

ANNEX 2 – DOCUMENTS RELATED TO THE 14 CASE STUDY MATERIAL AS A PART OF THE BANK OF CASE STUDIES (TO BE UPLOADED TO THE RUR'UP DIGITAL PLATFORM)

2.C - 7 Cases on Innovative training and support for local actors working in Peripheral Rural Areas (related to material addressed to professional training – advisors)

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RUR'UP CASE STUDY MATERIAL: GREECE

GUIDE MATERIAL FOR ADVISORS / FARMER TRAINING

USING RUR'UP CASE STUDY MATERIALS

1 INTRODUCTION

The RUR'UP Erasmus+ project

The project titled "**Innovative education for sustainable development in peripheral rural areas**" **RUR'UP** received a highly competitive funding from Erasmus + 2020 program [1].

The transnational project involves the cooperation seven of European universities [2] and other organizations active in education and advisory Institutes. It will support their cooperation in the field of innovative interventions for the sustainable development of mountainous and other marginalized rural areas, which are often described as 'peripheral areas'. The participating partners have produced and shared a variety of innovative educational materials and carried out learning activities specifically training, and awareness-raising specifically targeted to such areas.

Why important? Peripheral areas have a critical role in achieving rural vitality across European rural regions and contribute to their sustainable development that maintains and enhances environment, rural heritage and biodiversity while improving socio-economic conditions.

The project:

- evaluate what skills and competencies university graduates need in order to find employment and succeed well in jobs
- produce academic material focusing on the needs for sustainable development of peripheral areas
- engage educators into training in novel teaching methods
- organise an international summer school with educators, researchers, and students from Europe.

[1] shortly about Erasmus+(Strategic Partnerships KA2, Sector Higher Education)

[2] The project is led by the University of Thessaly, Laboratory of Rural Space (Greece)

Other partners are:

- CIHEAM Research Center - IAM Montpellier (France)
- University of Helsinki (Finland)
- Mayo GALWAY Institute (Ireland)
- NAPOCA University (Romania)
- OSJIEKU University (Croatia)
- University of National and World Economy (Bulgaria)

Also a number of associated partners across Europe, consisting of local authorities, NGO's and local agencies, will be involved.

This short guide and associated links have been developed for use in farm advisor and/or farmer training events. This material is targeted at advisors/farmer training events which are aimed at increasing their capacity and enhance their contribution to sustainable development in peripheral rural areas. The events should take a place-based approach (i.e. focused on a defined geographic location in a rural area; focused on collaboration and constitute part of the long term sustainable development of the area). Trainers (advisors) can use the material as an example of the process followed in order to:

1. Improve understanding of the peripheral rural area.
2. Identify innovation needs in a specific context (solutions appropriate for identified challenges in the peripheral rural area).
3. Provide examples of a range of broad innovation types as inspiration for advisors/farmers in peripheral rural areas.
4. Provide examples of the participatory approach in a specific context (applicable in multi-actor activities in the peripheral rural area).

The training material is designed as a practical case study of a peripheral rural area and the advisors/farmers should be guided through the innovation process and participatory approach that was followed in the case. The training material is presented in three parts in section 2 of this guide.



2 TRAINING ACTIVITY AND MATERIAL FOR THE MOUNT PINDOS PRA, GREECE

2.1 Understanding the Peripheral Rural Area

In this section the trainer will guide and facilitate the participants in gaining a broader understanding of their area. The case study of *mountain of Pindos in Thessaly (Greece)* summarises its social, environmental, and economic characteristics together with an assessment of its strengths and vulnerabilities in terms of sustainable development. The trainer can choose to concentrate on the case study example in the training or can use it as an example to analyse/discuss with the participants the current situation pertaining to the peripheral rural area in which the training is based.

Key thematic areas for the analysis/discussion are:

- Environmental (e.g. climate, soil, water, land resources, etc.)

- Valuable biodiversity network with 5 Natura2000 zones, with the habitats of most threatened bird species creating a mosaic of diverse landscape and environmental value and important flora.
- The springs of two of the most important rivers of mainland Greece (Acheloos and Pinios river) lay within the study area. Additionally, the artificial Tavropos Lake (Limni Plastira) lies within the study area, being a separate protected area of its own.

- Economic (e.g. agricultural key facts and figures; farm types and sizes, etc.)

- Vast number of agricultural holdings (N=4,084) with a big number of them being of mixed type, using traditional practices while livestock breeding is characterized as extensive and sometimes transhumant. The livestock systems are utilizing the local breeds and pastures of the area.
- Despite the big number of holdings, abandonment is evident. New entrants shift towards sheep breeding, cattle, and mixed holdings and partially towards new dynamic cultivations, while the number of arable holdings continues to decline. On the same time agritourism and provision of service gain momentum within parts of the study area (mainly Pertouli and Lake Plastiras).

- Social (e.g. population size; main towns and villages, etc.)

- Demographic decline throughout the last decades, with approximately 20% of active farmers being above 65 years old. The population lives in approximately 300 settlements, which are spatially dispersed, and the basic services are provided in towns outside the limits of the study area.
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- The diaspora plays an important role, with landowners living in cities and towns (Karditsa, Trikala, etc) while the transhumant farmers have an even closer link with the area.

- Institutional (e.g. interactions with state agencies or government departments; supports available/not available, etc.)

- Administrative changes, mainly in local government led in the establishment of seven extended municipalities within the boundaries of the same regional authority. At the same time, the existence of a many institutional actors (trans-municipal, development agencies, NGO's) could possibly cover the lack of participatory land planning since farm cooperatives are not present in the area.
- Diaspora through its cultural associations plays an important role in managing the cultural capital of the area. Additionally, they act as the market promoters and consumers of the area's agricultural products. It is evident, that they could further act as an intermediate actor for the land management and the strategic planning of the area.

A possible exercise might involve comparing and contrasting the case with your rural area as a lead in for a facilitated discussion with participants on the strengths and vulnerabilities of their area.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND COMPLEMENTARY MATERIALS:

- RUR'UP BASELINE ASSESSMENT FOR THE MOUNT PINDOS, GREECE ([link](#))
- RUR'UP PARTICIPATORY PROCESS FOR THE MOUNT PINDOS, GREECE ([link](#))

2.2 Definition of the vision for the PRA and identification of Innovation Needs

In this section the trainer will guide and facilitate the participants in gaining a broader understanding of the innovation needs of their area. Section 1 summarises the characteristics of the PRA together with an assessment of its strengths and vulnerabilities. This section takes the next step by exploring the shared vision for a sustainable future of the PRA and identifying broad innovation needs for ensuring the maintenance and evolution of the Peripheral Rural Area towards sustainable development. Participants will be introduced to the vision for the PRA case study selected and broad types of innovation needed to realise this vision. The trainer can choose to concentrate on the case study example in the training or can use it as an example to discuss with the participants a vision for the peripheral rural area in which the training is based. Key areas of focus for this section are:

- Exploring the vision for the future sustainable development of the PRA

The sustainable reconquest of the region: building on participatory governance to better manage and promote the HNVfarming heritage

The vision of the Pindos mt includes the inclusion of the environmental dimension in the development process of the area accompanied by an integrated approach in revitalizing the local economy. In order for this to happen, a two-fold proposal is supported. The first phase includes the spatial management of the area, with respect to its natural and cultural heritage, supplemented by the diaspora communities, mostly to its speciality production (i.e. cheese-making). Therefore, the management of pastures is set as a high priority.

On the same level, an innovative horizontal governance scheme is preferred, which includes a multi-actor approach of the social, economic, political, and institutional actors not only from public but also private sector. The proposed cooperative scheme requires the existence of an integrated plan for the area's development process in order to effectively manage future depreciation of the area's environmental capital but also to prevent intensification and/or abandonment of farming.

- Four broad types of innovation required in PRA

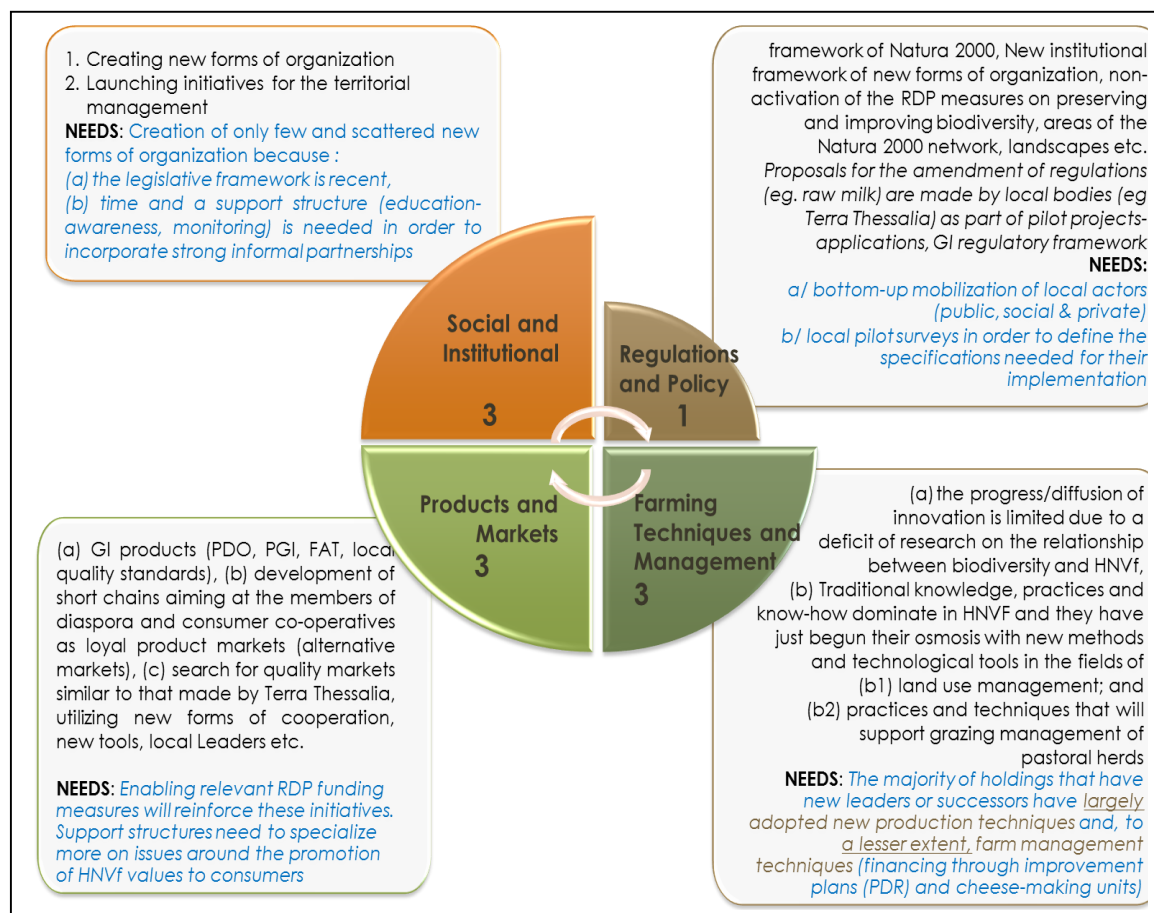
In this section the trainer introduces the participants to the broad types of innovation (case study material provided in link below). Innovation needs are explored across 4 broad themes to address the sustainable development of the peripheral rural areas:

