European Rural Parliament
Sustaining Rural Services and Infrastructure
Project Report – September 2017

Contents

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1. Introduction

This report has been prepared as part of the gathering of the European Rural Parliament (ERP) scheduled for October 2017 in the Netherlands.

As its catalysts, the report takes forward agendas expressed in both the 2015 European Rural Parliament report *All Europe Shall Live – the voice of rural people* and the Cork Declaration of 2016 concerning provision of vital services and infrastructure in rural areas. In particular the report seeks to identify positive ways forward for addressing issues raised in sections 16 and 17 of the *European Rural Manifesto* (produced through the 2015 European Rural Parliament gathering) on rural services and infrastructure, and broadband and mobile communication.

The report sets out findings from research involving rural actors across sixteen countries related to provision of infrastructure and services to rural communities (including broadband and mobile communication technologies.) In so doing, the report draws together a set of conclusions and recommendations that can be articulated at the 2017 European Rural Parliament gathering. These conclusions and recommendations were shared also at the project conference hosted by Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE), in England, during September 2017.

The research has been coordinated by ACRE, the body providing representation from England to the European Rural Parliament (ERP) and a member of the European Rural Community Alliance (ERCA), one of the initiating bodies of the ERP. The report is based upon research conducted and overseen by an international partnership comprising organisations with a working interest in the socio-economic wellbeing of rural communities. These organisations are drawn from eight countries – Armenia, England, Germany, Latvia, Moldova, Slovakia, Turkey and Wales. In addition a further eight countries, Czech Republic ,Denmark, Scotland, Finland, Republic of Ireland, Sweden, Bulgaria and Hungary provided input to the main survey and case studies with four of those sending representatives to the project conference.

The key findings of the research, and thus messages that can be taken to the European Rural Parliament gathering of 2017 are:

- Where spatial factors indicative of rurality impede the socio-economic wellbeing of rural communities, public policy instruments seeking to redress this are found often to be wanting.
- Investment in rural people is fundamental to success of infrastructure and services – and this is not happening sufficiently.
- There is much potential in the creation of rural strategies, at local level, enabling priority setting which augments that of national and international bodies.

2. Methodology

2.1 Partnership formation

The international partnership overseeing this research was formed as a result of the 2015 European Rural Parliament gathering held in Schärding, Austria. A chart detailing all the ERP proposed projects and the Country partners interests had been created, by the ERP Coordinators, together with a draft brief for the scope of the thematic project. ACRE contacted all organisations that had registered an interest in supporting delivery of work associated with the 'Rural Services and Infrastructure' project during early 2017.

Organisations responding to ACRE formed a partnership of lead organisations which communicated principally by Skype and e-mail during 2017. Each lead organisation appointed a key representative to head work related to this research.

The key representatives related lead organisations and partner Countries that supported the project are detailed below:

Anahit Ghazanchyan	Development Principles NGO, Armenia
Deborah Clarke	Action with Communities in Rural England, England (United Kingdom)
Kurt Krambach	Association Village Movement Brandenburg, Germany
Anita Selicka	Latvian Rural Forum, Latvia
Sergiu Mihailov	Pro Cooperare Regionala NGO, Moldova
Maria Behanovska	OZ VIPA SK, (Slovakian Rural Parliament) Slovakia
Ibrahim Tugrul	Development Foundation of Turkey, Turkey
Jessica Morgan	Pembrokeshire Local Action for Enterprise & Development, (PLANED) Wales (United Kingdom.)

For the purposes of this report, this partnership is termed the "ERP Project Group."

2.2 Scope

The research process involved four key stages – design, distribution of surveys and collation of data at individual country level, combined analysis and adoption of final report.

Firstly, the ERP Project Group formulated a questionnaire during the spring of 2017. This questionnaire was to be distributed to groups/organisations and individuals working or living in rural communities.

Secondly, questionnaires were distributed, and had their results collated, by ERP Project Group members in each country. Questions were distributed mostly online, but a small number were completed during thematic workshops held in some partner countries.

