



European Union  
European Regional  
Development Fund

**RUMORE**  
Interreg Europe



Rural-Urban Partnerships  
Motivating Regional Economies

RUMORE improves regional innovation policies and capacities by fostering rural-urban cooperation and partnerships. The project enhances the delivery of innovation by improving innovation chains between rural and urban stakeholders and by supporting the better use of synergies between urban and rural areas.

## WELCOME ///

Over the last three years (2017-2019) the RUMORE project has been a productive platform to exchange and develop ideas for rural-urban partnerships and innovation delivery. In the coming two years (2020-2021) several of these ideas will be realised and so, the fruits of the exchange will grow.

RUMORE "Rural-Urban Partnerships Motivating Regional Economies" is an interregional cooperation project funded by the Interreg Europe Programme 2014-2020. The project supports European regions to foster rural-urban partnerships and improve the implementation of related regional development policies and programmes. RUMORE enhances the establishment of innovation collaborations and synergies between urban and rural areas. By doing so, it stimulates the sustainable development of regions and contributes to territorial cohesion in Europe.

We are honoured and privileged to invite you to explore the outcomes of the RUMORE project. This publication summarises the results of intense collaboration and productive interregional learning within the project consortium comprising eight partners from five European countries. It includes a summary of the six action plans, elaborated in the framework of the project, as well as targeted recommendations including good practice examples from the partner regions for enhancing innovation processes and rural-urban partnerships in European regions.

*Prof. Jörg Knieling*

*HafenCity University Hamburg, Lead Partner  
on behalf of the RUMORE consortium*



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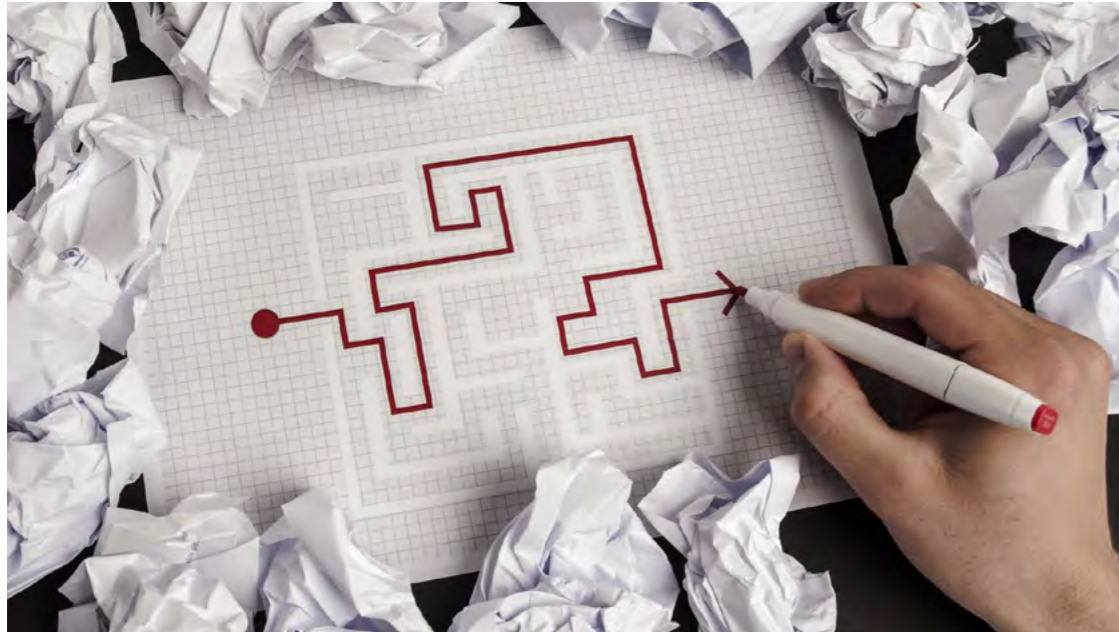


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## Innovating for a sustainable future: Rational for enhancing rural-urban partnerships



The shrinking natural resources, the polluted environment and the growing social problems make sustainable development a pressing issue for cities and rural areas. Sustainable development requires structural transformation of the economy which decouples economic growth from natural resource use and environmental degradation. In particular it calls for changes in current production and agricultural practices, food habits and lifestyles, for rethinking of services' distribution patterns and for new solutions for green and circular economy. Regions are to identify niche markets, support innovative entrepreneurship and create new business models by mobilising and combining the distinct assets and resource in urban and rural areas.

Innovation is an important driver of sustainable development at local, regional and national level. Innovation activities are typically associated with technological improvements and the application of information and communication technologies. The technological view on innovation is closely related to the transformation of technological knowledge into new inventions for products and services. Product and service innovations often go hand in hand with the introduction of new organisational concepts, which seek to optimise business activities, marketing methods, resource usage and workflows. Innovation processes are driving or accompanying not only economic, but also social and environmental changes. This said, they play a crucial role in achieving a balance between economy, society and environment.

Innovation is an interactive process between manifold actors, including enterprises, universities and research institutions, governments and NGOs. Regions have distinct constellations of actors and the innovation eco-systems significantly differ when it comes to their dynamics and features. The innovation eco-systems of urban cores are typically characterised by higher concentration of innovation activities and actors. Rural and peripheral areas, on the contrary, often have less developed business and innovation support infrastructures. Finding and establishing synergies between urban and rural areas can expand rural innovation eco-systems and could make them more attractive to urban innovation actors. At the same time, rural-urban linkages can open rural areas access to new markets. They can create new business models to produce goods and services, which harness local assets and resources.

Rural economies are historically associated with traditional industries such as agriculture and food production. Tackling the needs of traditional industries plays a central role in rural development policies. Rural-urban cooperation can help regions to boost innovation in the primary sector by promoting the potentials of new technologies and innovative cross-sectoral collaborations. This will improve the competitiveness of rural businesses and will support the diversification of the rural economy while reducing the environmental impacts of the traditional agri-food production. At the same time, the existing assets of rural areas can benefit the urban areas. Moreover, cooperation is needed to combine supply and demand measures in

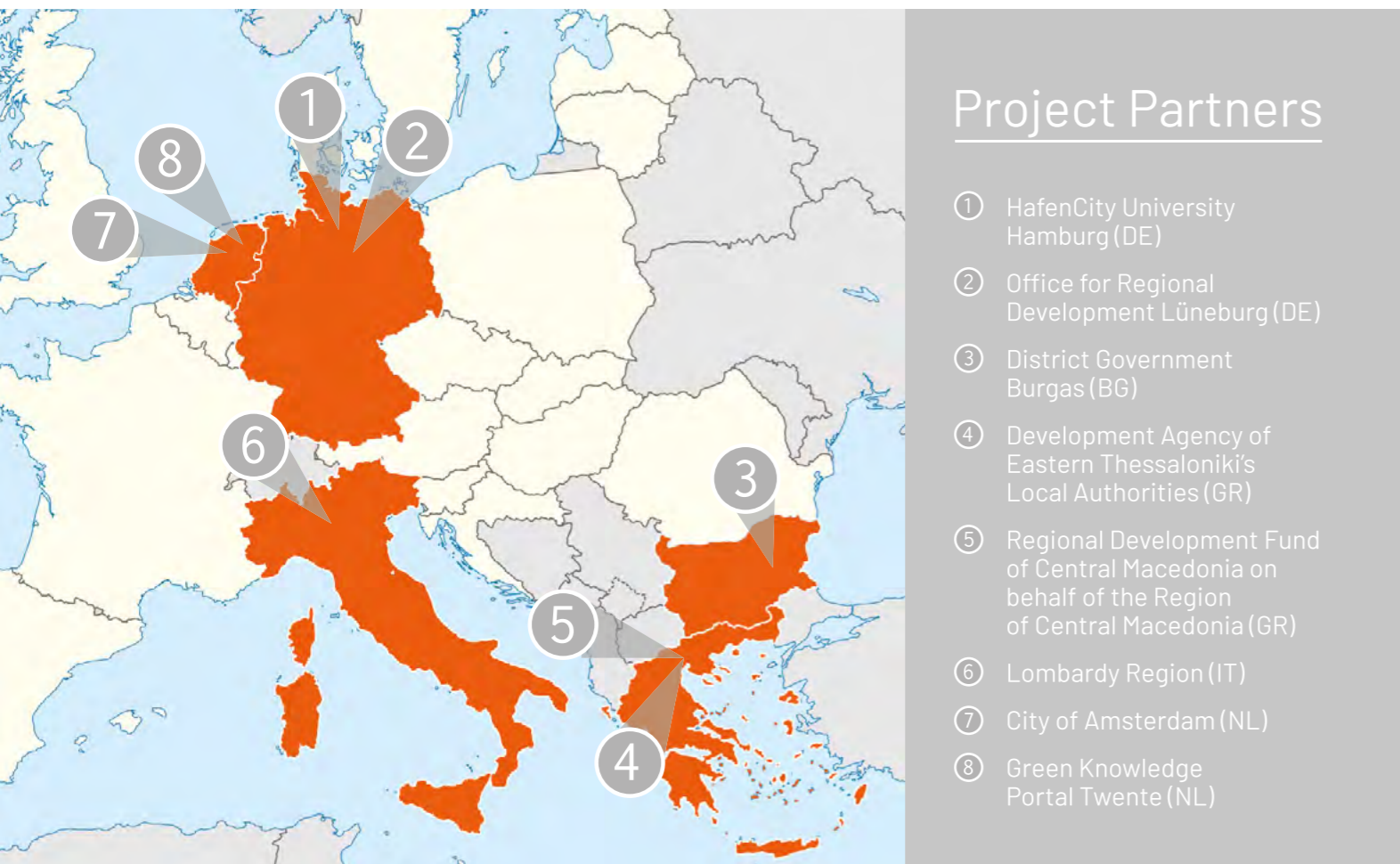
urban and rural areas in order to strengthen and close regional value chains. Sustainable financing and understanding end-user's behaviour is crucial to foster innovation in regional value chains.