- 1) Social and Institutional Innovation.
- 2) Regulatory Framework and Policy Innovation.
- 3) Farm Techniques and Management Innovation.
- 4) Products and Markets Innovation.

Categorising innovations in this way is intended to build a broader understanding of the range of innovations and match these to the needs of a particular area.

It should be communicated that these themes are often mutually supporting, and many successful innovations are part of a wider initiatives where different innovations are combined. Some innovations serve as foundations and are part of the creation of an enabling environment which fosters innovations under other themes e.g. rural community organisation within a favourable policy environment creating the space where new farming techniques are applied and farm diversification and product development opportunities are created.

- Innovation needs assessment



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND COMPLEMENTARY MATERIALS:

-RUR'UP PARTICIPATORY PROCESS AND THE IDENTIFICATION OF SOLUTIONS AND INNOVATIONS FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MOUNT PINDOS, GREECE ([link](#))

2.3 Examples of broad innovation types plus Innovation fiches

- Examples of Innovations

1. The Participatory Guarantee System, which belongs in the 'Products and Markets' category, contributes to the promotion of effectively managed territorial resources and local products based on innovative spatial representation technologies, multimedia etc. Through this system, the products introduced in the market are located and guaranteed through PGS' tools.
2. The proposed Territorial Cluster, belonging to the category 'Social and Institutional' includes livestock farmers and other actors, whereas the introduction of common products falls in the 'Products and Markets' type of innovation, while the services that are offered by the cooperative structure cover the theme 'Farm Techniques and Management'.

3 RUR'UP TRAINING MATERIALS FOR ADVISOR/FARMER TRAINING: GUIDES AND TIPS

- Track local leaders who can suggest actors that carry local knowledge on the area's strengths and vulnerabilities and are open to share useful data and participate in the area's vision.
- Be aware of the need to be inclusive in your selection of actors. Use criteria like gender, age, origin, educational level, profession, farm type and size etc.
- Form small groups, at least at the beginning, with participants that have common interests, close disciplinary among themselves and/or other characteristics (age, origin, educational level etc.).
- Propose an initial agenda, which will be loose, especially in preliminary meetings of these working groups, but share at the start of each meeting the desired goals that this will have.
- Make sure you accommodate each participant to freely express his/her opinion by being fair in sharing time among them. Avoid appropriation of time by powerful and/or loud voices.
- Leave adequate time at the end for summarizing the discussion and clearly define any further actions.
- Make sure clear minutes of each meeting are being kept (handwritten, typed, voice recorded), and a report on the meeting- working group outcome is communicated to the plenary e.g. by working group facilitators
- Bear in mind that if preliminary meeting working groups do not come to a desired end – i.e. common approval of further actions- to have a second one, shortly after with a stricter agenda.
- After the first round of meetings, the total assembly of small groups follows in order for collective decisions to be made. Therefore, the agenda and goals have to differ from the preliminary ones, as they are not of sectoral interest but carry territorial development value.
- The facilitator should present findings of the preliminary meetings at the start and proposed actions of the small groups.
- Try to find common ground among the vision of each group in order to build a collective one for the area (territorial vision).
- Assign among participants actions and tasks and formulate if necessary, specially dedicated groups towards the fulfillment of the territorial vision.
- Assign person within the team, for further coordination and implementation tracking of the territorial vision, as he/she has not need to be the advisor.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND COMPLEMENTARY MATERIALS:

-RUR'UP INNOVATION EXCHANGE, TRANSFER AND DISSEMINATION FOR THE MOUNT PINDOS
([link](#))

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RUR'UP CASE STUDY MATERIAL: SOUTHERN FINLAND

GUIDE MATERIAL FOR ADVISORS / FARMER TRAINING

USING RUR'UP CASE STUDY MATERIALS

1 INTRODUCTION

The RUR'UP Erasmus+ project

RUR'up project, co-funded by the Erasmus+ European Commission, has the objective to enhance existing knowledge of peripheral rural areas (PRA) (1) and develop new knowledge through innovative learning processes for high education (HE) students in collaboration between researchers, teachers and other stakeholders such as farmers.

The purpose of the project is to endorse students with professional competences valued in the labor market of PRA regions to shorten the gap between academia and practice. The intention is to strengthen the collaboration between HE and potential regional employers towards sustainable development of PRA.

RUR'up project builds on a previous Horizon 2020 project, HNV-Link, a network of partnering institutions in relation to PRA across Europe. PRA cover more than 30% of Utilized Agricultural Area (UAA) in Europe. PRA sustain environmental benefits such as biodiversity, cultural heritage and support socio-economic development of the territory. Understanding such benefits while recognising the needs and opportunities (innovations) offered by PRA contributes to sustainable development of rural areas.

The expected deliveries of the project, in open learning material format, are:

- IO1) The assessment of the education needs and gaps for the sustainable development of the EU peripheral rural areas
- IO2) E-learning course
- IO3) Bank of Case Studies
- IO4) Digital Teaching Platform and Digital Learning Resource
- IO5) Syllabus and materials for Intensive Study Activity
- IO6) Reflective report on the approach and methodology adopted

(1) PRA are areas that face structural weaknesses due to agro-environmental constraints, natural physical characteristics, especially in mountain areas. Very often, these areas are in protected areas, natural parks, Natura 2000 sites, among others. These areas have specific characteristics in terms of agricultural practices and activities supporting the conservation of areas rich in biodiversity (eg agro-pastoralism). At the same time, bear witness to great value in terms of natural and cultural heritage and contribute to the socio-economic development of the territory, among others. These are areas with a set of characteristics to which professionals need to be trained and made aware. Many of these areas are recognized as High Natural Value (HNV) areas, HNV agricultural systems represent forms of agriculture intimately associated with rich biodiversity, through complex interactions between species and non-intensive agricultural practices (Andersen et al. 2003).

This short guide and associated links have been developed for use in farm advisor or farmer training events. This material is targeted at advisors/farmer training events which are aimed at increasing their capacity and enhance their contribution to sustainable development in peripheral rural areas. The events should take a place-based approach (i.e. focused on a defined geographic location in a rural area; focused on collaboration and part of long term sustainable development of the area) and trainers (advisors) can use the material as an example of the process followed to:

1. Improve understanding of the peripheral rural area.
2. Identify innovation needs in a specific context (solutions required to identified challenges in the peripheral rural area).
3. Provide examples of a range of broad innovation types as inspiration for advisors/farmers in peripheral rural areas.
4. Provide examples of the participatory approach in a specific context (followed in multi-actor activities in the peripheral rural area).

The training material is designed as a practical case study of a peripheral rural area and the advisors/farmers should be guided through the innovation process and participatory approach that was followed in the case. The training material is presented in three parts in section 2 of this guide.



1 TRAINING ACTIVITY AND MATERIAL FOR SOUTHERN FINLAND

1.1 Understanding the Peripheral Rural Area of Southern Finland

In this section the trainer will guide and facilitate the participants in gaining a broader understanding of their area. The case study of Southern Finland summarises its social, environmental and economic characteristics together with an assessment of its strengths and vulnerabilities in terms of sustainable development. The trainer can choose to concentrate on the case study example in the training or can use it as an example to analyse/discuss with the participants the current situation pertaining to the peripheral rural area in which the training is based. Key thematic areas for the analysis/discussion are:

- Environmental (e.g. climate, soils, water, land resources, etc.)

Adverse climate conditions such as annual rainfall (340-370 mm) and average temperature (+2.9°C) that prevent crop production. Due to the northern location and climate, yields in Finland (mostly located in southern Finland) are low. Arable crops produce one harvest per year. The country is considered as an Area of Natural Constraint (ANC) under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

Poor soil structure and homogeneous crops that combined with the loss of grasslands resulted in less diverse agricultural environments. Most of the farms in Finland grow cereals such as barley, oat, wheat and rye.