On completion of, and collation of data from, the surveys each ERP Project Group member prepared a brief report and this was passed to the research project lead body, ACRE. ACRE is the England-wide umbrella organisation for a network of 38 further, geographically-specific, NGOs specialising in animation of community-led rural development known historically as 'Rural Community Councils.' Today ACRE and the 38 Rural Community Councils are grouped as the ACRE Network.

Thirdly ACRE produced the combined analysis in the form of this report. The fourth stage, adoption of the report, took place at the project conference held at Shipham, Somerset, on 6th September 2017.

2.3 The Survey

The aim of the survey was to clarify the key issues when considering the provision of rural services and infrastructure – based, in part, on identifying particular threats to viability of these, plus favourable factors that could help ensure that rural areas thrive.

The data collected by the partner Countries was intended to provide evidence to demonstrate which infrastructure and services are most important to rural communities, the condition, sustainability and accessibility of these services: and who is responsible for provision.

The survey was developed at the beginning of the project using questions set out by the ERP Project Group. It was circulated to the country partners who suggested changes to make the survey more relevant to rural communities in their country.

A hard copy of the survey (**Appendix C**) was provided so that partners could translate and circulate the questions. There was a section of the Survey for partners only to complete. This section asked for information about the % of population in different types of settlements and whether the settlements were considered rural. Case studies were asked for to demonstrate both negative and positive experiences in the provision of infrastructure or services – most of the case studies received focused on positive action by either central government or local (often community-led) organisations which sought to improve socio-economic wellbeing of rural communities.

The final question for country partners was 'What does your analysis imply for future action by rural people, service providers, governments and European institutions?" The responses to this question helped inform the conclusions and recommendations at the end of the report.

The survey was produced in [Survey Monkey](#) for anyone interested in the project and rural communities to complete. As part of the research process lead agencies in partner countries also held face-to-face meetings with small groups of people from rural villages and towns. The total number of participants recorded through virtual and face–to-face meetings and gatherings was in the region of 300. A minority of surveys were completed at these events.

Surveys were distributed by lead organisations from the eight countries represented in the ERP project group (Armenia, England, Germany, Latvia, Moldova, Slovakia, Turkey and Wales), although responses were received from participants based in sixteen nations (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Finland, Hungary, Ireland Netherlands, Scotland and Sweden comprising the additional eight.)

Survey responses were received from **410** participants across rural territories within sixteen countries. This represented a mean average return of **51.25** responses per country; Germany, Slovakia, Turkey and Wales all provided returns in excess of this average.

Data was returned in a number of formats and required detailed analysis during June, July and August 2017.

2.4 Interpretation

On collection of surveys, each ERP project group member produced a report comprising both quantitative and qualitative data as well as case studies. Examples of these reports can be found at **Appendix E**.

Quantitative data was collected principally on the importance of a series of key infrastructure and services for rural areas. From this it was possible to identify some common trends across all countries participating in the research.

Qualitative data from each country's results (including where drawn from respondents in any of the eight additional nations) was collected and ranked; 1 to 10 for infrastructure replies and 1 to 13 for services. Where final totals matched, an average score was given (e.g. if two data sets equalled a fifth most important service, then rather than each being given a score of 5, there would be an average rank for 5 and 6 – i.e. 5.5.) Once individual country totals were compiled an overall "eight country" (including all answers from the additional eight) list was produced. Tables 1 and 2 of this report are these lists, whilst tables containing country-by-country totals exist at **Appendix B**.

Qualitative data focused more on barriers to provision (or threats to its viability), and the potential to make rural areas more socio-economically resilient. This data was drawn from responses to the following questions:

- What main factor inhibits the better provision or threatens the future viability of rural services and infrastructure?

- What main factor favours the provision, viability and improvement of rural services and infrastructure?

- The survey asked partner Countries what their analysis implied for future action by rural people, service providers, governments and European institutes.

The responses to the qualitative data questions fed directly into the conclusions and recommendations outlined at the end of this report, as did feedback collected in the European Rural Parliament project event, hosted in England on 6th September 2017.   This event drew together rural development practitioners from the Czech Republic, Denmark England, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, Scotland and Wales. The feedback is recorded in **Appendix D**.

3. Rural Services and Infrastructure Survey: The Results, Commonality and Nuances

As indicated in the Methodology section above, survey respondents were asked to provide both quantitative and qualitative data.