Regions can significantly benefit from building rural-urban partnerships around common smart specialisation thematic priorities. Urban and rural spaces are closely linked economically, socially and environmentally and they cannot realise their innovation and development potential in isolation from one another. Cities have the excellent opportunity to take the lead and facilitate cooperation activities, which benefit both urban and rural areas. When talking about rural-urban partnerships, the territorial context is an important aspect. The design of cooperation and innovation support mechanisms that are adapted to the local needs and assets is essential. Cooperation requires a policy and financial framework, which enables investment and promotes the establishment of innovative forms of institutionalised and non-institutionalised partnerships.



# The RUMORE project: Interregional learning and cooperation approach

RUMORE brings together eight partners from five European countries and involves them in an intensive interregional learning process. In the course of the process, the project partners reflect on their regional innovation policies and develop innovative forms of rural-urban partnerships which tackle local innovation needs and potentials.



Policy making processes are complex and involve a variety of actors. RUMORE promotes a bottom-up approach to shaping regional innovation policies. It supports local actors to jointly shape the development paths of their region, its innovation dynam-

ics and sustainability transformation. The knowledge of local actors is aggregated in a series of local workshops. The so called "Local Stakeholder Group" meetings serve as a platform for the definition of concrete territorial challenges, the identi-

fication of existing policy barriers and the development of new ideas and solutions. The cooperation aims at the improvement of existing policy and financial frameworks and at better exploitation of the endogenous innovation potentials in the regions.

exchange of over 30 good practice examples for rural-urban partnerships from the six partner regions as well as study visits and discussions with regional stakeholders. Invited stakeholders from all partner regions joined the events.

*"The work in the stakeholder group is a unique opportunity to come closer to local entrepreneurs, SMEs and research institutions working on circularity in the local agri-food chain. Knowing the needs and challenges of the stakeholders, we can support them in the pioneering of their innovative ideas and the establishment of new partnerships."*

*/// Mara van der Kleij, City of Amsterdam*

Over the last three years, more than 40 "Local Stakeholder Group" meetings were held in the six partner regions. The events mobilised key stakeholders active in the field of regional development and innovation policy and served as an exchange and learning platform. During the events, the stakeholders discussed good practice examples of rural-urban partnerships, such as cluster structures, transfer mechanisms and formalised agreements for territorial governance. Based on the exchange, they developed concrete actions, which are to strengthen the rural-urban cooperation in their region.

They learnt from the experiences of the hosting regions, enriched the discussions with their expert knowledge and disseminated the lessons learnt from the living lab in their regional stakeholder group.

The "Local Stakeholder Group" meetings were complemented by "Interregional Learning Events" designed and organised as living labs. In the course of the project the partnership held altogether seven events in: Hamburg (DE), Almelo (NL), Milan (IT), Amsterdam (NL), Thessaloniki (GR), Burgas (BG) and Lüneburg (DE). The "Interregional Learning Events" included an





“The study visit was really inspiring; we learnt a lot of fascinating examples of circular economy approaches. Not everything could be transferred to our regional context, but our pool of ideas for future cooperation projects has grown significantly.”

To capture the added value of interregional cooperation, three working groups were established in the project. The working groups provided floor for regular discussion on the questions:

- How to institutionalise rural-urban linkages?
- How to influence regional innovation and Smart Specialisation Strategies (RIS3)?
- How to empower and mobilise innovation actors?

The interregional learning process was completed by regular virtual discussion rounds. The discussions enabled partners to receive additional insights into questions of regional interest, for example how other regions support start-ups in their rural areas or how local businesses are involved into research and innovation processes.

/// Jennifer Coordes,  
Economic Development Agency of Harburg District

## Embedding rural-urban partnerships in regional policies

The RUMORE activities aim to ensure policy and financial support for rural-urban partnerships in the partner regions. In particular they aim to emphasise the importance of rural-urban cooperation in the following policies and programmes for innovation and regional development:

- Lower Saxony Multifund Operational Programme 2014-2020
- Regional Operational Programme of Central Macedonia 2014-2020
- Operational Programme of Western Netherlands 2014-2020
- ERDF Regional Operational Programme for Lombardy Region 2014-2020
- Regional Development Strategy of Burgas Region 2014-2020
- Green Metropolis Twente: Programme Powerful Twente 2014-2020

To stimulate policy change, each region has elaborated an action plan, which specifies how the lessons learnt from the cooperation project are put into action. The action plans promote the initiation of new innovation projects and the mobilisation of local and regional funds. They support the introduction of better governance for rural-urban cooperation in the regions. The content of the plans strongly depends on the territorial context and the institutional set-ups of the individual regions. Although some ideas from the action plans are already in implementation, the main implementation phase of the actions is 2020 to 2021. The partners will facilitate the implementation and will regularly monitor its progress, also exchanging common experiences in this process.



# Action Plans

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Increased rural-urban cooperation for more boundary crossing innovation

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# Lüneburg Region

Exploiting the innovation potential of a region framed by major cities



## Territorial context

The Region of Lüneburg covers the north eastern part of the Lower Saxony federal state and has 1.7 million inhabitants. Rural areas and a diverse natural landscape characterise large parts of the Region. Several sub-regions are protected as National Parks or UNESCO Biosphere Reserves. The Region displays a considerable level of economic interdependence with the bordering cities Bremen, Hamburg and Hannover. It hosts one university, located in the city of Lüneburg, and a few colleges and research institutions in medium-sized cities such as Buxtehude and Suderburg. The economy of Lüneburg Region is characterised by small and medium-sized enterprises as well as well-developed energy, food and tourism sectors. Some

local enterprises from the manufacturing sector have reached leading positions in their branches due to the development of innovative products and services. In the last years, regional stakeholders have launched different projects to support these and other enterprises to exploit their full innovation potential. The Multifund Operational Programme of Lower Saxony funds several of these activities within its various funding guidelines.

## Needs and challenges

The predominantly rural character of Lüneburg Region and the high diversity of its economic base call for targeted

support of innovation activities. Regional challenges and funding needs are not identical with those of the cities and industrial cores around. There is a need for low threshold approaches, which address the demands of local companies and municipalities as well as for local support mechanisms. These should help applicants with less experience in project development to initiate new projects. Moreover, comprehensive and flexible support is needed for existing and new stakeholder networks and cooperation projects, which aim at exploiting the Region's innovation potential. It is crucial that local enterprises, universities, and public authorities are involved in the development of the regional policies and funding guidelines. The RUMORE activities in Lüneburg aim to better connect enterprises from the rural parts of the Region to universities and research institutions. Furthermore, they seek to involve the universities, colleges and their students in regional development projects in order to explore the Region's potential for sustainable development.

## Actions

### Programme implementation workshops

Discussions with stakeholders and monitoring processes revealed the need to take regional and local specifics more comprehensive into consideration in the implementation of the Multifund Operational Programme of Lower Saxony. In 2018, the implementation rate of the Programme was considerably lower in Lüneburg Region than in other parts of Lower Saxony. To improve this situation the Office for Regional Development Lüneburg launched a series of Programme implementation workshops in 2018. These were held in cooperation with the institutions responsi-

ble for the Programme implementation on federal state level. The workshops aimed to establish a closer link between the local stakeholders and the federal state level and to identify room for improvement in the individual funding guidelines. During the workshops, local stakeholders were invited to express their needs and ideas for improvement. Already small adjustments of the current Programme, such as the introduction of open-topic calls and the introduction of additional advisory services, have increased the amount and quality of project applications in the Region of Lüneburg.

The economy of Lüneburg Region is characterised by small and medium-sized enterprises as well as well-developed energy, food and tourism sectors.

“Landlust”: Student idea competition to involve students into regional development projects

To better link stakeholders from rural areas with universities and research institutions the student idea competition for sustainable regional development “Landlust” was launched in 2018. The competition was a cooperation project between the Office for Regional Development and the Leuphana University Lüneburg. From April to July 2018 over 200 master students worked intensively on the development of 57 project concepts. The groups of students elaborated innovative ideas for the improvement of the working and living conditions in the eastern part of Lüneburg Region and developed proposals for increasing the added value in several local communities and counties. The bunch of submitted project ideas was manifold from concepts

for co-working spaces and mobile learning offers through alternative models for food supply to new leisure and tourism activities such as geocaching events. Several local and regional stakeholders were involved in different steps of the competition such as formulating the tasks for the students and selecting the winner team. Different project ideas have inspired regional stakeholders such as public authorities and have resulted in the preparation of new project applications.

### Lighthouse project for sustainable economic development of Biosphere Regions

Large parts of Lüneburg Region and the Metropolitan Region Hamburg are protected as National Parks or UNESCO Biosphere Reserves. In those sub-regions, it is a permanent question how to combine nature conservation with economic development. Stakeholders from the Metropolitan Region Hamburg are currently developing a package of measures for the Biosphere Region Elbe-Schaalsee, which is located in the east of Lüneburg Region and in the bordering federal states. The measures will be implemented in one umbrella and three sub-projects on the topics: "Sustainable Tourism and Mobility", "Sustainable Business Cycles in the Food Sector" and "Sustainable Municipalities". The package of measures aims to improve the competitiveness of the regional economy and to increase the attractiveness of the Biosphere Region as a living and economic area. The implementation of the measures will support the area to better exploit the opportunities offered by its spatial proximity to Hamburg and other regional centres. Sustainability and conservation aspects are taken under special consideration.