The majority of the land use cover is forest with predominant conifer vegetation. Most of the forests are actively managed for intensive timber and pulp production, that is, clear-cut at about 60-year intervals and replanted. The Finnish Association for Nature Conservation (FANC) criticised the volume of harvesting. This means, more trees are cut than replaced. FANC also demanded protection for old forests from logging for biodiversity conservation purposes. Biodiversity commonly avoided in production estimations.

- Economic (e.g. agriculture key facts and figures; farm types and sizes, etc.)

Most of the farmers in Finland are considered family farmers with an average holding size of approximately 41 ha. The primary production in Southern Finland are milk and beef production, sheep and goat husbandry, and cultivation of starch potato, as well as outdoor production of vegetables which are now mainly supported by a scheme based on EU subsidies (Finnish agri-food sector report 2021, Luke).

Over the long term, the entrepreneurial income from farming has decreased and the number of holdings has dropped down. CAP subsidies make up as much as 32% of the income (Finnish food authority, 2020). Almost one out of three agricultural and horticultural farms in Finland engages in other business besides farming.

The share of companies in all farms remains very small in the area. Rather than operate as companies, farms are increasingly engaging in co-operation and using contracting services. The most common form of co-operation is collective ownership of machinery. The farms have increased their production volumes through investments in production facilities, at the same time modernizing their production methods.

- Social (e.g. population size; main towns and villages, etc.)

Finland is the most sparsely populated Member State in the EU with the population density of 13.7/km². Compared to most other European countries, Finland has a large share of rural areas and long distances between urban centres.

Over the last few decades, the countryside has experienced rapid depopulation. Jobs are strongly concentrated in urban clusters and centres. Rural areas in Finland have long traditions of collective activity and volunteer work. It has become a place where Finnish people like to live and spend their leisure time while commuting for work.

- Institutional (e.g. interactions with state agencies or government departments; supports available/not available, etc.)

Since 1995, when Finland joined the European Union and its internally open market, the number of farms declined by 38% by 2012. Every year, 6–7% of the farms give up agricultural production. In Southern Finland, CAP supports farms with suckler cows, nanny goats and ewes, as well as outdoor vegetable production.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry relies on The Natural Resources Institute Finland (Luke) and other research centres such as Forest centre or Agri-food research Finland (MTT) for conducting multidisciplinary research which works to advance the bioeconomy and sustainable use of agriculture and forestry in Finland. Laws and incentives are mainly based on results and guidance from these research centres.

An example exercise might involve comparing and contrasting the case with your rural area as a lead into a facilitated discussion with participants of the strengths and vulnerabilities of their area.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND COMPLEMENTARY MATERIALS:

-RUR'UP BASELINE ASSESSMENT FOR SOUTHERN FINLAND ([link](#))

-RUR'UP PARTICIPATORY PROCESS FOR SOUTHERN FINLAND ([link](#))

1.2 Definition of the vision for the PRA and identification of the Innovation Needs

In this section the trainer will guide and facilitate the participants in gaining a broader understanding of the innovation needs of their area. Section 1 summarises the characteristics of the PRA together with an assessment of its strengths and vulnerabilities. This section takes the next step by exploring the shared vision for the future sustainable development of the PRA and identifying broad innovation needs for ensuring the sustainable maintenance and development of the Peripheral Rural Area. Participants will be introduced to the vision for the PRA case study selected and broad types of innovation needed to realise this vision. The trainer can choose to concentrate on the case study example in the training or can use it as an example to discuss with the participants a vision for the peripheral rural area in which the training is based. Key areas of focus for this section are:

- Exploring the vision for the future sustainable development of the PRA

The future vision of PRA in southern Finland is framed under circular farming economy by bringing together different stakeholders towards sustainable development of PRA. The approach is based on a participatory process where researchers, farmers, policy makers and companies act at different levels tackling natural processes, agricultural practices, implementation on farms, and labelling / crediting. The foundation Baltic Sea Action Group (BSAG) launched the Carbon Action project that serves as an example of an initiative towards the future vision of PRA that implements such approach and framework. The circular farming economy includes practices that improve carbon sequestration and biodiversity conservation.

- Four broad types of innovation required in PRA

In southern Finland, circular farming economy practices includes innovations in:

Farm techniques and management: rotational grazing, grazing, and inclusion of grasslands in crop (cereal) rotations.

Regulatory framework and policy innovation: Raising the appreciation of farmland, in particular, farmland diversity in co-operation between farmers, companies and policy makers to develop channels alternative to direct sales (public markets, public events) and to improve incentives for green farming practices and promote biodiversity conservation (in addition to CAP subsidies).

Products and markets innovation: To improve existing labels (organic) or create new ones (i.e. grass-fed beef, grazing beef) and avoid contradictory information messages to consumers (i.e. marketing promoting nature-friendly products instead of business as usual).

Social and Institutional innovation: Promoting social support to farmers so farmers are motivated to produce green while aiming for a quality life standard, for example, creating associations where consumers can volunteer for shorter periods, temporary, being involved in the production process and farmers can aim for vacation or extra time to also be with their families.

All these themes presented here are mutually supporting, each innovation can foster the next one. The aim is to create a robust support that can promote sustainable farming systems for all.

- Innovation needs assessment

To improve the economic security of family farms through the enhancement of soil health and better yield stability, and to improve the environmental state through carbon sequestration and associated benefits such as better nutrient and water retention. Innovations for the enhancement of biodiversity through active farming and market development is also among the needs.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND COMPLEMENTARY MATERIALS:

-RUR'UP PARTICIPATORY PROCESS AND THE IDENTIFICATION OF SOLUTIONS AND INNOVATIONS FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF SOUTHERN FINLAND ([link](#))

1.3 Examples of broad innovation types plus Innovation fiches

- Examples of Innovations

A selection of innovation fiches from the Southern Finland PRA can be explored at this stage in the training event. These should be explored by the trainer with the participants as inspiration for future initiatives in their area. Some of the identified innovations are the following:

- Innovation 1: Luonnonlaidunlihan tuottajat ry: a farmers' association for farmers who utilise semi-natural grassland in their production in Finland)
- Innovation 2: E-college for regenerative Farming
- Innovation 3: Laidunpankki (Pasture Bank)
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Some examples of innovations are presented in the attachment to this document

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND COMPLEMENTARY MATERIALS:

-RUR'UP INNOVATION FICHES OF SOUTHERN FINLAND (link)

2 RUR'UP TRAINING MATERIALS FOR ADVISOR/FARMER TRAINING IN FINLAND: GUIDES AND TIPS

The resources below may be of use to trainers in setting up their training event and provide some more detailed background for trainers involved in innovation transfer/sharing in agricultural regions.

Guides to organising training events for farmers and advisors are available at:

<https://www.peltopaiva.fi/> The site presents examples from a diversity of demo-events, mostly run in fields

<https://carbonaction.org/en/front-page/> - describes a participatory approach with farmers and other stakeholders in Finland

For example, it could explain how to successfully mobilise farmers and other local stakeholders on a participatory process, on how to organise a workshop, a farm demo site or any other event that already took place in the territory (concrete examples for each area?)

<https://trainingkit.farmdemo.eu/3-demo-set-up/> A training kit on farm demonstration and training from The FarmDemo platform – a collection of 3 European Horizon 2020 projects.

<https://agrispin.eu/training-toolkit/> an innovation training toolkit for trainers from the EU-project “AgriSpin – Space for innovations in Agriculture”

Additional educational resources on HNV farmland are available at: <http://hvnlink.eu/outputs/educationalmaterials/> Educational package of presentations and education activities on High Nature Value Farmland

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND COMPLEMENTARY MATERIALS:

-RUR'UP INNOVATION EXCHANGE, TRANSFER AND DISSEMINATION FOR SOUTHERN FINLAND (link)

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RUR'UP CASE STUDY MATERIAL: BULGARIA

GUIDE MATERIAL FOR ADVISORS / FARMER TRAINING

USING RUR'UP CASE STUDY MATERIALS

1 INTRODUCTION

The RUR'UP Erasmus+ project

The RUR'UP project “Innovative education for sustainable development in peripheral rural areas” (<http://rurup.uth.gr/>) is an international Erasmus+ 2020 cooperation project between higher education institutions, intergovernmental organisations and other local actors responsible for rural development. It is funded by the EU through its Erasmus+ Programme. Between October 2020 and September 2022, RUR'UP identified and developed a range of innovative actions and training for the sustainable development of peripheral rural areas. In Bulgaria, this project is led by the University of National and World Economy (UNWE, <https://www.unwe.bg/>) in collaboration with the Society for Territorial and Environmental Prosperity (STEP, <https://www.step-bg.bg/>).

In this working document, an area/region is considered as a peripheral rural area if it faces structural weakness due to the agri-environmental constraints created by mountains or other biophysical characteristics. Very often, these areas are in protected areas, natural parks, Natura 2000 sites, among others. These areas have specific characteristics in terms of agricultural practices and activities supporting conservation of areas rich in biodiversity (e.g. agro-pastoralism system). At the same time, they have significant value in terms of natural and cultural heritage, and contribute to the socio-economic development of the territory. Professionals need to be aware of their unique characteristics and specific training is often required. Many of these areas are recognized as High Natural Value (HNV) areas. HNV agricultural systems represent forms of agriculture intimately associated with rich biodiversity, through complex interactions between species and extensive/low-input agricultural practices (Andersen et al. 2003). HNV farmland areas occupy approximately 30% of the agricultural area of the EU.

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2 TRAINING ACTIVITY AND MATERIAL FOR BULGARIA

2.1 Understanding the Peripheral Rural Area

In this section the trainer will guide and facilitate the participants in gaining a broader understanding of their area. The case study of **WESTERN STARA PLANINA [WSP]** summarises its social, environmental and economic characteristics together with an assessment of its strengths and vulnerabilities in terms of sustainable development. The trainer can choose to concentrate on the case study example in the training or can use it as an example to analyse/discuss with the participants the current situation pertaining to the peripheral rural area in which the training is based. Key thematic areas for the analysis/discussion are:

- Environmental (e.g. climate, soils, water, land resources, etc.)