Quantitative data focused on identifying and ranking the importance to rural communities of a series of key infrastructure and services.

Across the participating Countries the top rural priorities identified were as follows:

- For infrastructure: Provision of stable electricity supply, access to clean drinking water, and adequacy of roads.
- For services: Access to education for both early years and secondary level students, and access to health services such as Doctors and/or hospitals.

There were outliers in specific countries however – most notably quality of broadband infrastructure (Wales), access to vets (Turkey), health services (Latvia) and meeting places (e.g. village halls) (Germany) being identified as main service challenges for rural communities.

Further interrogation of data collected by groups of country – North West EU (England/Germany/Wales), New EU Member States (Latvia, Slovakia) and Non-EU Member States (Armenia/Moldova/Turkey) produced slightly differently nuanced sets of priorities. The top three priorities for infrastructure and services for the "groups of country" dataset were:

- North West EU: (*Infrastructure*) Provision of stable electricity supply, access to clean drinking water and broadband. (*Services*) Access to health services, and education for both early years and secondary level students.
- New EU Member States: (*Infrastructure*) Provision of stable electricity supply, adequacy of roads and access to clean drinking water. (*Services*) Access to education for both early years and secondary level students and provision of shops

- Non-EU Member States: (*Infrastructure*) Provision of stable electricity supply, adequacy of roads and access to clean drinking water. (*Services*) Access to Vets, education for early years and health services.

This division of data may suggest some nuances in priorities identified by type of country – so, for example, broadband provision is a high infrastructure priority in north western European countries whereas the adequacy of roads is so in the remaining partner states. Higher priorities for services varied more greatly with, for example, access to veterinary practices scoring highly in non-EU member states. Further research would need to be conducted to examine the emergence of data outliers, such as broadband or veterinary practices, that are viewed as important for the socio-economic wellbeing of rural areas.

An overall ranking of the importance of infrastructure and services for rural areas is set out in tables 1 and 2. A full table, showing variation in results by country is included at **Appendix B**.

Table 1: Ranking of importance of infrastructure provision for rural areas

Infrastructure type	Average Ranking	Overall Ranking
Electricity supply	2.3125	1
Drinking water	2.9375	2
Roads	3.3125	3
Broadband	4.625	4
Irrigation	6.0625	5
Transportation	6.3125	6
Sewerage	6.5	7
Rural Economy Infrastructure	6.9375	8
Public Lighting	7.125	9
Pavements	8.875	10

Table 2: Ranking of importance of service provision for rural areas

Service type	Average Ranking	Overall Ranking
Education (Infant & Early Years)	3.625	1
Health (Doctors & Hospitals)	3.75	2
Education (Primary & Secondary)	4.3125	3
Shops	4.8125	4
Places to Meet (e.g. Village Hall)	5.625	5
Social Care	6.6875	6
Education (University & Higher Education)	7.3125	7
Youth services	7.6875	8
Banks	7.875	9
Vets	8.4375	10
Dentists	8.8125	11
Libraries	9.875	12
Other	11.8125	13

In terms of infrastructure the major providers of each were national or international bodies - although not always agencies of government. Key services tended to be provided by sub-national, even local, public authorities, private business or community organisations/NGOs.

Qualitative data focused more on barriers to provision (or threats to its viability), and the potential to make rural areas more socio-economically resilient. Responses given were diverse – although despite geopolitical, social and economic diversity of the participating partner Countries it was possible to identify some commonality of thinking across rural communities. This thinking was evident in the following areas:

- Where spatial factors indicative of rurality (for example sparsity of population, small settlements, and distances between settlements) thwarted socio-economic wellbeing, public policy instruments were found often to be wanting.
- Investment in rural people[1] was fundamental to success of infrastructure and services – and this was not happening sufficiently.
- There was much potential in the creation of rural strategies, at local level, enabling priority setting which augmented that of national and international bodies.

Given the number of partner countries it is perhaps not a surprise that the barriers to the viability of rural services and infrastructure, or factors favouring an improvement to these varied between the countries. In the section below examples of this diversity have been given in relation to each of the research questions.