### Interregional inspiration

The development of the above actions was inspired by good practice examples from the Regions of Twente, Amsterdam and Lombardy, in particular:

- The Green Knowledge Portal Twente, which facilitates the participation of students in the elaboration and implementation of regional development projects as well as the cooperation experience of Twente with formal and informal networks;
- The governance and decision-making structures of the ERDF Operational Programme of the Western Netherlands, which covers different sub-regions, but considers their specificities as well as the needs and individual approaches of local stakeholders;
- The triple and quadruple helix urban-rural cooperation projects of Amsterdam and Lombardy Region, which provide insights for the development of future regional management projects.

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## Region of Central Macedonia

Strengthening regional and interregional links and ties to boost growth and cohesion



### Territorial context

The Region of Central Macedonia is one of the thirteen administrative regions of Greece. It has a population of almost 1.9 million, which makes it the second most populous Region in the country. The Region is divided into seven regional units and its administrative headquarter is based in the city of Thessaloniki. Central Macedonia makes up 26% of the country's primary sector. It contains the country's richest collection of agricultural products including fruits, vegetables, cheese, etc. The agri-food sector is an important economic priority for the Region, recognised by the Regional Smart Specialisation Strategy of Central Macedonia which defines agri-food, tourism, textile and construction materials as strategic mar-

ket priorities. The Strategy promotes the technological development of these sectors as well as their interaction with the ICT, energy, environment and logistics sectors.

**Despite the growth of research and development in the Region, projects do not address the needs of local companies.**

The Region's capital city Thessaloniki hosts three universities and two large research centres. Despite the growth of research and development in the Region, projects have mostly focused on externally funded activities and do not address the

needs of local companies. Small and medium-sized enterprises in Central Macedonia have limited opportunities to collaborate with research institutes and boost innovation in their production and marketing services.

## Needs and challenges

Small and medium-sized enterprises in the rural areas of Central Macedonia lack opportunities to establish networks with other businesses within and beyond the Region. This limits the enterprises' ability to build collaborations with research and development institutions to modernise their production and develop export capacities. The current RIS3 Strategy of Central Macedonia marginally recognises the importance of rural-urban collaborations and their potentials for the economic competitiveness of the Region. It is essential to include both urban and rural enterprises in innovation value chains to support and expand their activities. SMEs can significantly benefit from targeted digital services, offered by a digital incubator or a support web platform, for information on economic and development trends and funding opportunities. The RUMORE activities in Central Macedonia aim to establish closer collaborations between enterprises and research and development institutions in the Region and to boost innovation activities which address local market needs.

## Actions

### Establishment of One-Stop Liaison Office

In 2019 the Region of Central Macedonia established an Innovation and Entrepreneurship Support Mechanism, which is

funded by the ERDF Operational Programme. The Mechanism aims to support the monitoring, evaluation and improvement of the RIS3 Strategy of Central Macedonia. A core element of the new Mechanism is the One-Stop Liaison Office (OSLO). One of the main objectives of OSLO is to support rural-urban cooperation. OSLO will provide services for rural based enterprises from Central Macedonia and will support their collaboration with research and development institutions in urban centres. The initiative is the first to recognise in a regional policy document the importance of rural-urban partnerships and their interrelation with innovation processes.

**It is essential to include both urban and rural enterprises in innovation value chains to support and expand their activities.**

### Development of One-Stop Liaison Office as a digital incubator

The One-Stop Liaison Office will also be a digital incubator, providing digital services to local enterprises on developing business plans, mentoring and identifying funding opportunities and cooperation partners for their activities. It will function as a communication and support web platform, which is easily accessible and user friendly. The Office will also coordinate the development of a plan for a Digital Innovation Hub in the agri-food value chain, which will enable local enterprises to follow activities and benefit from the capitalisation of the "Fresh Fruit" pilot project in the context of Smart Specialisation Agri-Food Platform.

## Interregional inspiration

The development of the above actions was inspired by good practice examples from Lombardy Region and from the rural-urban cooperation experiences of all partner regions, in particular:

- The open innovation Platform of Lombardy Region, which supports the creation of innovation ecosystems and quadruple helix cooperation projects around strategic topics of regional smart specialisation. It functions as an open digital environment, which provides users with tools and methodologies for the establishment of cooperation projects.
- The Open-Agri project in Lombardy Region, which aims at the development of new entrepreneurial skills for the agri-food sector. It stimulates the introduction of new techniques for agricultural production, transportation and processing of food. Furthermore, it offers training and capacity building activities for SMEs and innovative start-ups along the agri-food supply chain.

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# Metropolitan Region Amsterdam

Closing the loops in the food chain: Urban-rural partnerships supporting the shift to a circular economy



## Territorial context

The Metropolitan Region Amsterdam (MRA) is a highly urbanised and strong economic region in the Netherlands. The exchange between the city of Amsterdam and the surrounding peri-urban and rural areas is limited, especially when it comes to food production and consumption. Large-scale businesses and agricultural producers and farmers in the Region mainly focus on exports, and the consumption of locally produced food and products is low. In addition, organic waste is rarely collected separately and is burnt together with residual waste which removes the opportunity to capture value.

Although Amsterdam is home to many innovative start-ups and research institutions, few of them have an established

working connection to regional partners. Connecting start-ups and supporting the expansion of innovative business ideas in the area around the city, will stimulate the regional agri-food chain. This will assist rural areas in maintaining local jobs as well as contributing to improved territorial cohesion in the MRA.

The RUMORE Amsterdam approach to addressing climate change is to improve the circular economy by stimulating circularity in the regional agri-food chain. This approach aligns with the ambitions of the ERDF Operational Programme for the Western Netherlands, which defines the agri-food sector as priority specialisation field.

## Needs and challenges

Extreme efficiency and increasing economies of scale have brought the MRA welfare, but also a high ecological footprint and negative effects such as loss of biodiversity and landscape. The Municipality of Amsterdam's Circular Economy Strategy states that economic development should respect the carrying capacity of natural systems, within social and planetary boundaries. The ERDF Operational Programme for the Western Netherlands identifies the difficulty that small companies experience in growing and scaling up. RUMORE Amsterdam aims to facilitate circular agri-food start-ups and scale-ups to grow in supporting the realisation of their plans (actions) and to increase their local market share. This is relevant for establishing short supply chains that can catalyse a circular economy through SME employment, as well as strengthen innovations that protect the landscape. Also to use and valorise organic (including food waste) residual flows in an optimal way to create a regional agri-food 'cycle' that is economically attractive and reduces environmental impact.

## Actions

### Flywheel Circular Agri-Food

The "Flywheel Circular Agri-Food" project will establish a cluster of start-ups, which creates investment for growth and jobs in circular economy organic (food and biomass) chains in the MRA. The Flywheel seeks to function as a hub where start-ups can work and experiment, and provide a platform where entrepreneurs can learn from each other. A programme office or foundation will bundle knowledge, skills, resources, funding instruments, people, networks and contacts. The Flywheel will facilitate entrepreneurs in overcoming

the obstacles imposed by the current linear economic system and will support the establishment of short supply chains in the Region. As a result of this, promising ideas and initiatives in the field of circular agri-food will be brought to realisation: new products, valorisation of residues in the agri-food sector, short supply chains, and new cooperative partnerships.

The Flywheel seeks to function as a hub where start-ups can work and experiment, and provide a platform where entrepreneurs can learn from each other.

### Quisquiliae: a factory for organic waste valorisation

The "Quisquiliae" project will develop concept testing for residual flow processing of vegetables and cocoa beans. To achieve this, the initiators aim to build a pilot-plant where process-technological insights for the residual flows can be tested, leading to products which in turn can flow back into the food preparation process. Every year 140,000 tons of food waste flows are released in the province of Northern Holland. The residual flows of vegetables and cocoa beans contain sufficient nutritional value for further processing and may lead to adequate sellable products that can be tested in the market and sold at the highest price/value. "Quisquiliae" (Latin for 'waste' or 'trash') is a collaboration of several parties, the two chief partners involving a local entrepreneur (Ad van Vught) and the knowledge institute Green Campus Amsterdam.



### B2B Marketplace for surplus & imperfect food

The project will reduce food waste by connecting regional producers of surplus food with parties who make this food suitable for consumption. The project focuses on fresh products, which generate the largest amounts of waste. The intended customers are catering entrepreneurs (mainly restaurants and caterers) as well as processors in the western part of the Netherlands. The connection between participating parties is achieved via an online functional B2B Marketplace. It is essential to make the supply predictable so that this can be included in both the logistics and the menu planning. Additionally, the organisation of a physical distribution system is necessary, as is mobilising and facilitating customers. The project is a collaboration between Instock (food waste organisation and project leader), Dutch Cuisine (restaurant chefs for sustainable menus) and the HvA (Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences).

### Development, marketing and production of Lisdodde

The project will develop a processing and marketing chain for Lisdodde (Cattail), a plant/crop which grows in the wetlands of MRA which could be processed into an insulation material for housing. The cooperation involves the City of Amsterdam (responsible actor), Amsterdam Institute for Advanced Metropolitan Solutions, a farmer and a local entrepreneur. MRA needs profitable crops that can grow on wetlands as an alternative to the unsustainable current land use as a large-scale dairy farming. It is important that the insulation material meets safety requirements as well as circular building principles, and that the Municipality is willing to launch a housing project that focusses on circular building.