Western Stara Planina is predominantly a mountainous area of exceptional beauty and biodiversity richness. It covers 1662 km² in five municipalities (LAU1 level) from two administrative districts. The land use is divided almost equally between forests (48%) and agriculture (47%).

The extensive character of agriculture in general and livestock breeding in particular, the low population density, the mountain relief and the proximity to the border with Serbia (which had a special access regime limiting economic activities in the past) have influenced positively the biodiversity in WSP.

The territory hosts many rare flora and fauna species included in the Red Data Book of Bulgaria and protected by international red lists and conventions. The designation of seven Natura 2000 sites underline WSP high nature value and conservation importance.

- Economic (e.g. agriculture key facts and figures; farm types and sizes, etc.)

The area's production, processing and service facilities are located in the towns, which are the development 'hubs' of the region. The villages are dependent on farming (a majority of semi-subsistence farms) and social payments (pensions or unemployment support). More than half of the farms are in livestock breeding – a variety of dairy cattle, suckler cows, sheep, goats and even horses. Both the number of animals and the size of farms is increasing, while the number of farms is decreasing. Arable land production systems replicate the farming model largely promoted by the CAP Pillar I payments – cereals and industrial crops.

- Social (e.g. population size; main towns and villages, etc.)

The total population in WSP is around 30 000 located in 73 settlements. There are four small towns (the municipal centers) while the majority of the settlements have less than 500 people. The average population density is 21.5 people/sq.km compared to 31.5 for all rural areas and 65.5 for the country. Depopulation is ongoing in WSP and in two of the municipalities the people above working age are already predominant.

- Institutional (e.g. interactions with state agencies or government departments; supports available/not available, etc.)

The wider North-West region is recognised as the least developed region in Bulgaria, despite its relative proximity to Sofia. The public institutions have their local/regional offices in the area, and in fact provide for 35% of the area's employment. There are several local action groups (LAGs) as well as a couple of local development NGOs too.

An example exercise might involve comparing and contrasting the case with your rural area as a lead into a facilitated discussion with participants of the strengths and vulnerabilities of their area.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND COMPLEMENTARY MATERIALS:

-RUR'UP BASELINE ASSESSMENT FOR THE WESTERN STARA PLANINA, BULGARIA ([link](#))

-RUR'UP PARTICIPATORY PROCESS FOR THE WESTERN STARA PLANINA, BULGARIA ([link](#))

2.2 Definition of the vision for the PRA and identification of the Innovation Needs

In this section the trainer will guide and facilitate the participants in gaining a broader understanding of the innovation needs of their area. Section 1 summarises the characteristics of the PRA together with an assessment of its strengths and vulnerabilities. This section takes the next step by exploring the shared vision for the future sustainable development of the PRA and identifying broad innovation needs for ensuring the sustainable maintenance and development of the Peripheral Rural Area. Participants will be introduced to the vision for the PRA case study selected and broad types of innovation needed to realise this vision. The trainer can choose to concentrate on the case study example in the training or can use it as an example to discuss with the participants a vision for the peripheral rural area in which the training is based. Key areas of focus for this section are:

- Exploring the vision for the future sustainable development of the PRA

A vision for the future of the Western Stara Planina PRA was developed following a participatory process involving a range of local stakeholders (for details see link to Case Study Part B “Building a common vision for Western Stara Planina, Bulgaria”, at end of this section). The Vision sets out a broad desired future target for the area. The participatory approach involved a range of informal bilateral meetings, local events and workshops where the participatory, farmer-centred approach was central to its success. The vision presents integrated economic, social and environmental development of the region: **Agricultural modernization taking into account the natural and cultural heritage in Western Stara Planina.** In this Vision, the farming activities and production methods reflect the characteristics of Western Stara Planina: pastoralism, maintenance of the landscape and nature values, protection of natural sites and protected areas, as well as HNV farmland outside the protected areas. All farmers have access to grasslands near their farms, including long-term contracts for municipal pastures and forests and grasslands routes and watering places are restored. Farmers (medium-size, family farms) are well informed, open to novelties providing better biodiversity conservation, using appropriate equipment, applying new technologies. Cooperation and interaction between all stakeholders to increase social cohesion, re-discovery of local traditions and events that lead to joint initiatives for promoting and marketing local products: local brand, direct marketing and direct contact with consumers, better promotion and services linked to tourism development. Stable and understandable legal framework and flexible administration both at local and regional, and national level.

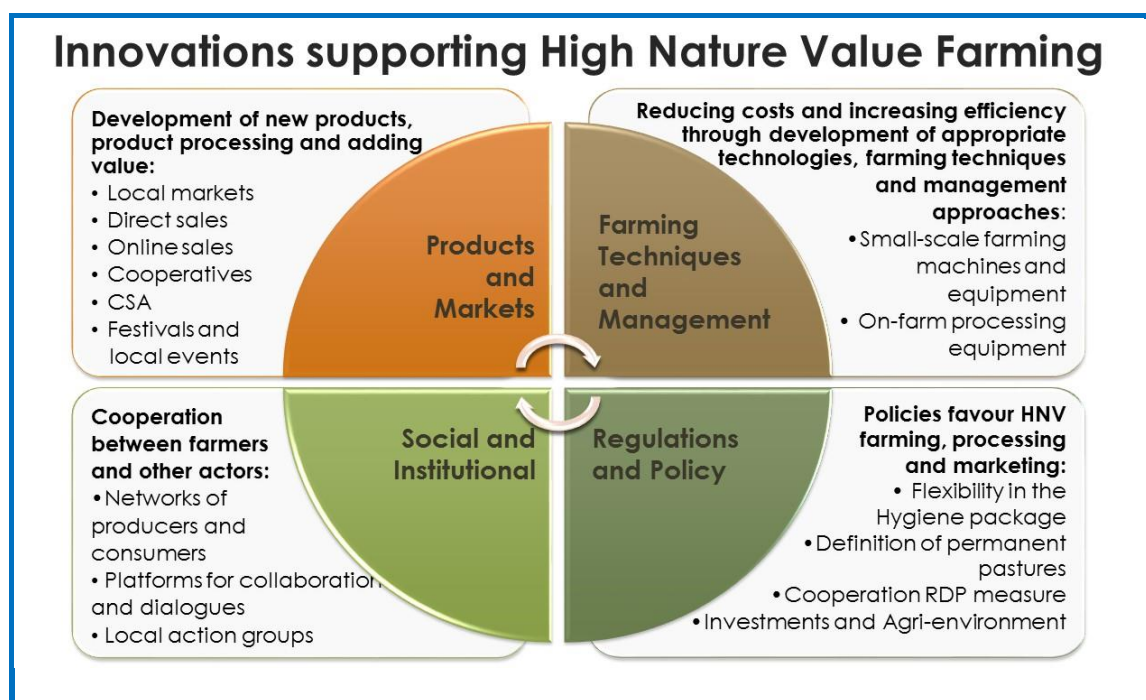
- Four broad types of innovation required in PRA

In this section, the trainer introduces the participants to the broad types of innovation (case study material provided in link below). Innovation needs are explored across 4 broad themes to address the sustainable development of the peripheral rural areas:

- 1) Social and Institutional Innovation.
- 2) Regulatory Framework and Policy Innovation.
- 3) Farm Techniques and Management Innovation.
- 4) Products and Markets Innovation.

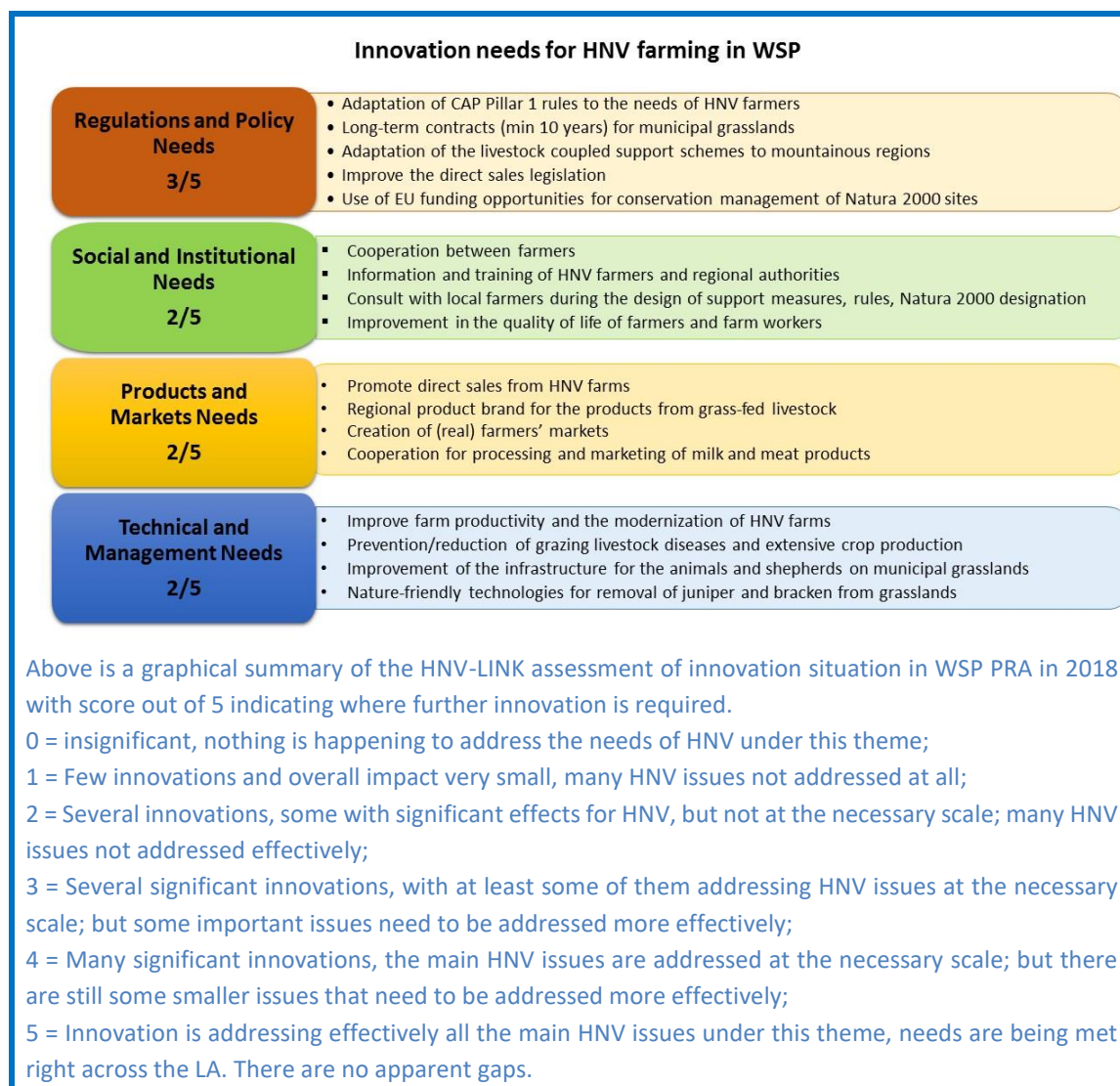
Categorising innovations in this way is intended to build a broader understanding of the range of innovations and match these to the needs of a particular area.

