



RUR@CT

Transnational Steering Committee 19 February 2009 in Limoges

Report of the meeting

45 persons from the 15 partners regions were present in Limoges, for the Transnational Steering Committee, as well as representatives of the European institutions (DG REGIO and DG AGRI, European Regions Assembly).

Gérard VANDENBROUCKE (1st Vice-president, Limousin Region), welcomed all participants in Limousin, on behalf of Mr Denanot, President of the Regional Council, and presented the Regional Scheme on Sustainable Development and Land Management insisting on three big issues: demographic challenges, climate change, isolation of the region, on which Rur@CT could be used to give solutions.

Claude TREMOUILLE (Vice-president in charge of agriculture, Limousin Region), recalled the history of Rur@ct network since its launching in April 2008 until today, its operational phase, and introduced the agenda.

David BUCHET (Limousin, France) reminded that Rur@ct is a network focused on the transfer of good practices. Today, the challenge is to go further than the step of exchanges and to start the transfers in order to realise useful and visible actions. As he insisted on the regional dimension of the network, he also wanted to underline the importance of the local actors support and reminded that Rur@ct promotes a global vision of rural development. Beyond the technical objectives of the network, the integrated approach also implies a political commitment of the Regions that is why Rur@ct is proposing its contribution to the green paper on territorial cohesion and its experience on Community policies and rural development.

He welcomed the representatives from DG REGIO and DG AGRI, and the close cooperation between Rur@ct and DG REGIO. Rur@ct is not meant to be another source of European funding but a tool for the transfer of experiences. Today, Rur@ct its 50 regions, 20 already signed the Chart; the others are interested and have contributed to the good practices database.

Operational launching for the transfer of good practices

Cédric LEGER (Limousin, France) started with the objectives of the meeting: regions expectations, intents and priorities in terms of transfer. The good practices (53) have been selected with a fair geographical and thematic representation. He explained the method of the Limousin Region to choose the good practices to import. The 53 GP and their sheets 1 and 2 were studied on February the 12th in a Regional Steering Committee composed of elected bodies and technicians. They did a preselecting of 14 GP with a priority order for each theme that would be discussed in the Regional Assembly on March 20th 2009. They will select 5 GP for immediate transfer as it was decided previously (objective of 5 transfers before 2010). Each region has been invited to express their intents in terms of importations and some have already identified some GP to transfer.

Santina DRIESEN (Flanders, Belgium) confirm their choice of 3 good practices to transfer :

- *Wallonia, Belgium, Rural Development Operation*
- *Andalucía, Spain, New rural strategy for Andalucía*
- *Nord Grand Plaine, Hungary, Regional partnerships for cooperation*

Alina Salajan (Salaj, Romania)

Although they could not assist to the meeting, the partners from Salaj have transmitted their intent of importation for the GP:

Opolskie, Poland, Make the communities more attractive for investors

Zoltan BALOGH (Nord-Grand Plaine, Hungary) expressed their choice to focus on one project only to transfer and agreed to do so with Flanders.

Etienne TIMMERMANS (Wallonia, Belgium) approved the transfer of their GP with Flanders. Concerning the importation, it is too soon for them to give a proposition (regional elections in June and contacts with local actors to be done).

Anne-Dominique FURPHY (Andalusia, Spain), they work directly with the LAGs for the transfers in accordance with their projects and interests. Andalusia agreed to assist Flanders in the transfer of their GP and is interested to import the following GP:

- *School for young business managers, Germany, Arrondt de Güstow*
- *Setting-up E-teams in school, Germany, Bade-Wurtemberg*
- *Demographic challenges, rural depopulation: multilateral approach*

Cédric LEGER (Limousin, France) : The GP «E-teams» is also a priority choice of Limousin to import so we could launch a multilateral transfer on this GP if other regions are also interested.

Patrice BAILLIEUX (DG REGIO) underlined the interest of DG REGIO concerning Rur@ct network, transfer being the hardest part in term of cooperation but the more interesting. He encouraged the members of the network to launch their transfers in the framework of the UE programs from 2007-2013 and using the existing tools, the ERDF and the EAFRD. DG REGIO could easily and rapidly provide the funding in the context of the economic crisis. For example, the transfers could enter in the propositions of adaptation and modification of the operational programs, or using the article 37-6b, rule 1083/2006 that offers the possibility to include an axis about interregional cooperation measure within the operational programs Competition and Employment or Convergence, which will make the

procedure easier; Limousin uses this article. He insisted on the emergency to identify the needs and possibilities, and proposed to organise a “partnership forum” in Brussels where direct contacts could be made.