### Food cooperation: a short supply chain for Care and Cure

The project will establish a food cooperative of local organic farmers/producers from the Region to supply one or more hospitals and healthcare-institutes in Amsterdam. Farmers and producers need a steady demand and fixed market, and Amsterdam's five large hospitals and many healthcare-institutes could provide that demand. Forming a short, transparent supply chain for the healthcare industry, and through connecting the city and its surroundings will be a great first step in creating a market for local food. When the project succeeds, the ambition is to grow and scale up to supply supermarkets and restaurants. The project also seeks to educate about the importance of local food. The chief partners are a wholesale entrepreneur (in local, organic food) and the Municipality of Amsterdam.

### Interregional inspiration

The development of these project ideas was inspired by good practice examples from the Regions of Central Macedonia, Lombardy and Lüneburg, in particular:

- Projects of Central Macedonia and Lombardy Region, which create short supply chains and value local products;
- Examples of entrepreneurial platforms, clusters and hubs that create connections between players along the production value chain, and which support the marketing of regional products. These include projects like Smart Farming solutions and the American Farm School in Central Macedonia, the "Kilometro Zero" project in Lombardy, the Innovation Incubator and Start-Up Centres of Lüneburg, and the AgroDesign Cluster in Thessaloniki.

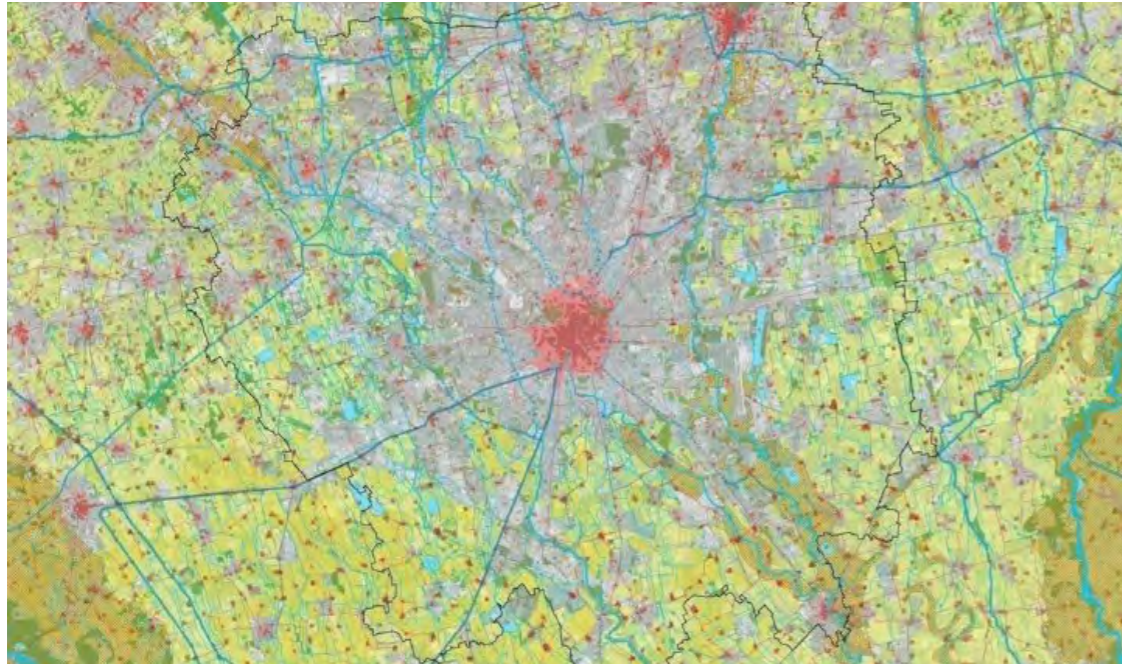


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# Lombardy Region

Urban-rural cooperation in Milan Metropolitan area: New partnerships for economic development of rural districts and technological clusters



## Territorial context

The RUMORE activities in Lombardy Region focus on the Metropolitan City of Milan and its peri-urban and rural surroundings. The Milan Metropolitan area is one of the strongest performing economic areas in Europe. It is home to renowned research and development institutions and well-established high technological clusters in the fields of regional smart specialisation. The small and medium-sized enterprises in the surrounding peri-urban and rural areas can benefit from the proximity and cooperation with the technological clusters and research institutions. Improved rural-urban cooperation will increase the competitiveness and innovation potentials of rural enterprises and will foster innovation activities especially in the fields

of energy, environment and agri-food. Cooperation will support and stimulate the economic development of SMEs and in the long term preserve and create jobs in the peri-urban and rural areas, which are characterised by higher unemployment rates compared to urban areas. The strengthening of the rural economy will also support Lombardy Region's policy efforts to maintain important agricultural lands under pressure from urban development.

## Needs and challenges

The peri-urban and rural areas of Milan are characterised by a large number of traditional enterprises seeking to diversify their

economic activities to become more competitive and resilient. Since 2010, many of the companies have grouped together in so called "Rural Districts". The Districts represent clusters of companies, which form a local productive system in areas with specific territorial features and development potential. They are main actors in the implementation of the "Milan Rural Metropolis", a Framework Agreement for territorial development and governance of rural-urban areas in the Metropolitan City of Milan. The RUMORE activities aim to support the Rural Districts and the companies they represent to establish closer collaboration with the technological clusters. In particular, the activities aim to encourage technological clusters to formulate cooperative project proposals with agricultural enterprises to introduce multi-functional agriculture services. Rural-urban cooperation will facilitate the access of traditional enterprises to the ERDF Regional Operational Programme (ROP) and its innovation measures (Axis 1: Innovation, Axis 3: Competiveness). It will stimulate innovation in the fields of circular and bioeconomy and will support the diversification of the rural economy and the preservation of agricultural land.

## Actions

The following actions aim to facilitate the cooperation between Rural Districts and high technological clusters and to support them in the development of joint proposals for the ERDF ROP. All actions are under the common keyword 'METRO' which stands for the Metropolitan City of Milan, and the two macro-themes:

- 'METRORURAL' - rurality as a new paradigm for the territorial planning of peri-urban and urban-rural metropolitan areas; and

- 'METROCIRCULAR' - circular economy in urban-rural areas as an opportunity to develop agricultural and bioeconomy businesses.

## Agro-Creative Matches

The Agro-Creative Matches represent training workshop events to transfer design thinking and cross-innovation concepts to the Rural Districts' agricultural enterprises. The events will promote the establishment of active collaboration between agricultural businesses and creative and cultural enterprises (e.g. freelancers and young creative professionals in the fields of design, communication and visual arts, architecture, cultural management). The cross-fertilisation process between traditional companies and cultural-creative industries will be facilitated through co-design tools and other creative methods for rural-urban entrepreneurship. The matching events will contribute to the identification of new business solutions to strengthen agri-food supply chains and promote the circular economy. This will further promote the hybridisation of local businesses, enhancement of the metropolitan territory and preservation of rural lands.

## Agro-Green network events

The Agro-Green network events intend to create new partnerships between agricultural entrepreneurs and the Lombardy Green Chemistry Cluster to foster innovation in the field of bioeconomy and circular economy. A starting event will be organised as an exchange event for companies which are interested in developing products and services in the value chain of the bioeconomy industry. During the

event, the agricultural entrepreneurs will learn and exchange on topics related to agricultural and zootechnical waste. The idea is to demonstrate to Rural Districts and farmers that bio waste from agricultural production can be reused and provide new market opportunities. The event seeks to raise awareness among enterprises that agricultural waste is not just a cost for entrepreneurs but can create economic benefits. Following the event, a subsequent facilitation process would occur to match farmers from Rural Districts and innovative SMEs. The matching process will include thematic focus workshops, "speed dates", and tailor-made support for the definition of project ideas. It seeks to encourage new partnerships and pilot projects for agricultural waste reuse, such as projects for the production of biodegradable objects or the use of biomass for energy generation.

The event seeks to raise awareness among enterprises that agricultural waste is not just a cost for entrepreneurs but can create economic benefits.

#### Rural-urban guidelines for the ERDF ROP of Lombardy Region

The rural-urban guidelines aim to inspire future calls of Axis 1 (Innovation) of the ERDF ROP on the themes developed by RUMORE: economic development of the urban-rural territories of the Milan Metropolitan Area; strengthening supply chain relations between Rural Districts and companies that process and sell agri-food products; and the implementation of circular economy projects that relate green chemistry and green economy com-

panies with agricultural entrepreneurs for the reuse of agricultural resources. The guidelines will be based on the findings from the Agro-Creative Matches and the Agro-Green network events. It will outline the main needs identified by the local enterprises during the events. The guidelines should be considered during the assessment of projects funded by the ERDF ROP in order to strengthen the links between urban and rural areas, and to support the creation of rural-industrial partnerships.

#### Rural-urban planning recommendations

The recommendations will address the Framework Agreement for territorial development "Milan Rural Metropolis". The Agreement was signed in 2015 and includes an Action Plan with concrete activities which is updated annually. The recommendations will suggest the inclusion of project proposals of the Rural Districts in the Framework Agreement's Action Plan. Some of the projects will relate to the reuse of disused municipal spaces for agricultural purposes (such as storage, transportation or marketing) and will enhance local supply chains managed by Rural Districts. Cooperation projects between the Rural Districts, non-agricultural companies and companies in the agri-food chain can apply for funding from the ERDF ROP. The collaboration activities will create a new balance between cities (businesses, large companies) and agricultural areas (agricultural and non-agricultural companies located in open spaces but close to urbanised areas).