It should be communicated that these themes are often mutually supporting, and many successful innovations are part of a wider initiatives where different innovations are combined. Some innovations serve as foundations and are part of the creation of an enabling environment which fosters innovations under other themes e.g. rural community organisation within a favourable policy environment creating the space where new farming techniques are applied and farm diversification and product development opportunities are created.



- Innovation needs assessment

It is important to explore the key gaps between the current situation and the desired future. Innovation needs are explored across the 4 broad themes to address the sustainable development of the peripheral rural area.



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND COMPLEMENTARY MATERIALS:

-RUR'UP PARTICIPATORY PROCESS AND THE IDENTIFICATION OF SOLUTIONS AND INNOVATIONS FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WESTERN STARA PLANINA ([link](#))

2.3 Examples of broad innovation types plus Innovation fiches

- Examples of Innovations

A selection of innovation fiches from the PRA can be explored at this stage in the training event. These should be explored by the trainer with the participants as inspiration for future initiatives in their area.

If the trainer is interested in bringing a broader international aspect to the training event, a list of innovations of potential interest from other countries is available on a searchable database at <http://www.hnmlink.eu/innovations/>.

Selected innovations from the Western Stara Planina identified in 2018 (source HNV-Link) are:

1. HNV-focused Mobile Advisory Teams ([link](#))
2. Linbul Farm HNV farming approach ([link](#))
3. Natura 2000 compensatory measure from RDP programme ([link](#))

3 RUR'UP TRAINING MATERIALS FOR ADVISOR/FARMER TRAINING: GUIDES AND TIPS

The resources below may be of use to trainers in setting up their training event and provide some more detailed background for trainers involved in innovation transfer/sharing in agricultural regions.

Guides to organising training events for farmers and advisors are available at:

<https://trainingkit.farmdemo.eu/3-demo-set-up/> A training kit on farm demonstration and training from The FarmDemo platform – a collection of 3 European Horizon 2020 projects. and in Bulgarian: <https://trainingkit.farmdemo.eu/bg/demo-design-guide-bg/>

<https://agrispin.eu/training-toolkit/> an innovation training toolkit for trainers from the EU-project "AgriSpin – Space for innovations in Agriculture"

Additional educational resources on HNV farmland are available at:

<http://hvnlink.eu/outputs/educationalmaterials/> Educational package of presentations and education activities on High Nature Value Farmland

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND COMPLEMENTARY MATERIALS:

-RUR'UP INNOVATION EXCHANGE, TRANSFER AND DISSEMINATION FOR WESTERN STARA PLANINA, BULGARIA ([link](#))

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RUR'UP CASE STUDY MATERIAL: ROMANIA

GUIDE MATERIAL FOR ADVISORS / FARMER TRAINING

USING RUR'UP STUDY MATERIALS

1 INTRODUCTION

The RUR'UP Erasmus+ project

RUR'UP project, co-funded by the Erasmus+ European Commission, has the objective to enhance existing knowledge of peripheral rural areas (PRA) (1) and develop new knowledge through innovative learning processes for high education (HE) students in collaboration between researchers, teachers and other stakeholders such as farmers.

The purpose of the project is to endorse students with professional competences valued in the labor market of PRA regions to shorten the gap between academia and practice. The intention is to strengthen the collaboration between HE and potential regional employers towards sustainable development of PRA.

RUR'UP project builds on a previous Horizon 2020 project, HNV-Link, a network of partnering institutions in relation to PRA across Europe. PRA cover more than 30% of Utilized Agricultural Area (UAA) in Europe. PRA sustain environmental benefits such as biodiversity, cultural heritage and support socio-economic development of the territory. Understanding such benefits while recognising the needs and opportunities (innovations) offered by PRA contributes to sustainable development of rural areas.

The expected deliveries of the project, in open learning material format, are:

- IO1) The assessment of the education needs and gaps for the sustainable development of the EU peripheral rural areas
- IO2) E-learning course
- IO3) Bank of Case Studies
- IO4) Digital Teaching Platform and Digital Learning Resource
- IO5) Syllabus and materials for Intensive Study Activity
- IO6) Reflective report on the approach and methodology adopted

(1) PRA are areas that face structural weaknesses due to agro-environmental constraints, natural physical characteristics, especially in mountain areas. Very often, these areas are in protected areas, natural parks, Natura 2000 sites, among others. These areas have specific characteristics in terms of agricultural practices and activities supporting the conservation of areas rich in biodiversity (eg agro-pastoralism). At the same time, bear witness to great value in terms of natural and cultural heritage and contribute to the socio-economic development of the territory, among others. These are areas with a set of characteristics to which professionals need to be trained and made aware. Many of these areas are recognized as High Natural Value (HNV) areas, HNV agricultural systems represent forms of agriculture intimately associated with rich biodiversity, through complex interactions between species and non-intensive agricultural practices (Andersen et al. 2003).

This short guide and associated links have been developed for use in farm advisor or farmer training events. This material is targeted at advisors/farmer training events which are aimed at increasing their capacity and enhance their contribution to sustainable development in peripheral rural areas. The events should take a place-based approach (i.e. focused on a defined geographic location in a rural area; focused on collaboration and part of long term sustainable development of the area) and trainers (advisors) can use the material as an example of the process followed to:

1. Improve understanding of the peripheral rural area.
2. Identify innovation needs in a specific context (solutions required to identified challenges in the peripheral rural area).
3. Provide examples of a range of broad innovation types as inspiration for advisors/farmers in peripheral rural areas.
4. Provide examples of the participatory approach in a specific context (followed in multi-actor activities in the peripheral rural area).

The training material is designed as a practical case study of a peripheral rural area and the advisors/farmers should be guided through the innovation process and participatory approach that was followed in the case. The training material is presented in three parts in section 2 of this guide.



2 TRAINING ACTIVITY AND MATERIAL FOR EASTERN HILLS OF CLUJ, ROMANIA

2.1 Understanding the Peripheral Rural Area

In this section the trainer will guide and facilitate the participants in gaining a broader understanding of their area. The case study of **Dealurile Clujului Est, Romania** summarises its social, environmental and economic characteristics together with an assessment of its strengths and vulnerabilities in terms of sustainable development. The trainer can choose to concentrate on the case study example in the training or can use it as an example to analyse/discuss with the participants the current situation pertaining to the peripheral rural area in which the training is based. Key thematic areas for the analysis/discussion are:

- Environmental (e.g. climate, soils, water, land resources, etc.)

The outstanding biodiversity of the permanent natural meadows and pastures is explained by the low – intensive traditional farming techniques applied from generation to generation. They use extensive farming practices, with no or little chemical inputs. Several botanical studies showed the existence of 282 different vascular plants that characterise the spontaneous flora of the permanent natural meadows and pastures (Management Plan, 2016). Some of them are listed among the priority species under the EU "Habitats" Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC/1992).

These key trends are:

- a sharp reduction in the number of animals that are bred under the traditional household system. Common grazing of the permanent pastures has become almost an exception in the last years;
- the HNV meadows and pastures are summer grazed by specialized sheep farms. The subsidizing method, the lower sanitary-veterinary requirements and the lower investment needs favoured the development of this agricultural business. This specialized sector is owned by capital from outside the rural communities. There has been a deterioration of the agri-environment and the traditional grazing system because of the existing rupture between newcomers in the rural community and the traditional farming system.

- Economic (e.g. agriculture key facts and figures; farm types and sizes, etc.)

The **HNV farming** system is based on low-intensive traditional family households' techniques that used a mosaic of natural pastures in grazing and mowing. In the last years the HNV **agri-environment resources** had known a process of degradation caused by the alteration of the traditional agricultural practices and intensification. The traditional farming system based on common grazing and family labour is threatened and abandoned nowadays due to low-incomes and due to high alternative incomes outside the peripheral rural areas.