Responses to the three qualitative research questions*:*

Qualitative question 1: **What main factor inhibits the better provision or threatens the future viability of rural services and infrastructure?**

With regard to the main factors inhibiting better provision, or threatening future viability, of rural services and infrastructure, the following themes were highlighted in particular:

- Small size of rural populations, exacerbated by rural depopulation and outward migration
- High levels of rural unemployment and lack of access to jobs because of high costs of transport and other factors
- Geographical disparities in provision of infrastructure including roads, broadband, water supplies
- Inefficacy of local authorities
- Lack of properly structured community development programmes and investment/money to support better provision of rural services and infrastructure.

These themes were articulated in a variety of ways. For example general geographical disparities in provision of infrastructure emerged strongly in responses from Armenia and Turkey whereas in Wales and Germany there was a specific focus on broadband accessibility and sewerage costs. Local authorities were described in one partner country as "lacking awareness of 21st century needs." More worryingly, at least one country identified actions of neighbouring governments as problematic for rural areas near their borders (particularly over mobile reception) and another highlighted corruption as a threat to rural services and infrastructure.

Small populations, a characteristic of rural areas, were seen across the countries as a threat to viability of services and infrastructure – principally due to cost of provision or implied weakening of economies of scale. Some interesting insights emerged too during the research that may be worthy of further enquiry – in Latvia, for example, rural depopulation was part and parcel of a wider outward migration (i.e. residents moving to other countries) whilst in Wales sustained reductions in

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[1] By investment in rural people we mean revenue funding such as education, capacity building, training, networking to share good practice etc.

public sector spending, and subsequent impacts such as increased travel costs to access essential services or pressures placed on NGOs to "step in" and deliver where formerly the state did.

Unemployment, part of a wider "access to work" issue identified in some Countries, was noted as a particular challenge in Slovakia. It is worth noting the responses to this in the Case Study section of this report in terms of both a Slovakian central government initiative, and its increased flexibility around use of EU funds to support development of the rural economy in the country.

> *Qualitative question 2*: **What main factor favours the provision, viability and improvement of rural services and infrastructure?**

With regard to the main factors favouring provision and viability of rural services and infrastructure, the following two themes were highlighted in particular:

- Community-led socio-economic development initiatives, featuring strong community engagement and capacity building
- Having access to good infrastructure

A series of factors favouring provision of rural services and infrastructure were articulated. Capacity building was identified in Turkey as of key importance, whilst in Armenia this was set out even more expressly as a need for investment in "educated and dedicated human resources" without which "proper use of infrastructure and services cannot be sustainable." The German partner stressed that "human initiative" was vital for efforts to create village "centres" (such as village halls), re-establish village shops, or maintain crèches and kindergarten. In-migration was viewed also as having benefit in terms of new skills being brought to rural areas. The partner in Wales cited the importance of both the UK National Lottery and EU funds.

Allied to all of this, some funding programmes to assist in supporting rural development were cited as of importance, as was the potential to enhance rural development strategies. Although not mentioned in response to this question (although it was in question 3) the EU LEADER programme, and similar initiatives in European countries outside of the EU, includes requirement for creation of rural development strategies and provides investment funding in specific rural areas.

Access to good infrastructure was highlighted especially in relation to roads and healthcare. In other words, adequate roads and access to healthcare underpinned the ability of rural communities to thrive. It is interesting to note that access to good roads was also ranked as the third most important type of infrastructure for rural communities in the quantitative part of the survey, whereas healthcare was identified as the second most important service required in rural areas.

> *Qualitative question 3*: **What does your analysis imply for future action by rural people, service providers, governments and European institutions?**

The analysis by the members of the ERP Project group points towards one particular conclusion:

- A need exists to invest in dedicated human resources, whilst associated funding mechanisms have to be flexible enough to be of genuine use to rural communities.

This conclusion is significant given that current EU rural development programmes focus often on investment in machinery, technology or buildings (i.e. capital items) rather than people (revenue funding.)

Within the analysis presented by the ERP Project Group it was possible to identify where national (or international) level organisations had a role to play, as well as where more localised structures could operate more effectively.