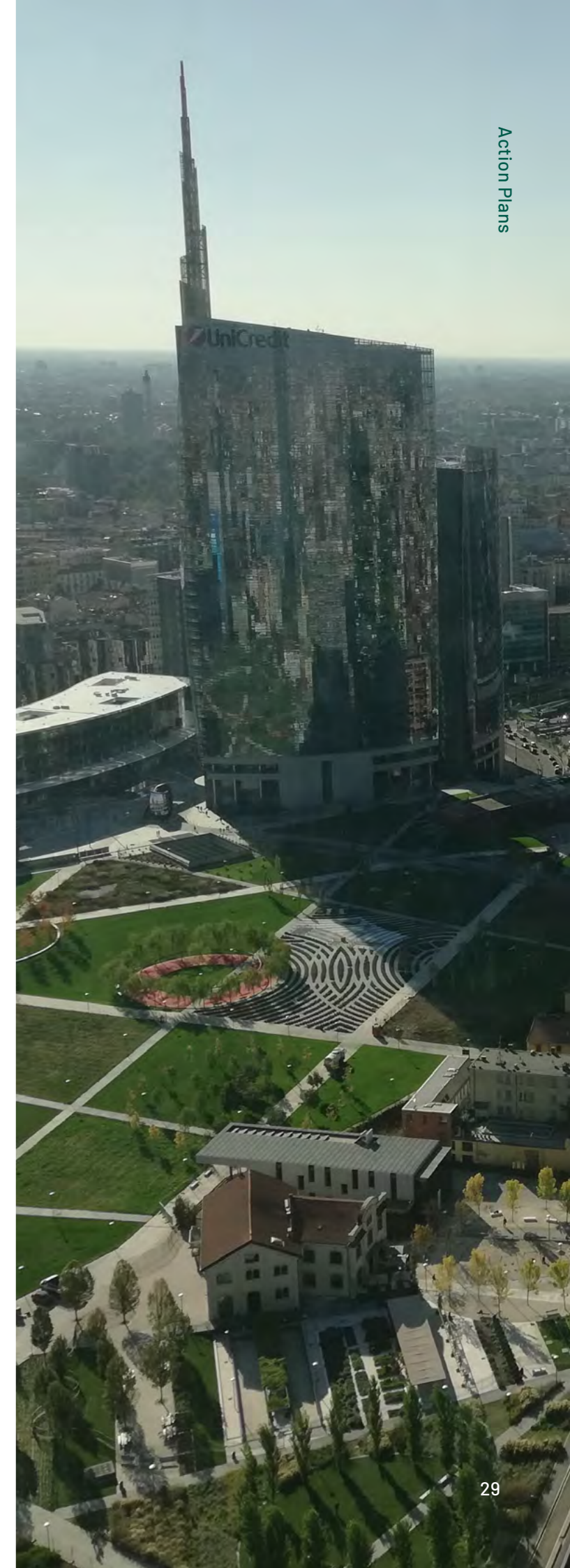
## Interregional inspiration

The development of the above actions was inspired by good practice examples from the Regions of Lüneburg, Amsterdam and Central Macedonia, in particular:

- The AgroDesign Cluster in Thessaloniki, an entrepreneurial platform that brings local creative industries in closer cooperation with the agri-food producers;
- The Technology Transfer Centre Elbe Weser, which provides SMEs from the rural areas of Lüneburg Region with demand-oriented technological advice;
- The Green Knowledge Portal Twente, which supports regional networks through urban-rural living labs;
- Instock-Amsterdam for its circular economy projects; and
- Central Macedonia's experiences in establishing new value chains along traditional food products.

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# Burgas Region

Support services for local enterprises: Promoting cross-sectoral partnerships and innovation



## Territorial context

Burgas Region is spatially the largest province in Bulgaria with a land area of 7,748.1 km<sup>2</sup>. It is subdivided into 13 municipalities and in 2017 had a total population of 411,579 inhabitants. Seven of the municipalities in the Region are entirely rural and six are located along the Black Sea coast. Research and innovation activities are mainly concentrated in the core city areas of Burgas which hosts two universities. The economic, social and territorial development of the Region is guided by a Regional Development Strategy, which defines the maritime, agricultural and tourism sectors as motors for the local economy and important for future development.

The RUMORE activities in Burgas seek to support local research institutions, enterprises and local authorities to jointly exploit the innovation potential in these sectors. They aim to promote opportunities for blue growth in the Region, as well as the modernisation and improved cooperation and integrations of its important agricultural sector with tourism. These actions seek to develop synergies and innovative solutions to combat local problems related to the isolation of parts of the Region from economic activities, low competitiveness of the economy, preservation and more efficient use of maritime resources.

## Needs and challenges

The maritime ecosystem in Burgas Region offers economic development potential which is currently underused. New approaches are needed to promote more efficient use of maritime resources and environmental protection, as these can generate economic value to coastal municipalities and have positive effects on the tourism sector. New approaches will require closer cooperation between public authorities, science institutions and enterprises. The development of the agricultural sector in Burgas Region is an important economy indicator. In recent years, the industry has been substantially supported by European and national funds. However, agricultural production in the country is still characterised by low competitiveness and insufficient market orientation, largely due to acute problems accumulated during the years of transition to a market economy. The following actions aim to strengthen the links between agriculture, food and tourism sectors by promoting closer cooperation between local actors.

## Actions

### Establishment of Black Sea Centre for blue growth and innovations

The Black Sea Centre will support start-ups and companies from Burgas Region to develop and test innovative business models, which contribute to sustainable growth in the marine and maritime sectors in the Region. The Centre will provide start-ups and companies with research and development services. It will facilitate the exchange of ideas and the establishment of cross-sectoral partnerships. Besides the Centre's headquarter in Burgas, a number of research and innovation contact

points in medium-sized cities will contribute to boosting economic activities in the rural parts of the Region. The contact points will serve as an information and support desk for local companies and will promote their cooperation with regional research and educational institutions.

### Innovative exhibition and internet platform for local innovators

The internet platform "Virtual Innovative Creator" will provide a virtual room for exchange between the local creative industries and the agri-food producers in the Region. The platform will support the sharing of knowledge between sectors and the development and marketing of innovative business ideas. It will contribute to the establishment of clusters of enterprises to work together for the diversification of the rural economy.

### The platform will support the sharing of knowledge of innovative business ideas.

The activities of the platform will be complemented by the organisation of annual exhibitions, which will facilitate the establishment of cross-sectoral partnerships. The exhibitions will focus on topics of local economic importance and bring together local producers and creative professionals. They will provide floor for the marketing and branding of innovative local products.

### "Green Deal Strandzha Cuisine" initiative

Burgas Region is characterised by a diversity of rich natural landscapes,



including a long coastline and mountainous landscapes, such as the area of Strandzha Mountain. The latter is renowned for its centuries' old rich traditions and heritage of several civilizations. The "Green Deal Strandzha Cousine" will promote the gastronomic heritage of the Strandzha area and at the same time contribute to healthier nutrition in schools and kindergartens in Burgas Region. The initiative will establish better links between local producers from the under developed rural and border territories from Strandzha, schools and kindergartens in the city of Burgas as well as small and medium-sized towns in the Region. In addition, the initiative will promote the gastronomic heritage of Strandzha beyond the Region by strengthening links between the local producers and the well-developed tourist industry. An official "Green Deal" agreement elaborated and signed by the regional authority, rural municipalities, food and agriculture institutions, local schools and kindergartens will serve as a framework and roadmap for future cooperation activities.



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## Interregional inspiration

The development of the above actions was inspired by good practice examples from Lüneburg Region, Amsterdam and the Region of Central Macedonia, in particular:

- The Innovation and Start-up Centres in Lüneburg Region, which support start-ups from small and medium-sized cities to develop and test new ideas and business models;
- The AgroDesignCluster Thessaloniki, which promotes joint projects between the creative and agri-food sectors;
- The Dutch Koksgilde (chefs) agreement, which supports the preservation and further development of the Dutch gastronomic heritages; and
- The Agro-nutritional Cooperation of the Region of Central Macedonia, which brings the stakeholders from the agri-food value chain of the Region closer together.

## Twente Region

Increased rural-urban cooperation for more boundary crossing innovation



### Territorial context

Twente Region is part of the eastern Province Overijssel, the Netherlands. The Region has three major cities Almelo, Hengelo and Enschede, which are centrally located in the Region and surrounded by large rural areas. In total, Twente includes 14 municipalities and has approximately 600,000 inhabitants, half of which live in the rural parts of the Region. In the last decades, the Region Twente and especially its rural areas, has been significantly affected by aging populations and outer migration of young people in search for education and job opportunities.

The paths for economic and social development of Twente Region are defined by the Green Metropolis Twente: Programme Powerful Twente. The programme aims at

closing regional economic and ecological chains, improving sustainability, and fostering innovation through supporting new forms of cooperation. It transcends municipal boundaries and interests and works region-wide with entrepreneurs and foundations and in close cooperation with the Province Overijssel. To encourage the realisation of regional development projects in the urban and rural areas, the Green Metropolis Twente closely collaborates with the Green Knowledge Portal Twente. The Knowledge Portal is an intermediary institution that builds bridges between policy makers, entrepreneurs, students and residents of Twente. It connects the newest knowledge and ideas of students and researchers with the real demands

and needs of the Region. In particular, it supports the establishment of new networks and projects in the agri-food sector, which is a main field of regional smart specialisation.

The RUMORE activities in Twente follow two main aims. Firstly, they seek to stimulate circular economy approaches in the agri-food sector by strengthening regional food chains. The establishment of regional food chains will contribute to closer connections between the cities and their surrounding rural environment. Secondly, the RUMORE activities aim at strengthening the cooperation between Green Metropolis Twente and Green Knowledge Portal Twente. This will foster innovation processes in Twente and will stimulate the regional economy.

