is reporting the challenge of maintaining infrastructure in view of increasing migration from urban areas to cities and thus diminishing population in rural areas.

Entrepreneurship in the European countryside also remains low. Though some large companies have facilities in rural areas due to historic precedent: such as Aubert, Duval, Louis Vuitton, and Sanofi in Auvergne, this is an exception, not the rule. In Dolj and Oppland, rural companies are usually small (with less than 15 employees).

At the same time, there are projects in Europe that serve as examples for the development of services in rural areas. The regions of Açores, Aquitaine, Békés, and Somerset have witnessed growth in the tourism industry. The region of Silesia is in the process of establishing technical and judicial counselling services in rural areas. Limousin and Açores have developed healthcare services for elderly people living in rural areas.

With regard to the promotion of entrepreneurship, the region of Somerset has launched a program entitled “Rural renaissance,” focusing on the refurbishment and renovation of older buildings. Once remodelled, the buildings can serve as headquarters for SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises), such as companies that sell produce, for example. By promoting technologies favouring communication and commercialisation, the region is also encouraging citizens to work out of their homes.

As Aquitania notes, “with a large potential to create employment, services to individuals will benefit from changes in the modes of life, namely from the demographic attraction of the countryside for older people and tourism. Amongst private service, personal care should develop due to city-countryside migration of elderly people and due to the aging nature of the population in rural areas. In this sector, social and solidarity economics should find opportunities for development. The maintenance and the development of services are priorities for territorial projects: they are inscribed in the majority of territorial charters: services for children, for youth, for ageing populations, but the question of health is also important.”

8 & 9. What types of environmental issues concern your region? Transportation, GHG emissions? What types of actions have your region taken to respond to these issues?

Environmental issues are considerably important for European regions.

The 2009 budget for the region of Alsace devoted 15 billion dollars to environmental issues and renewable energy projects. Furthermore, the region recently passed a series of laws aimed towards environmental protection, of which the most important are:

- A plan to encourage investments aimed towards reducing CO2 emissions
- Aid to develop resources for renewable energy in agriculture
- Aid to help reduce the use of phytosanitary products
- Programs to encourage the development of organic agriculture (documents attached)

Mureç recently introduced a “polluter-pays” principle into its environmental legislation. In order to reduce the negative impact of intensive agricultural exploitation on the environment, the government of Açores passed a law concerning “Good Agricultural Practices.” All farmers must respect these laws. Regional authorities are also aiming to increase the amount of arable land consecrated to organic agriculture. The government of the islands is launching a study that seeks to analyse the fertility of the soils and the situation of sensitive rural areas. Organic agriculture is also a priority for the regions of Limousin and South Ostrobothnia, which have just passed laws regulating the use of pesticides.

Waste management is a crucial issue for many regions in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, such as Açores, Békés, Berat, Mures, Brodsko-Posavska, Pozesko-Slavonska, and Tirana.

Water pollution in rural areas and the quality of its treatment is an important issue for Açores, Auvergne, Brodsko-Posavska, Dolj, Karlovac, and Mureç. The agricultural sector is one of the largest aquatic polluters. Concentrated livestock-raising facilities result in the production of large amounts of

manure; the animal waste is washed into streams and other water sources, increasing the bacterial pollution. Chemical fertilizers filter down into the water table, affecting its quality. Insecticides, herbicides, and other phytosanitary products accumulate in soils and subsequently filter down into the water table, also affecting its quality.

Non-point pollution from the agricultural sector perturbs ecosystems and can make water consumption dangerous. This phenomenon is closely monitored in Karlovac where their underground water-filled caves are susceptible to the infiltration and transportation of pollution from agricultural sources. In the Balearic Islands, the General Direction has created a technical committee for climate change and environmental education in order to evaluate the role that the agricultural sector plays in climate change. Thurgau supports measures to reduce ammoniac emissions in animal husbandry.

The majority of European regions favour the development of clean energy. The cluster of Podkarpackia, made up of private companies, governmental representatives, and regional universities aims to promote and develop the use of renewable energy sources in Lesser Poland. The region of Växjö has decided to focus investments on geothermal and solar energy. Regional authorities have also shown themselves to be in favour of bioethanol and its use in the transportation sector. At the same time, larger-scale consumption of this product poses problems in terms of supply (unavailable at many petrol stations). The region of Oppland has fixed an objective of 5% for the use of biofuels in the transportation sector by 2010. The region of Medimuje produces electricity from hydraulic sources. Wind energy is part of an action plan in Limousin. Västra Götaland intends to produce energy from biomass and agricultural waste. The region of Carinthia has developed a comprehensive support scheme for renewable energies.

Smart answers to environmental challenges combine the reduction of CO₂ emissions with the development and support of regional traffic concepts and public transport as realised in Upper Austria and Thurgau. By enhancing accessibility and ensuring region wide public transport coverage regions not only offer important infrastructure but also contribute to reducing energy consumption and air pollution.

Home to an amazing natural heritage and diverse and remarkable geography and landscapes, the majority of European regions have established some sort of protection program in their more sensitive “natural territories”. These “natural territories” represent 52% of the land area in Aquitania, or 2,152 km². Aquatic and wetland areas also cover large territories. Because of its biodiversity, the region of Aquitania has put protective laws in place. The network of Natura 2000 sites, now finalised, covers about 10.3% of its regional territory (more than 30% in the Pyrénées Atlantique principally in mountainous areas), of which 80% is in agricultural or forested land (150 sites). However, there are still efforts to be made in order to finalise a sustainable management plan for these areas, and to establish contractual obligations. Large parts of the rural areas in Açores, Lika Senj, and Medimurje (50% of the total surface) also belong to the Natura 2000 network. In 2008, the region of Somerset established a program called the “Green and Pleasant Landscape Project.” With a £10,000 budget, the program hopes to encourage regional tourism establishments to adhere to a sustainable regional development scheme. All tour operators that enroll in the program obtain a certified license for “sustainable tourism.” It is the largest certification program of its kind in Europe and was validated in its entirety by national authorities.

Certain regions are also exposed to a variety of natural hazards such as landslides, fires, floods, seismic activity, and avalanches. The region of Aquitania is classified as being at a high risk for forest fires: an average of 1,690 fires/year (outside of the Pyrénées Atlantiques) between 1980-2004. The departments of Gironde and Landes are the nationally highest-ranking in terms of forest fires. Despite this fact, affected areas from fires remain low due to the efficient prevention system that has been put in place. The region of Somerset initiated a similar program called JAF- “Joint Action Force for the prevention of flooding.” This project aims to make financial resources available for flood-prevention work in areas that are susceptible to overflowing rivers.

10. Would you be interested in sharing your experiences with other regions in order to adapt and apply them to rural development?

The majority of regions have shown interest in initiating new opportunities for cooperation in the domain of rural development. Some wish to exchange practices that only respond to their specific needs.

The region of Västra Götaland seeks to exchange knowledge on the promotion and development of clean energy and sustainable transportation. The region of Dolj is interested by all projects that could eventually inspire elaborated strategies for rural development.

South Ostrobothnia proposes to implement a regional network for the exchange of good practices for rural development. Limousin suggests focusing on the opportunities that are already available. In this way, the exchange of best practices can take place within the RUR@CT network, an Interreg IVC initiative in which Limousin is a leader.

The region of Tirana points out that some of the regions might have difficulties joining such an initiative because their operational competences are insufficient in the field of rural development.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

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