The Turkish partner commented on the KOYDES (Project for Supporting Infrastructure of Villages) initiative launched by the central government. KOYDES was viewed as rather top-down, and focusing on major infrastructure (roads, drainage, drinking water) but not on capacity-building which was felt to be a weakness by Turkish partners. As reported already, in Armenia the need to invest in educated and dedicated "human" resources was promoted. These views on investing in human resources and capacity building were taken further in the response from Germany – for example a call for all villages to have their own 'centre' / meeting point (although this could allow for differing types of centres to serve a cluster of villages – with cooperation similar to the French syndicate des communes structure.)

Again from Germany came the call to introduce structures that "bundle all local actors" for rural self-determination, not as an alternative to LEADER, but to interlock with it. It is notable that whilst LEADER may be seen as the principal EU mechanism for supporting "bottom-up" / community-led socio-economic development in rural areas very few of the case studies included at the end of this report (Car Chums Pembrokeshire aside) made use of it. Maintenance of decentralised structures to support rural development was viewed as important in Germany also.

Evidence of a centralised government mechanism attempting to help locally-driven rural development came from Slovakia, where an initial baseline minimum of 1.5million Euro public funding to support rural growth projects was reduced to 200,000 Euro. By way of contrast, under the EAFRD Growth Programme in England, 200,000 Euro is the maximum that can be applied for.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

This research has been able to identify a series of types of infrastructure and service necessary for any rural community to thrive. In addition, conditions which might make the thriving of rural communities possible have been indicated.

There are a suite of international (including European), national, regional and local mechanisms available to help rural areas to overcome special factors which impede socio-economic wellbeing – However, these do not function as effectively as they might and this leads to the existence of real "investment gaps."

The principal conclusions that can be drawn from this research are:

- Rural areas require a range of essential infrastructure, provided often by national or international level organisations, but the provision of this is not always adequate
- Rural areas require access to a range of essential services, and more could be done – both at community and national/international level – to improve provision of and accessibility to these services
- Investment in rural people, including via capacity-building, is a real "gap"; programmes supporting only large-scale investments or a focus on capital items are not alone enough.

Discussion at the European Rural Parliament Pre-event, held in England on 6th September 2017, focused in part on the potential of LEADER to drive socio-economic wellbeing in rural areas. This discussion was informed particularly by a sense that the present 2014-20 LEADER programme was, in many countries (e.g. England, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Portugal,) a missed opportunity due in part to its focus on capital expenditure. From Germany had come the need to "interlock" LEADER with wider models of rural socio-economic development, whilst delegates from Denmark and England identified that although the LEADER approach certainly worked there could be a huge amount of rural community-led local development activity delivering on LEADER Local Development Strategies without being recorded as such (as projects were not deemed eligible for LEADER funding.)

Delegates welcomed the statements made on improving the delivery of LEADER across Europe as set out in the Cork Declaration 2.0, published in 2016.

The main recommendations arising from this research are:

RECOMMENDATION 1

National and regional level organisations, including governments, consider means by which the socio-economic wellbeing of rural communities can be improved and sustained.

This work might include

- The redesign of strategic funding programmes, so that funding allocated to rural areas can be spent (e.g. see the Case Study from Slovakia on page 14)
- The creation of dedicated programmes to improve infrastructure in rural areas (e.g. see Case Study on KOYDES, Turkey, on page 14)
- The introductions of formal "rural-proofing" mechanisms to ensure the needs of rural areas are considered in the making of policy.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Community-led rural development programmes, such as LEADER, need to be designed so that they support and meet the needs of local people.

This work might include

- Undertaking analysis of barriers to uptake of LEADER funding at local level
- Undertaking analysis of progress in delivery of current rural strategies (including LEADER Local Development Strategies) – even where work is financed outside the scope of specific funding programmes
- Participating in mid-term, ex post ante and other research / evaluations of rural community-led rural development programmes, to highlight what has worked well and not so well (this may include structures supporting delivery of the Cork Declaration 2.0 Action Plan, published in 2017.)

Ideally, there should be a synergy between Recommendations 1 and 2, allowing local, regional, national and even international agendas to align for the socio-economic wellbeing of rural areas.

The next section of this report contains a series of case studies, provided by participants in this research, which can be given as examples of activity contributing to either the first or second recommendation.