The **value chain** of the HNV products is currently based on low-value-added products. On-farm processing (cheese/meat) and direct sales cannot be developed due to rigid rules and bureaucracy. There is a lack of product differentiation.

- Social (e.g. population size; main towns and villages, etc.)

There is an increasing aging trend especially for the rural communities that have important HNV resources. Basic rural infrastructure is poor especially in the remote HNV areas.

- Institutional (e.g. interactions with state agencies or government departments; supports available/not available, etc.)
-

In the field of **good governance**, there exist inconsistencies both in the administrative organization (communes belonging to different administrative associative structures with specific objectives and instruments) and in the implementation of agricultural policies and for the agri-environment measures (not all communes eligible for such measures although they belong to a Natura 2000 site).

An example exercise might involve comparing and contrasting the case with your rural area as a lead into a facilitated discussion with participants of the strengths and vulnerabilities of their area.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND COMPLEMENTARY MATERIALS:

-RUR'UP BASELINE ASSESSMENT FOR THE EASTERN HILLS OF CLUJ ([link](#))

-RUR'UP PARTICIPATORY PROCESS FOR THE EASTERN HILLS OF CLUJ ([link](#))

2.2 Definition of the vision for the PRA and identification of the Innovation Needs

In this section the trainer will guide and facilitate the participants in gaining a broader understanding of the innovation needs of their area. Section 1 summarises the characteristics of the PRA together with an assessment of its strengths and vulnerabilities. This section takes the next step by exploring the shared vision for the future sustainable development of the PRA and identifying broad innovation needs for ensuring the sustainable maintenance and development of the Peripheral Rural Area. Participants will be introduced to the vision for the PRA case study selected and broad types of innovation needed to realise this vision. The trainer can choose to concentrate on the case study example in the training or can use it as an example to discuss with the participants a vision for the peripheral rural area in which the training is based. Key areas of focus for this section are:

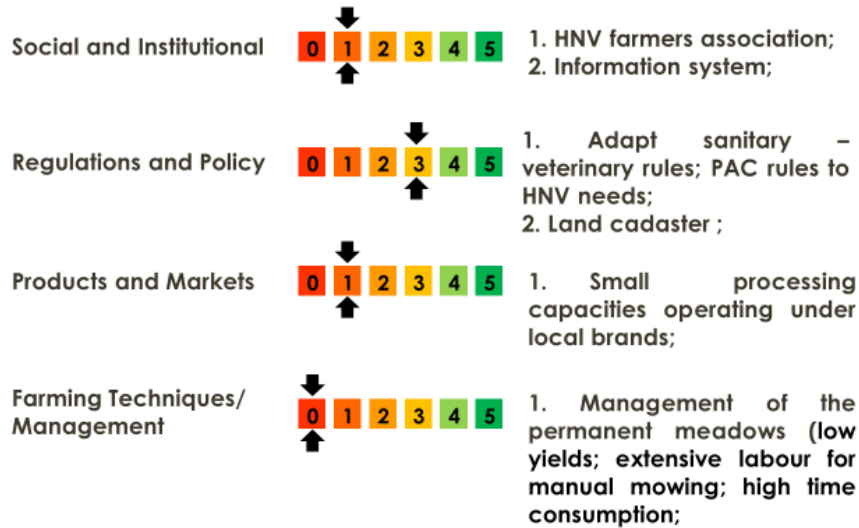
- Exploring the vision for the future sustainable development of the PRA

In the future, a drastic reduction of the traditional agricultural production system and an increase in the importance of intensive practices are anticipated. These phenomena will lead to the drastic reduction of the HNV resources.

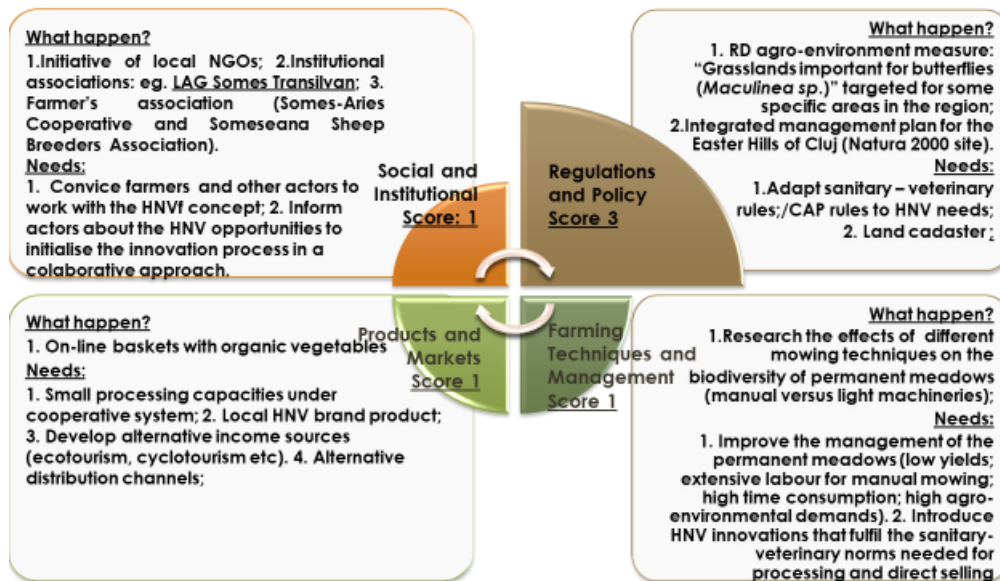
The **alternative vision for the sustainable development of HNV farming** propose the development of **medium-sized farms** operating in an **associative structure** through which **high value-added products** are marketed under a **local brand**.

- Four broad types of innovation required in PRA

LA priorities going forward



- Innovation needs assessment



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND COMPLEMENTARY MATERIALS:

-RUR'UP PARTICIPATORY PROCESS AND THE IDENTIFICATION OF SOLUTIONS AND INNOVATIONS FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EASTERN HILLS OF CLUJ ([link](#))

2.3 Examples of broad innovation types plus Innovation fiches

● Examples of Innovations

Map of Innovations in LA and outside LA



3 RUR'UP TRAINING MATERIALS FOR ADVISOR/FARMER TRAINING: GUIDES AND TIPS

The resources below may be of use to trainers in setting up their training event and provide some more detailed background for trainers involved in innovation transfer/sharing in agricultural regions.

Guides to organising training events for farmers and advisors are available at:

<https://trainingkit.farmdemo.eu/3-demo-set-up/> A training kit on farm demonstration and training from The FarmDemo platform – a collection of 3 European Horizon 2020 projects.

<https://agrispin.eu/training-toolkit/> an innovation training toolkit for trainers from the EU-project "AgriSpin – Space for innovations in Agriculture"

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND COMPLEMENTARY MATERIALS:

-RUR'UP INNOVATION EXCHANGE, TRANSFER AND DISSEMINATION FOR THE EASTERN HILLS OF CLUJ (link)

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RUR'UP CASE STUDY MATERIAL: IRELAND

GUIDE MATERIAL FOR ADVISORS / FARMER TRAINING

USING RUR'UP STUDY MATERIALS

1 INTRODUCTION

The RUR'UP Erasmus+ project

The RUR'UP project “Innovative education for sustainable development in peripheral rural areas” (<http://rurup.uth.gr/>) is an international Erasmus + 2020 cooperation project between higher education institutions, intergovernmental organisations and other local actors responsible for rural development. It is funded by the EU through its Erasmus+ Programme. Between October 2020 and September 2022, RUR'UP identified and developed a range of innovative actions and training for the sustainable development of peripheral rural areas. In Ireland, this project is led by the Atlantic Technological University (www.atu.ie).

In this working document, an area/region is considered as a peripheral rural area if it faces structural weakness due to the agri-environmental constraints created by mountains or other biophysical characteristics. Very often, these areas are in protected areas, natural parks, Natura 2000 sites, among others. These areas have specific characteristics in terms of agricultural practices and activities supporting conservation of areas rich in biodiversity (e.g. agro-pastoralism system). At the same time, they have significant value in terms of natural and cultural heritage, and contribute to the socio-economic development of the territory. Professionals need to be aware of their unique characteristics and specific training is often required. Many of these areas are recognized as High Natural Value (HNV) areas. HNV agricultural systems represent forms of agriculture intimately associated with rich biodiversity, through complex interactions between species and extensive/low-input agricultural practices (Andersen et al. 2003). HNV farmland areas occupy approximately 30% of the agricultural area of the EU.

This short guide and associated links have been developed for use in farm advisor or farmer training events. This material is targeted at advisors/farmer training events which are aimed at increasing their capacity and enhance their contribution to sustainable development in peripheral rural areas. The events should take a place-based approach (i.e. focused on a defined geographic location in a rural area; focused on collaboration and part of long term sustainable development of the area) and trainers (advisors) can use the material as an example of the process followed to:

1. Improve understanding of the peripheral rural area.
2. Identify innovation needs in a specific context (solutions required to identified challenges in the peripheral rural area).
3. Provide examples of a range of broad innovation types as inspiration for advisors/farmers in peripheral rural areas.
4. Provide examples of the participatory approach in a specific context (followed in multi-actor activities in the peripheral rural area).

The training material is designed as a practical case study of a peripheral rural area and the advisors/farmers should be guided through the innovation process and participatory approach that was followed in the case. The training material is presented in three parts in section 2 of this guide.



