



International Policy Roundtable | Zoom Webinar

Social Entrepreneurship and Social Innovations in European Rural Regions – Recommendations for Policy Makers

23 September 2020



Social Entrepreneurship in Structurally Weak Rural Regions:
Analysing Innovative Troubleshooters in Action

ruraction.eu



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Registration

Please register for the Policy Roundtable by **21 September 2020** by sending an email to Rebecca.Roggisch@leibniz-irs.de in order to receive a link to the Zoom conference. No fees are charged for the conference.

Organisers

Prof. Dr. Gabriela Christmann | IRS
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The background of the policy roundtable is the EU-funded project "Social Entrepreneurship in Structurally Weak Rural Regions: Analysing Innovative Troubleshooters in Action RurAction" which started in December 2016 and will be finished at the end of the year.

The project is based on the observation that a downward spiral has been set in motion in many structurally weak rural regions of Europe in the past decades. Particularly, the economic and financial crisis starting in 2007/2008 has become a burden in some European regions. In the past, ever more rural inhabitants were leaving the countryside. A consequence was a deficit in the required labour force and skilled workers, leading to a further deterioration in the economic prospects of such areas. This often makes it difficult to break the downward spiral and reverse its effects. Currently, the Corona pandemic will certainly bring along new challenges.

In the face of such challenges, actors in some parts of the countryside have become active and are taking things into their own hands in order to improve their situation. Several have even founded small companies, creating workplaces and an economic basis for themselves and others. In many instances it is the case that actors leave behind more well-trodden paths and develop novel approaches in the search for solutions. This is what we call social innovations. In some cases, actors have found support among fellow campaigners who have set themselves the goal of promoting innovative problem-solving approaches and, once tried and tested, of professionally supporting creative processes and grass-roots initiatives, as well as business start-ups. The talk is of social entrepreneurs.

Meanwhile policy makers build their hopes on the 'transformative power' of socially innovative solutions and social entrepreneurship. The European Commission in particular, aims at empowering people and driving change through social innovations. There are, however, still many questions about the conditions in which social innovation emerges in rural areas, how its potential can be developed, and what support strategies can be used to assist it.

The RurAction project aimed at tackling these questions by empirically analysing innovative initiatives in the countryside and by understanding critical junctures that could pose a threat to their further progress as well as favourable factors that are needed for the creation, implementation and spatial spread of innovative solutions. The findings led to recommendations for action concerning future support and particularly for funding strategies in this field. In the policy roundtable we will discuss these recommendations with policy makers.

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- 09:30 * Logging in at the virtual platform of the webinar
in the background: the RurAction Exhibition slide show
* Please note: All times correspond to Brussels Time.
- 09:50 **Welcome and Introduction**
Gabriela Christmann | Leibniz Institute for Research on Society and Space (IRS), Germany
- 10:00 **Essentials from the RurAction Handbook for Practitioners**
Researchers from the RurAction project
15 mins + 15 mins discussion with policy makers
moderated by Georgios Chatzichristos | University of the Aegean, Greece
- 10:30 **Essentials from the RurAction Policy Paper**
Gabriela Christmann | IRS, Scientific Coordinator of the RurAction project
15 mins + 15 mins discussion with policy makers
moderated by Georgios Chatzichristos | University of the Aegean, Greece
- 11:00 **Short statements about what social enterprises need most from policy makers for the implementation and spread of social innovations**
Social Enterprises from the RurAction project
each 3 mins, in sum approx. 10 mins
moderated by Gabriela Christmann | IRS
- Martin Hollinetz | Otelo, Austria
 - Clara Lourenço | ADC Moura, Portugal
 - Catherine Smyth/Pádraig Casey | Ballyhoura Development, Ireland
- 11:10 Break | in the background: RurAction Exhibition slide show

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- 11:30 **Statements and responses**
Invited Policy Makers
each 10 mins
moderated by Gabriela Christmann | IRS
- **Orsolya Frizon-Somogyi** | European Commission, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI)
 - **Eleftherios Stavropoulos** | European Commission, Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG Regio)
 - **Anastasios Perimenis** | European LEADER Association for Rural Development, representative of Greece
 - **Prof. em. Leonidas Papakonstantinidis** | Expert for Rural Development Programmes in Greece
- 12:10 **Discussion between policy makers, RurAction's social enterprises and RurAction's researchers**
moderated by Thilo Lang | Leibniz Institut für Länderkunde, Leipzig, Germany
- 12:50 **Wrap up**
by Nikolaos Nagopoulos | University of the Aegean, Greece & Gabriela Christmann | IRS