The case studies have largely been included as submitted by the project partners but some editing has been undertaken to improve clarity.

Appendix A   Case Studies in support of Recommendation 1

"National and regional level organisations, including governments, consider means by which the socio-economic wellbeing of rural communities can be improved and sustained"

ARMENIA

ADVANCED RURAL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE PROGRAM (ARDI)

This case study illustrates how investment in infrastructure can fall coherently within a broader program of mainly economic development, funded by a major donor organisation, USAID.

ARDI is a 5-year program launched in September 2013. This program is funded by USAID and implemented by NGO consortium of Heifer International and Fuller Centre for Housing Armenia. Its aim is to increase rural employment by tackling constraints to rural economic development of select rural communities in the Syunik, Vayots Dzor and Lori marzes (provinces) of Armenia. The program will support interventions in **three main rural economic sectors/Value Chains** namely *Dairy Processing, Fruit Processing* and *Rural Tourism.*

The program will directly enhance the ability of more than 5,000 people from 51 rural communities of Armenia to utilize the opportunities and advantages available for economic development. Inhabitants of 51 rural communities will be able to benefit from the capital intensive hard investments that are placed in the 12 target communities/clusters. Moreover, ARDI will build the capacity of at least 500 (potential) entrepreneurs specifically youth and women regarding/in terms of entrepreneurship related knowledge and skills. Entrepreneurs will learn about the existent opportunities for starting their own businesses and will be supported in developing their businesses through adequate (sector specific) trainings, consultancy services and targeted investments by the program. Cumulatively, during the project life time around 125 startup companies will be created of which 100 will be youth business startups.

The program will additionally support 15 existing businesses, including rural (farmer's) cooperatives that can help to enhance the economic base of the communities and create additional employment opportunities. Cumulatively, over 1,000 short and long term rural jobs will be created as a result of the ARDI program.

Program Implementation Phases

In order to realize the program objectives, ARDI has a comprehensive, and yet, clear program design and methodology. This encompasses the implementation of a targeted and interrelated set of interventions that can be categorized under six intervention groups: *Community Competitiveness Analysis, Value-chain Assessments, Non-Financial Support Services, Financial Support Services, Infrastructural Development, and Environmental Protection.*

Community Competitiveness Analysis: Using the Heifer International methodology, ARDI identifies and maps the competitive advantages of communities, existent marketing opportunities and underserved markets related to the competitive areas.

Value Chain (VC) Assessments: ARDI identifies specific issues in the high potential VCs of target community. Based on the results of these assessments communities develop operational plans to address the main constraints of each VC.

Non-Financial Support: The program offers technical assistance in the form of consultancy and trainings on topics related to entrepreneurship and small business development, as well as build the capacity of VC players to reach markets.

Financial Support: ARDI invests in economic activities that contribute to local economic growth and employment. This includes small grants in support of community based economic activities of youth and women startups and capital investments to support cooperative approaches.

Infrastructural Development and Environmental Protection: The program improves community infrastructure and creates increased construction employment taking into account potential adverse environmental impact of program activities.

Evaluation: ARDI applies sound performance monitoring and evaluation approaches which serve as critical instruments for program management.

2.2 Program Objectives

The Local Economic Development component increases the use of best practices and methodologies among stakeholders for building rural community-based economic development and entrepreneurship through:

- ✓ Identification and promotion of community competitive advantages
- ✓ Promotion of market access
- ✓ Promotion of entrepreneurship
- ✓ Promotion of good governance.

The Small Scale Infrastructure development component applies participatory eight-step Infrastructural Planning and Implementation (IPI) methodology to:

- ✓ Improve community infrastructure and promote increased construction employment

The Rural Environmental Protection component identifies solutions to mitigate environmental pressures on the community and thus contributes to the sustainability of community economy, through:

- ✓ Increased awareness and knowledge of environmental issues in the target communities and respective mitigation measures.

2.3 Program Components

Component 1 In order to enhance the competitiveness of the target communities, ARDI will identify communities' competitive advantages and establish action plans to support and promote community enterprises. ARDI applies Heifer's Community Strategic Development Model (CSDM), which focuses on capitalizing community strengths and leads to systematic solutions that have the potential to produce more sustainable and effective outcomes. Through comprehensive assessments, ARDI:

- Collects information about community resources and needs
- Identifies and addresses the real problems and promotes strengths of the community
- Leads a participatory community-driven planning and development process.