## Needs and challenges

The agri-food sector is one of the economically most important sectors in Twente as it provides 10% of the jobs in the Region. Currently, the sector is changing rapidly due to the increasing awareness and responsibility of consumers about their food and more stringent environmental regulations. The sector's main challenge is to grow towards a sustainable regional and circular production system that respects the natural resources and responds to regional consumers' demands for healthy and traceable food. The transition to a more circular production system requires closer collaboration between the companies, farmers, municipalities and NGOs in Twente. It also calls for closer connections between different sectoral approaches and initiatives. Presently, there exist multiple thematic networks in the Region, focusing almost explicitly on one economic field, such as agriculture, energy or mining. The RUMORE activities aim

to support the Green Metropolis Twente in establishing stronger connections between the existing thematic networks and in extending these networks to other municipalities of the Region. To achieve this, new working methods and models for cooperation will be introduced in the Green Metropolis Twente work and the cooperation between the network and the Green Knowledge Portal Twente will be strengthened.

## Actions

### Evaluation of Green Knowledge Portal Twente

The Green Knowledge Portal was established in 2009. Since 2016, it has acted as a formalised foundation with its own board. The activities of the Knowledge Portal are funded by the members of Green Metropolis Twente. This action aims to evaluate the organisation and working methods of the Knowledge Portal, and to develop recommendations for its future closer collaboration with the Green Metropolis Twente network.

**The Green Knowledge Portal Twente could expand its activities and serve other knowledge institutes, entrepreneurs and non-governmental organisations.**

The evaluation will strengthen the position of the Knowledge Portal which could expand its activities and serve other knowledge institutes, entrepreneurs and non-governmental organisations. At the same time, the evaluation will provide concrete recommendations of how the Green Metropolis Twente could benefit from the working methodology of Green Knowledge Portal Twente.

### Transformation of Green Metropolis Twente into an innovation platform

This action aims to improve the organisation and governance of Green Metropolis Twente. Presently, Green Metropolis Twente is a voluntary cooperation between municipalities in Twente, the local farmers' organisation, the nature conservation organisation and educational institutes. The action seeks to transform Green Metropolis Twente into an innovation platform for regional challenges, which fosters closer cooperation with the other thematic networks and programmes in the Region and in the Province Overijssel. The innovation platform will act on the basis of a formal agreement, which defines the goals and ambitions of the cooperation as well as the responsibilities of the individual parties. The platform will allow for cross boundary innovation in the sectors of regional importance and will foster the transition to circular economy. A central part of the action is the introduction of working methods from the Green Knowledge Portal Twente into the work of Green

Metropolis Twente. The Green Knowledge Portal has developed effective methodology to speed up innovation processes by including knowledge institutes and students in regional development projects. This methodology will be consolidated into the new innovation platform and will guarantee structured involvement of young people and students into the regional policy making process.

### Development of "Twente Canteen" as an innovation living lab

The "Twente Canteen" initiative aims at increasing the consumption of locally produced food and at strengthening regional food chains. The initiative stimulates the demand of regional food products in the canteens of municipal buildings in Twente such as hospitals, universities, schools and kindergartens. It is based on a formal agreement which obliges the participating canteens to buy at least 25% of food products for their menus from regional



producers. The “Twente Canteen” initiative will be expanded to further municipal buildings in the Region. Furthermore, it will serve as an innovation living lab for the development of new cooperation projects and activities. This includes projects looking for more efficient organisation of regional logistics, the establishment of new demand-supply chains and the identification of new market opportunities. The projects will contribute to strengthening the role of local producers in the marketing of agricultural food products and to additional jobs for the rural economy.

## Interregional inspiration

The development of the above actions was inspired by good practice examples from Lombardy Region, Amsterdam and the Region of Central Macedonia, in particular:

- Buen Mercado and the Parco delle Risaie projects in Lombardy Region as well as by the regional cooperation for large scale distribution and marketing of local products, which provide insights for the organisation, legal establishment and marketing of food value chains;
- Instock and “Tuinen van West” in Amsterdam, which illustrate innovative approaches for rural-rural cooperation and entrepreneurship; and
- The food value chains in Central Macedonia, which are based on the development and marketing of traditional food products.



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# Recommendations

Create and institutionalise mechanisms for knowledge and technology transfer to support development in peri-urban and rural areas

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Encourage the participation of young people in the creation and implementation of regional innovation projects

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Support demand-based research in living labs and open innovation networks involving urban and rural actors

P. 44

Support decentralised provision of research infrastructure and entrepreneurial services in peri-urban and rural areas

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Strengthen and institutionalise innovation partnerships and thematic cluster cooperation to complete regional value chains

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Support cross-sectoral urban-rural partnerships in the fields of regional smart specialisation

P. 50

Operationalise urban-rural synergies to unlock circular economy potentials

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Complement existing policy documents with Formal Agreements for Territorial Governance

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Include the concept of urban-rural partnerships in RIS3 processes and ERDF Regional Operational Programmes

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## Create and institutionalise mechanisms for knowledge and technology transfer to support development in peri-urban and rural areas



### Importance:

#### Why is knowledge and technology transfer necessary?

The economy of peri-urban and rural areas is traditionally dependent on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The longer-term competitiveness of these businesses relates to their ability to keep pace with technology advancements in industries' manufacturing and marketing processes. New technologies offer rural SMEs additional development opportunities; they help enterprises access new markets, attract skilled workers and use resources more efficiently. As a result, the successful digital transformation of the rural economy is crucial in enabling it to withstand increasing competitive pressure. Yet, the provision of digital infrastructure and services in rural areas remains limited. Many local SMEs are struggling to gain or access expertise, including research and development resources. To avoid technological regression of rural businesses, it is recommended that peri-urban and rural areas' access to technological knowledge is improved. Technological expertise can be shared, for example, through institutionalised transfer or competence centres. These facilities can help connect the market and educational institutions, to prepare and inform rural SMEs about economic structural change.



### Added value:

#### What are the expected results?

Institutionalised knowledge and technology transfer centres can support the creation of employment opportunities in both rural and urban areas. They can assist the transfer of knowledge into innovative products and processes and can therefore increase diversity and sustainability in the local economy. Advice services can encourage SMEs to enact change in their manufacturing and marketing processes, to increase labour productivity and to deploy new sectors or business concepts. Institutionalised knowledge and transfer centres are particularly important for SMEs in rural areas as the number of research institutions there is often limited. In this sense, transfer centres can help to bridge the spatial distance and can provide SMEs access to expert networks, research resources and potential cooperation partners.



### Good practice example: How does it work in practice?

#### 'TRANSFER CENTRE ELBE WESER', LÜNEBURG REGION

Technology development and innovation processes in the Lüneburg Region have been traditionally facilitated by the municipal-led Economic Development Agencies. To support the work of the Agencies in promoting competitive local economies, the regional Transfer Centre Elbe Weser (TZEW) was established in 1999. TZEW is jointly operated and financed by 10 counties in the Lüneburg Region, supported also by the European Regional Development Fund (Multifund Operational Programme of Lower Saxony 2014-2020). TZEW provides tailor-made and demand-oriented technology and innovation advice for rural SMEs. It serves as an interface between SMEs, research institutions and external service and technology

providers. The Centre, in close cooperation with the Economic Development Agencies, accompanies rural SMEs in all steps of the innovation process. It carries out consultations to identify the exact needs of the enterprise and connects the enterprise with a network of external research and technology development experts. The established team jointly develops and implements solutions for optimised business operations. It identifies suitable funding resources and supports the enterprises in preparing funding applications. Since 1999, TZEW has provided on-site consultations for more than 3,000 SMEs in the Region.

 <https://tzew.de/>

## Encourage the participation of young people in the creation and implementation of regional innovation projects



### Importance:

#### Why is the participation of young people necessary?

Rural depopulation is an increasing challenge across Europe. The relative remoteness and limited economic structures of rural areas make their economies particularly vulnerable to the influences of globalisation trends and competitive technological developments prevailing in urban areas. While population decline necessitates new models for service provision, this can be a chance to design and test new ways for societal and economic organisation of processes, e.g. how services of general interests are delivered. The participation of younger generations in the creation of knowledge and innovative ideas can be an important driving force in facilitating change in rural areas. Yet, young adults and students often move to larger urban centres in search of better educational, employment and entrepreneurial opportunities even though they would prefer to stay in their home regions. The establishment of networks between educational and research institutions in cities, businesses, and local authorities in rural areas can assist innovation and benefit both sides. It is recommended that networks be accompanied by education programmes and practical exchange projects.



### Added value:

#### What are the expected results?

The involvement of younger generations in regional innovation projects can help rural areas build sustainable local communities. It can promote the development and implementation of new ideas, which address local needs and demands. The cooperation of young people with the local authorities and businesses can promote changes in traditional patterns of problem solving. It also gives young people the possibility to participate in decision-making processes and train their entrepreneurial skills, which can motivate them to develop new businesses in rural areas.



### Good practice example: How does it work in practice?

#### 'GREEN KNOWLEDGE PORTAL TWENTE', TWENTE REGION

To support the realisation of innovative rural development projects, the governments and educational institutions in the Twente Region set up the Green Knowledge Portal Twente. Established in 2009, the Knowledge Portal represents a quadruple-helix cooperation network, which facilitates the integration of scientific knowledge and innovation processes. The Knowledge Portal connects practical questions from regional stakeholders to students and researchers from different educational backgrounds. In this way, it gives students and researchers the opportunity to learn in practice, to find out and value the potentials of the region and to shape its future sustainable development. At the same time, it has helped local governments and businesses to receive new

ideas and solutions for local needs and to connect to future employees. The Knowledge Portal builds clusters of regional actors from both urban and rural territories in Twente. Since its initiation, it has supported the development and realisation of more than 100 innovation projects and networks. Promising ideas are tested in living labs and scaled up in different parts of the Region. This is the case with the "Green and Edible City" project, a partnership for local food production in Twente's cities. The cooperation, including new educational programmes, grew into a living lab for sustainable management of natural resources in the Region.