2 TRAINING ACTIVITY AND MATERIAL FOR THE BURREN, IRELAND

2.1 Understanding the Peripheral Rural Area

In this section the trainer will guide and facilitate the participants in gaining a broader understanding of their area. The case study of *the Burren* summarises its social, environmental and economic characteristics together with an assessment of its strengths and vulnerabilities in terms of sustainable development. The trainer can choose to concentrate on the case study example in the training or can use it as an example to analyse/discuss with the participants the current situation pertaining to the peripheral rural area in which the training is based. Key thematic areas for the analysis/discussion are:

- Environmental (e.g. climate, soils, water, land resources, etc.)

The Burren is the most extensive glaciated karst landscape in western Europe covering approximately 720Km². The climate of the Burren is similar to the rest of Ireland with mild temperature (14 OC in Summer and 5 oC in Winter) and wet throughout the year. In some years summer drought and lack of availability of water in karst upland areas can be an issue. Landcover/habitat types vary from semi-natural dry grasslands to calcareous wetlands to Atlantic Hazel woodland. The area hosts 70% of Ireland native flora and a diversity of vertebrates and invertebrates. Approximately 32,000 ha is designated for its nature value as part of the EU Natura 2000 network if special areas of conservation (habitats and species) and special protection areas (birds).

- Economic (e.g. agriculture key facts and figures; farm types and sizes, etc.)

Agriculture production focuses on livestock rearing with some dairy production in areas with deeper soils. There are approximately 1500 farmers in the area with an average farm size of 40ha. Burren farming involves a unique practice called 'winterage', where cattle are grazed on the Burren uplands in October and brought back down to more fertile/improved pastures grasslands in the lowlands over summer. The economy of the Burren is dominated by agriculture and tourism with some residents commuting to nearby cities for work in technology, medical devices and services sectors. The development of locally-led results based agri-environment programmes in recent decades have supported the unique farming practices in the Burren and influence how the land is managed.

- Social (e.g. population size; main towns and villages, etc.)

Population = approximately 15,500 people. Area includes eleven small towns and several rural villages which are the centres of social activities. Many farm families have at least one member working off-farm, which can impact on labour availability on farm.

- Institutional (e.g. interactions with state agencies or government departments; supports available/not available, etc.)

A broad range of stakeholders/institutional actors are involved in the management and development of the Burren including: Government Departments; Teagasc (national farm advisory service); nature conservation authorities and local higher education institutions; non-governmental organisation e.g. BurrenBeo Trust. A comprehensive list of stakeholders is available in the RUR'UP COURSE STUDY MATERIAL FOR THE BURREN: THE PARTICIPATOR PROCESS – explaining the participatory process in the Burren to build a common vision.

An example exercise might involve comparing and contrasting the case with your rural area as a lead into a facilitated discussion with participants of the strengths and vulnerabilities of their area.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND COMPLEMENTARY MATERIALS:

- RUR'UP BASELINE ASSESSMENT FOR THE BURREN ([link](#))
- RUR'UP PARTICIPATORY PROCESS FOR THE BURREN ([link](#))

2.2 Definition of the vision for the PRA and identification of the Innovation Needs

In this section the trainer will guide and facilitate the participants in gaining a broader understanding of the innovation needs of their area. Section 1 summarises the characteristics of the PRA together with an assessment of its strengths and vulnerabilities. This section takes the next step by exploring the shared vision for the future sustainable development of the PRA and identifying broad innovation needs for ensuring the sustainable maintenance and development of the Peripheral Rural Area. Participants will be introduced to the vision for the PRA case study selected and broad types of innovation needed to realise this vision. The trainer can choose to concentrate on the case study example in the training or can use it as an example to discuss with the participants a vision for the peripheral rural area in which the training is based. Key areas of focus for this section are:

- Exploring the vision for the future sustainable development of the PRA

A vision for the future of the Burren PRA was developed following a participatory process involving a range of Burren stakeholders (for details see link to Case Study Part B “Building a common vision for Burren, Ireland”, at end of this section). The Vision sets out a broad desired future target for the area. The participatory approach involved a range of informal bilateral meetings, group discussions at farmer training events, and workshops and the participatory, farmer-centred approach was central to its success.



- Four broad types of innovation required in PRA

In this section the trainer introduces the participants to the broad types of innovation (case study material provided in link below). Innovation needs are explored across 4 broad themes to address the sustainable development of the peripheral rural areas:

- 1) Social and Institutional Innovation.
- 2) Regulatory Framework and Policy Innovation.
- 3) Farm Techniques and Management Innovation.
- 4) Products and Markets Innovation.

Categorising innovations in this way is intended to build a broader understanding of the range of innovations and match these to the needs of a particular area.

It should be communicated that these themes are often mutually supporting, and many successful innovations are part of a wider initiative where different innovations are combined. Some innovations serve as foundations and are part of the creation of an enabling environment which fosters innovations under other themes e.g. rural community organisation within a favourable policy environment creating the space where new farming techniques are applied and farm diversification and product development opportunities are created.

- Innovation needs assessment

It is important to explore the key gaps between the current situation and the desired future. Innovation needs are explored across the 4 broad themes to address the sustainable development of the peripheral rural area:



Above is a graphical summary of the HNV-LINK assessment of innovation situation in the Burren PRA in 2018 with score out of 5 indicating where further innovation is required. 0 = insignificant, nothing is happening to address the needs of HNV under this theme; 1 = Few innovations and overall impact very small, many HNV issues not addressed at all; 2 = Several innovations, some with significant effects for HNV, but not at the necessary scale; many HNV issues not addressed effectively; 3 = Several significant innovations, with at least some of them addressing HNV issues at the necessary scale; but some important issues need to be addressed more effectively; 4 = Many significant innovations, the main HNV issues are addressed at the necessary scale; but there are still some smaller issues that need to be addressed more effectively; 5 = Innovation is addressing effectively all the main HNV issues under this theme, needs are being met right across the LA. There are no apparent gaps.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND COMPLEMENTARY MATERIALS:

-RUR'UP PARTICIPATORY PROCESS AND THE IDENTIFICATION OF SOLUTIONS AND INNOVATIONS FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BURREN ([link](#))

2.3 Examples of broad innovation types plus Innovation fiches

- Examples of Innovations

A selection of innovation fiches from the Burren PRA can be explored at this stage in the training event. These should be explored by the trainer with the participants as inspiration for future initiatives in their area. Selected innovations from the Burren are:

1. Adding value to HNV Farming (insert link)
2. Farming conservation awards: celebrating HNV farmers (insert link)
3. The Burren Programme: a locally targeted "hybrid" agri-environmental scheme (insert link)
4. Developing locally tailored livestock feeding and watering systems (insert link)

If the trainer is interested in bringing a broader international aspect to the training event, a list of innovations potential interest from other countries is available on a searchable database at <http://www.hnvlink.eu/innovations/>.

3 RUR'UP TRAINING MATERIALS FOR ADVISOR/FARMER TRAINING: GUIDES AND TIPS

The resources below may be of use to trainers in setting up their training event and provide some more detailed background for trainers involved in innovation transfer/sharing in agricultural regions.

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<https://agrispin.eu/training-toolkit/> an innovation training toolkit for trainers from the EU-project "AgriSpin – Space for innovations in Agriculture"

Additional educational resources on HNV farmland are available at:

<http://hnvlink.eu/outputs/educationalmaterials/> Educational package of presentations and education activities on High Nature Value Farmland

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND COMPLEMENTARY MATERIALS:

-RUR'UP INNOVATION EXCHANGE, TRANSFER AND DISSEMINATION FOR THE BURREN ([link](#))

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RUR'UP CASE STUDY MATERIAL : CROATIA

GUIDE MATERIAL FOR ADVISORS / FARMER TRAINING

USING RUR'UP CASE STUDY MATERIALS

1 INTRODUCTION

The RUR'UP Erasmus+ project

The RUR'UP project “Innovative education for sustainable development in peripheral rural areas” (<http://rurup.uth.gr/>) is an international Erasmus + 2020 cooperation project between higher education institutions, intergovernmental organisations and other local actors responsible for rural development, it is funded by the EU through its Erasmus+ Programme. Between October 2020 and September 2022, RUR'UP identifies and develops innovative actions and training for the sustainable development of rural mountain areas, and peripheral rural areas, and supports collaborative approaches between actors in the field and training institutions. Thus, higher education organisations produce and share innovative educational tools to carry out learning, training and awareness-raising activities specifically targeted at these areas of high territorial and natural value.

In Croatia, this project is led by the Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, (<https://www.unios.hr>).

In this working document, an area is considered as a peripheral rural area if it faces structural weaknesses due to agro-environmental constraints, natural physical characteristics, especially in mountain areas. Very often, these areas are in protected areas, natural parks, Natura 2000 sites, among others. These areas have specific characteristics in terms of agricultural practices and activities supporting the conservation of areas rich in biodiversity (eg agro-pastoralism). At the same time, bear witness to great value in terms of natural and cultural heritage and contribute to the socio-economic development of the territory, among others. These are areas with a set of characteristics to which professionals need to be trained and made aware. Many of these areas are recognised as High Natural Value (HNV) areas, HNV agricultural systems represent forms of agriculture intimately associated with rich biodiversity, through complex interactions between species and non-intensive agricultural practices (Andersen et al. 2003) and, in Europe, occupy about 30% of the agricultural area.