Marteen VERGAUWEN (DG AGRI) reminded the participants that through the EAFRD a rural network has been established and is set up in every region. There are complementarities between this network and Rur@ct and they should get closer in order to exchange and to merge the existing tools and funds.

David BUCHET (Limousin, France), contacts with DG AGRI has already been made and they are thinking about how to build a coherent link between Rur@ct and the European Rural Network (cf. annexe 4).

Herbert MANLEY (Cheshire, United Kingdom) described its region and the GP that they can export, centred on tourism. They created a website promoting the activities proposed in the Cheshire and the hosting places, this could become a GP and they would be happy to share the idea. They are also interested by issues concerning the attraction of new population.

Gunilla CLASSON (Jämtland, Sweden), the region is still thinking about the working method and will give more details about their intents of importation in the coming weeks. Concerning the export, they are already exchanging with French partners from Limousin on the GP « Ullforum, local added-value for quality wool ».

Florence SEGUIN-CALLOIS (Auvergne, France) wants to give more time to Rur@ct. The Auvergne Region is interested by the theme of territorial engineering, gouvernance and demographic challenges.

David BUCHET (Limousin, France) insisted on the fact that today, the challenge is to transfer the GP and not to create new working groups on a theme. There is a good opportunity to launch the transfer, as DG REGIO told us sooner. It is important that the regions express rapidly their wish to import and to export in order to start the process in April.

Patrice FORMAGE (Aquitaine, France) showed an interest for the themes “attracting new population”, “health and medical houses”. A partnership with the Limousin and Auvergne could start.

Jyriki HAATAJA (Kainuu, Finland), all the topics were interesting for them but the Region is especially concerned by issues such as eco-tourism and services to young people. Concerning the transfers, it is too soon for them to tell which GP they want to import, but Kainuu Region will give more details about transfers’ objectives as soon as possible.

Stéphane VICTOR (Basse-Normandie, France), the region is not in a transfer logic yet, it is too recent for them, but proposed to the Aquitaine Region to transfer their GP on health (*Demographic medicine Charter*) or to participate to a multilateral group with Limousin. They are also interested on issues such as sustainable agriculture and adding-value to farm products.

Luciana ZANIER (Friuli, Italy) : they just signed the Chart a week ago and are only thinking in terms of exporting (GP have been transmitted recently). Concerning the importation of GP,

they cannot give an answer for now but are really interested and will organise a meeting with all the directorates of their region in order to select a GP to transfer.

Demonstration of Rur@ct tools:

Cédric LEGER (Limousin, France),

The Rur@ct approach can be summarized in 3 P:

- “partnership” (with other regions)
- “project” (concrete results expecting from the transfer)
- “progress” (improvement after the transfer of the good practice)

The Limousin Region presented the tools available today :

- website (www.ruract.eu)
- database of 53 GP (for the launching phase)
- technical sheets (1 = presentation, 2 = evaluation of transferability, 3 = report on the transfer)
- methodological guide (new version, illustrated document with instructive content and presentation)

A practical case study was presented by Cedric to illustrate each step of the importing process using the website (database, searching tool, transfer monitoring...) in order to be familiar with the procedure. The website is made to be a useful tool, help in the transfer monitoring and guide the process in a collective and participative way, it is important to follow each step.

David BUCHET (Limousin France) insisted on the importance of the website and of using it to maintain the link between the regions that are far away in order to follow the transfer projects.

Question of Aquitaine, France : What if other regions enter the network, do they also have to use these tools ?

Cédric LEGER (Limousin, France) reminded that the network is opened to everyone (free registration) and by signing the Chart, the entering region accepts Rur@ct methodology.

A possible Rur@ct « quality certification »

Question of Aquitaine, France : Could we consider the implementation of a quality certification system, such as an « identity Rur@ct » ?

Patrice BAILLEUX (DG REGIO), the creation of such a criterion could be included in the Regional Program in order to give funding priority to the projects with this label, this idea has to be deepened.

Cédric LEGER (Limousin, France), this would be essential for the success and viability of Rur@ct network, especially now that the challenge is to achieve the objectives and make the best use of the methodology. Such a label would contribute to the launching of the GP transfers with the prospects of getting some funding for the projects.

Claude TREMOUILLE (Limousin, France) underlined the importance of this proposition and think that the efficiency of the network would get even better.