 <https://www.groenekennispoort.nl/>

## Support demand-based research in living labs and open innovation networks involving urban and rural actors



### Importance:

#### Why are living labs and open innovation networks necessary?

In peri-urban and rural areas, the local community often plays a dominant role in fostering entrepreneurial processes and innovation. These areas are less knowledge intensive than their urban counterparts, as they often do not host universities or other knowledge institutions, and their business community is spatially dispersed. Businesses often draw upon local knowledge, internal resources and social networks to find innovative solutions. Rural businesses can compensate for their remoteness by relying on knowledge linkages and networks beyond their region. It is recommended that local innovation ecosystems in peri-urban and rural areas promote an open innovation networking environment. In particular, problem-driven experimentation in real-life contexts and quadruple helix projects, which involve the local community in the development and testing of products and services, should be facilitated. The establishment of networks, where businesses and research institutions partner with end-users, is recommended as a crucial step in closing the gap between research and the market, and to foster the transfer of scientific discovery to implementation.



### Added value:

#### What are the expected results?

Demand-based research in living labs and quadruple helix projects can support the generation of new services, products and technologies. Open innovation processes can contribute to better understanding the future demand of goods and products in urban and rural areas. Enterprises in rural areas can benefit from the inclusion in open innovation networks, which have strong relations with city-based parties and knowledge institutions. In this way, enterprises can better utilise the local economic potential and can adjust their business models to changing market dynamics. This can nurture a new culture of innovation in rural environments and stronger market connections with urban areas. Additionally, it can offer research institutions a different role, namely hand-in-hand support for local challenges.



### Good practice example: How does it work in practice?

#### 'AMSTERDAM INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED METROPOLITAN SOLUTIONS', AMSTERDAM

The Amsterdam Institute for Advanced Metropolitan Solutions is a public-private scientific institute established in 2014. It is a cooperation initiative between several universities, cities and businesses from the Netherlands. The Institute aims to support industry, government and academia in designing solutions for social, economic and environmental challenges in the Metropolitan Region of Amsterdam. The Region of Amsterdam is highly urbanised and experiences issues related to mobility, local food production and waste management, which could be addressed through improved cooperation with rural areas. The focus of the Institute's activi-

ties lies in the co-creation of innovative ideas in living labs, which are organised in different parts of the Region. One of the living labs aims to support localised food systems in the Metropolitan Region. The lab's activities look to improve the connections between food consumption and production in rural and urban areas. A series of bottom-up innovations are planned to investigate networks in the regional agricultural market to cultivate healthier food consumption patterns, reduce food waste and lower carbon emissions.

 <https://www.ams-institute.org/>

## Support decentralised provision of research infrastructure and entrepreneurial services in peri-urban and rural areas



### Importance:

#### Why is decentralised research infrastructure necessary?

Knowledge-intensive entrepreneurial activities are often launched and developed in urban cores, where universities, research institutions and innovation centres are located. Small businesses in peri-urban and rural areas often face challenges to establish networks with suppliers, to find employees and working space, and to receive financial grants. The limited business services provided by the market often need to be complemented by public sector support schemes. Small and medium-sized cities have particular potential to support entrepreneurial activities if they provide network opportunities, technical facilities and training infrastructure for businesses. The establishment of university facilities or thematic research centres in small and medium-sized cities can offer practical education training, research services and innovation labs. It is recommended that research infrastructure in smaller towns be complemented by locally-established start-up centres and services for entrepreneurial support.



### Added value:

#### What are the expected results?

The provision of research infrastructure, start-up support and entrepreneurial services in peri-urban and rural areas can assist the creation of start-ups and job opportunities outside urban centres and can bring new dynamics in the local business environment. It can facilitate the launch of new and alternative business models such as mobile or seasonal businesses, which adjust to the specificities of the local context. Furthermore, it can support the development of existing enterprises by providing access to expert support. And it can facilitate the establishment of networks between secondary and higher education, research institutions and the market, to develop a regional entrepreneurial hotspot.




### Good practice example: How does it work in practice?

#### 'START-UP CENTRES IN SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED CITIES', LÜNEBURG REGION

Innovation and entrepreneurial activities in Lüneburg Region are facilitated by start-up centres, such as the "E.Novum Centre" in Lüneburg and the "Centre for Business, Start-ups and Innovation" in the city of Buchholz. The centres are operated by the Municipal Business Development Agencies and support start-ups in their initial establishment years with affordable co-working spaces and rooms for events and networking. They organise open workshops, regular discussion tables and consultations, both for local start-ups and established SMEs, and connect participating enterprises with the local business

and research community. The mix of trade and industry branches in the centres and the advisory services on site have cultivated entrepreneurial projects, which have gained momentum in rural areas. Since the establishment of the centres, several of the start-ups have expanded their operations and moved to their own business premises in the Region. This stimulated the creation of new jobs and the further development of new products and services.

 <http://enovum-lueneburg.de/das-e-novum/>



## Strengthen and institutionalise innovation partnerships and thematic cluster co-operation to complete regional value chains

### Importance:

#### Why are institutionalised innovation partnerships necessary?

The production of goods and services includes a full range of activities, which are often fragmented in various segments and geographical locations. The competitiveness of goods and services closely relates to the existence of functioning links between the different steps of the process – from the conceptualisation of the product to its final consumption, i.e. along the whole value chain. The integration of local enterprises in markets and value chains is crucial for the development and the re-regionalisation of the local economy. The regions can support the competitiveness of their core economic sectors by improving coordination and cooperation between stakeholders along the value chains of these sectors. It is recommended that regions provide platforms such as cluster management, which work to complete the value chains in a way that they connect urban and rural supply and demand, while taking into consideration environmental impact. Different urban-rural cooperation formats can support the flows of agricultural and other services from rural-based enterprises to urban markets and vice versa. They can facilitate the access of smaller companies to the local (short supply chains) or international (long supply

chains) markets and ensure them timely knowledge about changing market conditions and customers' demands.

### Added value:

#### What are the expected results?

Institutionalised urban-rural cooperation structures along value chains can bring new impulses for the regional economy. They can provide a formalised cooperation framework for all parties along the value chain, to better connect producers and consumers and to improve a more sustainable supply-demand matching in rural and peripheral areas. Cluster managements and sectoral innovation networks, for example, can support local businesses to improve their competitiveness and efficiency and can promote the creation of synergies between rural- and urban-based enterprises. Additionally, they can provide know-how and the setting for longer-term collaborations as such structures are not bounded to the duration of a single project. Public authorities' support of cooperation structures can guarantee a higher level of security for the private sector, as well as better alignment of local economic activities with existing policy and funding instruments.



### Good practice example: How does it work in practice?

#### 'AGRONUTRITIONAL COOPERATION OF THE REGION OF CENTRAL MACEDONIA', REGION OF CENTRAL MACEDONIA

The non-profit organisation "Agronutritional Cooperation of the Region of Central Macedonia" was founded in 2016 under the guidance of the Regional Government. It is a joint cooperation between local companies, chambers of commerce, educational and research institutions and six municipalities from the Region of Central Macedonia as well as the Regional Government, which holds 47% of the organisation's shares. The cooperation serves as an advisory body to the Region regarding policies in the agri-food sector. Within the partnership, the key stakeholders from the regional agri-food value chain can propose, design and implement policies in the agri-food sector. Further-

more, the cooperation aims to create a network for the promotion of local food products. Through a series of information campaigns, workshops and roundtable discussions, the partners seek to extend the knowledge and position of rural producers in the regional market, to help them overcome market barriers and to guarantee food quality and security. Additionally, they initiate joint actions, such as the "Macedonian Cuisine" (i.e. inter-sectoral cooperation between the service, agricultural and tourism sectors) and the "Product of Macedonian Land" (i.e. certification services for the promotion of local products).

 <http://agromacedonia.gr/>

## Support cross-sectoral urban-rural partnerships in the fields of regional smart specialisation

### ! Importance:

#### Why are cross-sectoral partnerships necessary for smart specialisation?

For decades, traditional industries have dominated economies of regions, generating the largest share of employment and economic growth. In the course of industrial transformation, many regions have experienced decline in traditional sectors and a change in the economic make-up of their territory. The diversification of the economic base in rural areas is particularly challenging, due to the lower density of economic activities established in rural areas. Economic modernisation requires a change, or at least the evolution, of traditional working practices, including the development of new entrepreneurial skills. Cross-sectoral initiatives can be a vehicle for the transformation of the traditional economic sectors with regional importance, as they support the pooling of resources, capacity building, and innovation. It is recommended that regions facilitate initiatives, which catalyse public-private and cross-sectoral interactions in the fields of regional smart specialisation. Cooperation activities will support the concentration of resources and the exploitation of underused regional economic potentials.

### 📈 Added value:

#### What are the expected results?

The shift from clearly sectoral approaches to cross-sectoral cooperation can help regions to bridge the gap between urban and rural networks. Traditional economic activities in rural areas, such as agricultural and food production, can benefit from interaction with tourism, cultural, creative and ICT sectors, which can access new markets and can provide more demand-oriented services. Consequently, cross-sectoral urban-rural partnerships can help identify and launch new business niches in both urban and rural areas. They can generate collaborations that could translate into new products and working processes, and increase the competitiveness of the regional economy.