These areas contain a vast part of EU's biodiversity capital and are a pool of traditional farming practices. They contribute meaningfully to the local economy thanks to the diversity of small-scale production procedures and the special geographical conditions. Despite their importance for rural livelihoods, cultural heritage, biodiversity, and ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration and water retention, these areas face a combination of social, political, and environmental pressures

RUR'UP aims to deliver educational materials concerning the sustainable development in peripheral rural areas through a specially designed platform. The course along with the rest of produced educational material will contribute to developing skills and competencies for students, educators, advisors, and practitioners towards:

- a broad understanding of social, environmental, and economic characteristics of peripheral rural areas, and recognize vulnerabilities of these areas
- recognition of needs and opportunities for sustainable development in peripheral rural areas
- distinguish the stages and key elements of the innovation process
- create awareness on the variety of existing innovations relevant to their own country and across the EU

This short guide and associated links have been developed for farm advisors or farmer training events. This material is targeted at advisors/farmer training events to increase their capacity and enhance their contribution to sustainable development in peripheral rural areas. The events should take a place-based approach (i.e. focused on a defined geographic location in a rural area;



focused on collaboration and part of long term sustainable development of the area), and trainers (advisors) can use the material as an example of the process followed to:

1. Improve understanding of the peripheral rural area.
2. Identify innovation needs in a specific context (solutions required to identify challenges in the peripheral rural area).
3. Provide examples of broad innovation types as inspiration for advisors/farmers in peripheral rural areas.
4. Provide examples of the participatory approach in a specific context (followed in multi-actor activities in the peripheral rural area).

The training material is designed as a practical case study of a peripheral rural area, and the advisors/farmers should be guided through the innovation process and participatory approach that was followed in the case. The training material is presented in section 2 of this guide in three parts.



2 TRAINING ACTIVITY AND MATERIAL FOR TCROATIA

2.1 Understanding the Peripheral Rural Area

In this section, the trainer will guide and facilitate the participants in gaining a broader understanding of their area. The case study of the **Dalmatian islands and East Croatia Peripheral Rural Area** summarises its social, environmental and economic characteristics together with an assessment of its strengths and vulnerabilities in terms of sustainable development. The trainer can choose to concentrate on the case study example in training or use it as an example to analyse/discuss with the participants the current situation in the peripheral rural area in which the training is based. Key thematic areas for the analysis/discussion are:

- Environmental (e.g. climate, soils, water, land resources, etc.)

Due to the shortage of natural arable land in this karstic area, the susceptible landscape in Dalmatian Islands results from long-lasting efforts to create additional arable land and prevent erosion by cleaning stones and building stonewalls.

- Economic (e.g. agriculture key facts and figures; farm types and sizes, etc.)

- The average size of a parcel is 0,27 ha, and there are more than 6 295 small scale family farms in the area. The area is characterized by a continuously decreasing population, small-scale agriculture, and on some islands, micro and some islands small-extensive livestock farming.
- Today agricultural land covers 10.802 ha or only 5,8% of the Dalmatian Islands Peripheral Rural Area surface (Arkod, 2015), with the average surface of used agricultural land per household being 0,6 ha.

- Social (e.g. population size; main towns and villages, etc.)

80% of the employed population of age above 65 is in agriculture, while the youngest population (15-29) is employed in the service sector. Agriculture is job intensive since it creates 6% of the local revenue and employs 15% of the labour force.

- Institutional (e.g. interactions with state agencies or government departments; supports available/not available, etc.)

Islands are divided by Municipalities. The 8 islands that form the peripheral rural area of Dalmatian islands have in total 27 municipalities that are divided among two counties.

An example exercise might involve comparing and contrasting the case with your rural area as a lead into a facilitated discussion with participants about the strengths and vulnerabilities of their area.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND COMPLEMENTARY MATERIALS:

-RUR'UP BASELINE ASSESSMENT FOR THE DALMATIAN ISLANDS ([link](#))

- The Baseline Assessment of the Dalmatian Islands: <https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-02568149>

2.2 Definition of the vision for the PRA and identification of the Innovation Needs

In this section, the trainer will guide and facilitate the participants in gaining a broader understanding of the innovation needs of their area. Section 1 summarises the characteristics of the PRA together with an assessment of its strengths and vulnerabilities. This section takes the next step by exploring the shared vision for the future sustainable development of the PRA and identifying broad innovation needs for ensuring the sustainable maintenance and development of the Peripheral Rural Area. Participants will be introduced to the vision for the PRA case study selected and the broad types of innovation needed to realise this vision. The trainer can choose to concentrate on the case study example in training or can use it as an example to discuss with the participants a vision for the peripheral rural area in which the training is based. Key areas of focus for this section are:

- Exploring the vision for the future sustainable development of the PRA

In 2017, the key actors of the Dalmatian island, after following a multiActor / participatory process (...) agreed on the Vision of the PRA as 'preserved mosaic landscape as a result of interrelationships between low intensity agriculture and rural tourism based on local resources and top quality products.

- Four broad types of innovation required in a Peripheral Rural Area, these answers to:

In this section the trainer introduces the participants to the broad types of innovation (case study material provided in link below). Innovation needs are explored across 4 broad themes to addresses the sustainable development of the peripheral rural areas:

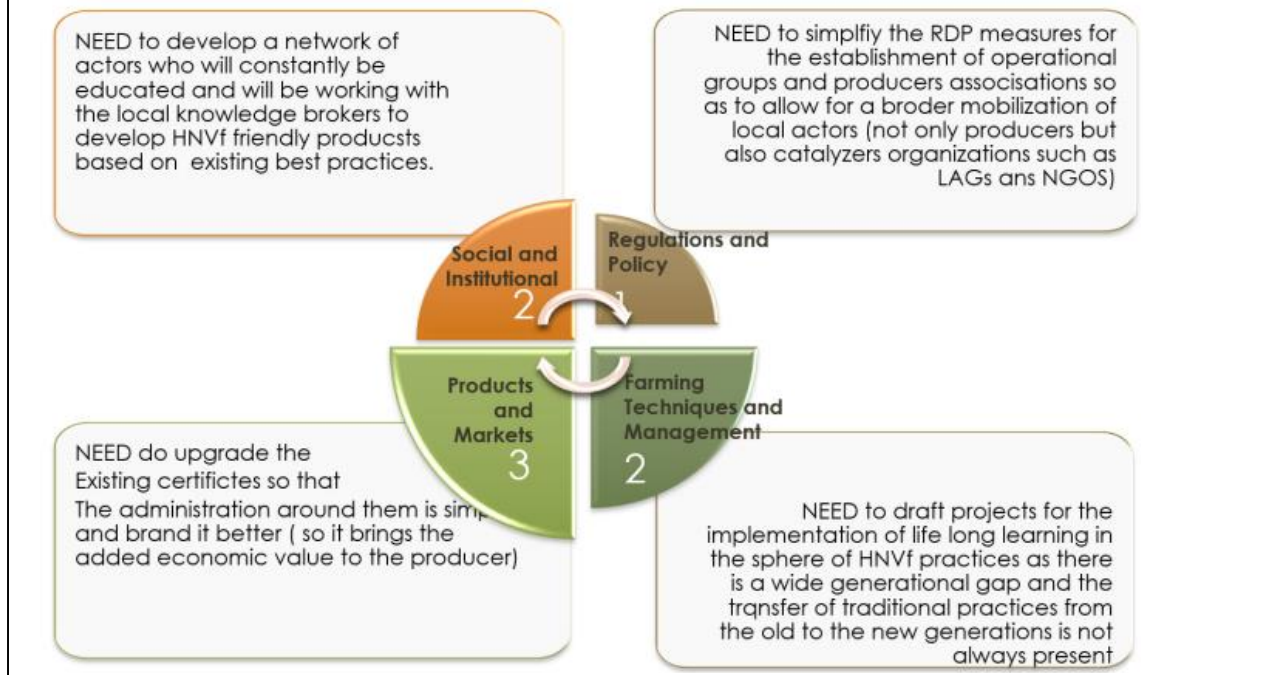
- 1) Social and Institutional Innovation.
- 2) Regulatory Framework and Policy Innovation.
- 3) Farm Techniques and Management Innovation.
- 4) Products and Markets Innovation.

Categorising innovations in this way is intended to build a broader understanding of the range of innovations and match these to the needs of a particular area.

It should be communicated that these themes are often mutually supporting, and many successful innovations are part of a wider initiatives where different innovations are combine. Some innovations serve as foundations and are part of the creation of an enabling environment which fosters innovations under other themes e.g. rural community organisation within a favourable policy environment creating the space where new farming techniques are applied and farm diversification and product development opportunities are created.

- Innovation needs assessment

It is important to explore the key gaps between the current situation and the desired future. The figure below shows the innovation needs explored across the 4 broad themes to address the sustainable development of the Dalmatian Islands. The assessment of innovation situation in the Dalmatian Islands carried out in 2018 (under HNV-Link project) current situation still need to address the following gaps:



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND COMPLEMENTARY MATERIALS:

-RUR'UP PARTICIPATORY PROCESS AND THE IDENTIFICATION OF SOLUTIONS AND INNOVATIONS FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DALMATIAN ISLANDS AND EAST CROATIA PRA ([link](#))

2.3 Examples of broad innovation types plus Innovation fiches

- Examples of Innovations

A selection of innovation fiches from the Dalmatian Islands and East Croatia PRA can be explored at this stage in the training event.

These should be explored by the trainer with the participants as inspiration for future initiatives in their area.

Some relevant innovations from CROATIA PRA:

Organic Food Supply Chain

HNV farming as a tourist activity

Multistakeholder organizations fostering HNV products and practices

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND COMPLEMENTARY MATERIALS:

-RUR'UP INNOVATION FICHES CROATIA ([link](#))

3 RUR'UP TRAINING MATERIALS FOR ADVISOR/FARMER TRAINING: GUIDES AND TIPS

Guides on the topic of High Nature Value Farmland to organising training events for farmers and advisors. Additional educational resources on HNV farmland are available at:
<http://www.hnmlink.eu/outputs/educationalmaterials/>

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND COMPLEMENTARY MATERIALS:

-RUR'UP INNOVATION EXCHANGE, TRANSFER AND DISSEMINATION FOR CROATIA

([link](#))

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