Patrice BAILLEUX (DG REGIO), we could include the label « Rur@ct » in the evaluating list of the Programming Committee, innovation being the priority number 1 of the Commission. For instance, in the field of tourism, when selecting a project, and when looking for an innovative project, a Rur@ct quality certification could make the selection quicker and more efficient. It would be a realistic selecting criterion.

Question of Cédric LEGER : How to make this proposition real ?

Patrice BAILLEUX: you need to contact the national managing authorities, DG REGIO can do so during a meeting with them but this must be done in every Member State.

Future activities of the network for 2009 :

Cédric LEGER (Limousin, France)

- New GP to be included in the database

Update of 3 GP each month, that is to say 18 GP for the next 6 month. A selection of 20 GP was done with the new list made by the experts, in accordance with the regions' interests (cf. annexe 2). These new GP will be progressively included in the database and published in the newsletter on the website.

- RUR@CT event (Brussels, Bavaria antenna, April 30th 2009, in the morning)

The objectives of the event are to strengthen and broaden the network, to extend the partnership with the European institutions, to develop and reinforce the network's awareness at a European scale. MEP, official representatives from the European Commission (DG REGIO, DG AGRI) will assist to this event, as well as European regions and networks (AER, Committee of the Regions...).

- « The Partnerships Forum » (Brussels, 30 April 2009 in the afternoon, Antenne Limousin)

Create a first contact between exporting and importing regions, support the two first steps of the bilateral transfer (identification of the GP and contact), propose a methodological monitoring and realise a first The Forum will be set up this way:

- Seminar for exporting (Limoges, 25 June 2009)

The Limousin Region proposes to the regions interested in a multilateral transfer on the GP "attracting new populations", to meet in Limoges on June 25th during the event "*Projets en campagne*". A detailed and practical presentation on two specific actions will be done: the organisation of the event "*Projets en campagne*" and the presentation of the "*Local Recepting Point*". On June 26th, the partners interested to give a speech on these kind of policies would be welcomed to do so.

- First thoughts about the constitution of a EGTC (European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation), Rur@ct would become a more autonomous entity with its own budget and organisation. The network could have a more participative governance and a better efficiency.

- International Cooperation : two transfers of experiences are currently taking place in Limousin with third Regions from Tunisia and Burkina Faso. The region will host an event organised by the AER in cooperation with the UNDP the next 30 and 31 March: “the regional answers on climate change”, with the presence as guests of Mr Compaore, President of Burkina Faso and other personalities.

Marteen VERGAUWEN (DG AGRI) invited once again Rur@ct to collaborate with DG AGRI and the European Rural Network in order to find a better efficiency and coordination between the two networks.

- Presentation of Andalucia : **1st International Forum of Cooperation for Rural Development**, next 8-9-10 of June in Sevilla. For more information: <http://www.ficoder.es>

Claude TREMOUILLE (Limousin, France), to conclude, we have everything in our hands for the success of the network. Now we have to coordinate the tools in order to achieve our objective, that is to say the transfer of GP, 2 or 3 before 2010 for each region. He invited the participants to join next meeting in Brussels on April 30th. He concluded with these few words : “Rur@ct it is about meeting each other, exchange and transfer our experiences in order to find and share the solutions adapted to each region to overcome together the future challenges.

Summary and conclusions

- Most of the partners were present in Limoges, 15 regions were represented from 8 Member States out of the 20 Regions members that have signed Rura@ct Chart.
- An active participation of the Regions with the first intents of GP transfers
- Suitability between the tools developed (methodological guide, website, database) and the needs and expectancies of the partners Regions
- Partnership and support reinforced with the European Commission (DG REGIO) proposing an idea of quality certification « Rur@ct » for the
 - qui a proposé la reconnaissance d’un label européen « RUR@CT » pour la programmation régionale des projets pilotes qui seront issus des transferts de BP
- Intérêt de la DG AGRI pour RUR@CT avec nécessité de préciser davantage l’articulation avec les deux réseaux
- Démarrage de la phase opérationnelle : chaque Région membre du réseau est invitée à se fixer des objectifs de transferts, et si possible à identifier au minimum une bonne pratique à importer, dans la perspective de l’événement RUR@CT à Bruxelles le 30 avril 2009 et de la bourse aux partenaires où un accompagnement méthodologique et une assistance technique sera proposée pour faciliter les premières étapes du processus.