### 📌 Good practice example: How does it work in practice?

#### 'AGRODESIGN CLUSTER THESSALONIKI', REGION OF CENTRAL MACEDONIA

The AgroDesign Cluster is an innovative cooperation model, which connects agri-food with cultural and creative sectors in the Region of Central Macedonia. The Cluster was established as a bottom-up initiative of the creative community in Thessaloniki. Through its activities, the Cluster supports agri-food producers to access graphic designers and other professionals from the creative sector, and to jointly develop innovative market-oriented services, applications and products. Since its initiation in 2014, the Cluster has organised a series of agri-food exhibitions, open lectures and related matching events between agri-food producers and designers. As a result of these events, more than 200

new packages and marketing strategies for traditional local products were developed. The results assisted producers from rural areas to better advertise their products and to explore new markets within and outside the Region. The cooperation has fostered innovation in the traditional agri-food sector, which is one of the main fields of smart specialisation in Central Macedonia. In the long-term, the activities of the Cluster intend to support the establishment of a regional hub of creative agri-food entrepreneurship.

🌐 <http://creativityplatform.gr/en/activities/agrodesign/>

## Operationalise urban-rural synergies to unlock circular economy potentials

### ! Importance:

#### Why are urban-rural synergies necessary for the transition to a circular economy?

Current production and consumption processes predominantly follow the linear “take-make-waste” model. To reduce waste and enhance resource efficiency, regions should promote a fundamental shift in businesses and consumption practices. Circularity offers a new way of organising the economy, which is based on the use of waste streams as resources for new products. The transition to a circular economy requires innovations in technology, logistics, working practices as well as regulatory changes (on EU, national and local governments level). In particular, regions can support the transition to a circular economy by optimising regional material cycles and promoting short supply chains. To do so, regions need to establish stronger collaboration between urban and rural areas. Urban-rural partnerships are important for the development of more region-oriented logistics services and the understanding of the different types of material flows. It is recommended that regions support new forms of collaboration between public authorities and research institutes, businesses and citizens as final consumers, which result in new circular economy solutions that use the potential of endogenous assets, underexploited or wasted resources. Regions can facilitate

circular initiatives by incentivising the piloting and scaling up of circular business models. They can set up mechanisms to monitor resource usage in the region and can develop an evidence-based roadmap that seeks to optimise the resource usage and material flows between urban and rural areas. This also paves the path for the realisation of pilot experimenting in practice for the realisation along the Technology Readiness Levels framework that is from idea (lab) to concept (pilot) to business (product).

### 📈 Added value:

#### What are the expected results?

The circular economy is a key instrument for reducing climate change. Proper resource and waste management strategies can achieve a significant reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. By supporting urban-rural partnerships, regions can stimulate the creation of new regional cycles, which are economically attractive and respect the local natural environment. This can ease the burden of waste in both urban and rural areas and can support the

development of business sectors with strong regional roots. Circular economy presents businesses an opportunity to expand into new areas such as refurbishment, collection logistics and remanufacturing of product components. Caring for products through repair, maintenance, upgrading and remanufacturing is more

labour-intensive than mining and manufacturing in highly automated facilities, so in a more circular economy additional jobs will emerge. By developing new circular economy solutions enterprises can establish new service based business models, can participate in new green markets and can generate employment.



### Good practice example: How does it work in practice?

#### ‘GRO TOGETHER’, AMSTERDAM REGION

Gro Together is an innovative company from Amsterdam which recycles green organics and uses them for the development of new products. With its activities, the company effectively uses an organic rest stream as a resource for their products and also supports the transition from animal to more plant-based protein nutrition. Gro Together has specialised in different types of snack products made from mushrooms. The company grows the mushrooms on disposed coffee grounds

collected from bars and restaurants in Amsterdam and its surroundings. The participating bars and restaurants collect and donate their old coffee grounds to Gro Together which then deliver the new products to the same businesses. This is a future oriented business model whose success depends on a critical mass of participating bars and restaurants from the Metropolitan Region Amsterdam.

🌐 <https://gro-together.com/>

## Complement existing policy documents with Formal Agreements for Territorial Governance



### Importance:

#### Why are Formal Agreements for Territorial Governance necessary?

The sustainable development of urban-rural areas requires inclusive territorial governance, which coordinates the relations between the various tiers and scales of government and integrates local communities and enterprises. In many regions, there is a need to facilitate the interactions between urban and rural areas and to negotiate the interest of public and private actors. Formal governance agreements can support the establishment of a common agenda for urban and rural policies, even though boundaries between rural and urban areas are flexible across different fields of action and re-defined over time. They can set the frame for an urban-rural approach to economic development based on joint development strategies. It is recommended that regions complement their existing set of territorial governance mechanisms with formalised agreements, which support functionally integrated urban-rural development. Regions should improve integration between complementary assets of urban and rural areas and encourage urban and rural areas to jointly manage common challenges.



### Added value:

#### What are the expected results?

Formal Agreements for Territorial Governance can support the establishment of a sustainable model of urban-rural development, which is based on local needs and priorities. Coordinating development perspectives of the city and its surroundings is an important step towards overcoming policy fragmentation and aligning financial resources. The private sector plays an important role in connecting the economic development perspectives of urban and rural areas. Its inclusion in local governance processes can support regions to reinforce and diversify the peri-urban and rural economy.



### Good practice example: How does it work in practice?

#### 'MILAN RURAL METROPOLIS', LOMBARDY REGION

In recent years, the Milan Metropolitan Area has witnessed extensive urbanisation processes and urban sprawl, which has placed significant pressure on settlement and infrastructure development. The resultant effects are particularly obvious in Milan's peri-urban and rural territories, which are an important development resource for the agricultural, recreational and tourism sectors in Lombardy Region. To preserve the rural character of Milan's surroundings and to secure the interconnectivity of the urban agglomeration with its hinterlands, a new institutional agreement for local development was signed in 2015. The agreement, "Milan Rural Metropolis", is a joint initiative of Lombardy Region, the Municipality of Milan, the Metropolitan Authority and Rural Districts (clusters of local enterprises). It is the result of a participatory decision-making

process, which sought to combine the interests and development perspectives of the city and its rural surroundings and to develop common thematic and territorial objectives, which support integrated urban and rural development in the Metropolitan Area. All parties agreed on a shared and coordinated Action Plan with seven priority axes for future territorial and economic development. The actions implemented under each priority axis are facilitated by a thematic technical group comprising public and private actors. The technical group "Innovation for enterprises" works to support the preservation and diversification of the rural economy.



<https://www.milanometropoliturale.regione.lombardia.it/wps/portal/site/milanometropoliturale>

## Include the concept of urban-rural partnerships in RIS3 processes and ERDF Regional Operational Programmes



### Importance:

#### Why are urban-rural partnerships necessary in RIS3 Strategies?

Regional Smart Specialisation Strategies (RIS3) are important documents which guide innovation support activities in regions. Currently, the challenges and potentials of peri-urban and rural areas are seldom addressed in these strategies. To valorise the innovation potentials in peri-urban and rural areas, it is recommended that regions acknowledge and integrate urban-rural partnerships in the sectors of regional specialisation and promote both sectoral and cross-sectoral cooperation projects and initiatives. The importance of urban-rural partnerships can be introduced in specialisations and RIS3 priorities in the course of RIS3 monitoring or updating processes. Hence, regions can introduce financial incentives within their ERDF Regional Operational Programmes (ROPs) to support the establishment and operation of cooperation networks between urban and rural areas. There exists no one-size-fits-all approach for inclusion of urban-rural aspects in RIS3 or ERDF Programmes since European regions have different characteristics and follow context-specific strategic priorities.



### Added value:

#### What are the expected results?

By including the urban-rural concept in RIS3 processes and in ERDF ROPs, regions can create formal framework conditions to support cooperation activities on their territory. They can provide more targeted financial support for urban-rural cooperation initiatives and can at the same time harness the potential of actors from the regional specialisation fields, who would otherwise not be addressed from existing innovation funding schemes. By including urban-rural cooperation in their ROPs, less developed regions or regions with lower private capital rates can benefit from creating spillovers and synergies between regional priorities.



### Good practice example: How does it work in practice?

#### 'REGIONAL OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME OF CENTRAL MACEDONIA', REGION OF CENTRAL MACEDONIA

Economic activities in Central Macedonia have been traditionally concentrated in the largest city, Thessaloniki. For years, the innovation strategy of the Region has rarely considered the potential of rural areas. Past research and development activities have been characterised by high public participation but with limited business orientation. To promote a more direct focus of research activities on local needs and to support rural enterprises in their innovation efforts, the Region launched a new One-Stop Liaison Office. The Liaison Office was established in 2019 as part of the flagship initiative "Innovation and Entrepreneurship Support Innovation Mechanism" of the Regional Operation Programme of Central Macedonia. The

Mechanism serves as a framework, within which the RIS3 strategy is monitored, evaluated and improved. The Liaison Office is subordinate to the Mechanism and has been established during the updating of the RIS3 strategy. The call for the establishment of the new Mechanism explicitly specified that the One-Stop Liaison Office should provide services to boost urban-rural collaborations in the Region. Through the Liaison Office, producers from the rural areas can identify funding opportunities for their activities, can receive support for the preparation of business plans and can investigate cooperation opportunities with partners within and outside of the Region.



**RUMORE**  
Rural-Urban Partnerships Motivating  
Regional Economies

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OF CENTRAL MACEDONIA  
ON BEHALF OF  
THE REGION OF CENTRAL MACEDONIA**

 **Regione  
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 **City of  
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Twente**



# Project Summary

RUMORE improves regional innovation policies and capacities by fostering rural-urban cooperation and partnerships. The project enhances the delivery of innovation by improving innovation chains between rural and urban stakeholders and by supporting the better use of synergies between urban and rural areas. By integrating the potentials of rural and urban areas into smart specialisation strategies RUMORE facilitates the better implementation of these strategies and of the cluster policies of the participating regions. As a result, the project strengthens the innovation capacity of the regions, supports their sustainable development and contributes to territorial cohesion.