Based on the community competitiveness analysis conducted in 20 rural communities in the selected Marzes, 12 communities with highest potential for economic growth and job creation will be selected.

Subsequently, in the selected communities, VC assessments will be conducted on (environmental conservation oriented) high potential VCs that best tap into the advantages of communities. The VC assessments will identify the specific issues that business in the target communities have regarding market access and tailored solutions will be developed to address the identified issues in each VC. ARDI will work with communities on improving forward and backward linkages in the VCs, improving the physical and non-physical connection of rural businesses to markets through construction, access to information, and communication.

The next logical step is to stimulate entrepreneurship. ARDI will provide different levels of program activities including: 1) activities to create and maintain entrepreneurial culture; 2) training on entrepreneurship; 3) specific training programs for individuals who wish to create their own business or engage in entrepreneurial activities in the identified competitive areas, and 4) create an enabling environment through provision of (ongoing) technical and financial support services.

The quality of local economic governance very much affects the other action areas of the program and is therefore considered in all stages of program development. Sound economic

governance is often characterized as an essential governance functions that facilitates trade and expands participation in markets. To address this issue the program will set out to enhance dialogue and information sharing on the issues faced by rural businesses, develop public and private cooperation and partnerships aimed at tackling the issues raised and build the capacity of national and Local Self Governance bodies (LSGs).

Component 2 aims at improving community infrastructure in 12 communities/clusters to ensure sustainable access of community enterprises to markets; enhanced productive capacities and create increased construction related employment in the target communities.

Community infrastructure and assets can include economic infrastructure such as markets, roads, irrigation systems, disaster protection structures, etc. that will contribute to the development of the community as a whole. The implemented small scale infrastructural projects will provide immediate employment opportunities for local labor, and where necessary, include a local workforce development services that will facilitate the acquisition of practical/employable skills from the target communities.

Almost all of these interventions will involve some construction activities such as site-clearing, excavation, pipe laying, equipment installation, structure erection and soil grading, leveling, and compacting. Such activities can have potentially adverse environmental impact and therefore special attention will be paid to sound environmental evaluations that will identify such potential issues, and if necessary, suggest potential mitigation measures.

ARDI applies eight-step Infrastructural Planning and Implementation (IPI) methodology, which takes into account best practices regarding implementation of similar projects aimed at improving small scale infrastructure. Next to the environmental aspects of projects, the adopted IPI model prioritizes the promotion of active engagement of local population in all stages of the projects, including planning, management and implementation, construction, operation, and maintenance.

Component 3 aims at addressing any underlying threats to the environment, while implementing the program and working with farmers, processors and communities to increase the efficiency and profitability of their operations. The program will involve an expert to conduct environmental assessment which will help to identify the negative environmental externalities that are created by the program interventions and enhance the positive impact ARDI has on the environment. The program will look for creative and innovative ways to help the community enterprises deal with the byproducts of the production process and other negative externalities.

For this purpose, the program will pay a great attention to environmental aspects through all activities and stages of program implementation. ARDI will conduct Environmental Impact Analysis for specific interventions and will prepare environmental risk mitigation plans to monitor and reduce potential negative impact, as well as will integrate environmental protection best practices into the program scope.

The full Report from Armenia includes links to five further case studies.

ENGLAND

ACRE Member, **Community Action Norfolk**, carried out a rural proofing exercise of the County Council's budgeting process for its services. An outcome from this was rural issues being included within the Equality Impact Assessment that informed the budget setting. Community Action Norfolk was part of the strategic stakeholder group for the NHS Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP). Working with the Clinical Commissioning Group it also hosted three workshops for VCS organisations, to help them understand the STP process and how they might support its objectives.

SLOVAKIA

The Government of the Slovak Republic (SR) has established the Office of the Slovak Government Representative for the support of the least developed districts. VIPA SK considers this government decision a good example of helping the Slovak countryside. VIPA SK president Maria Behanovska is a member of the Working Group on Regional Development of the Office of the Slovak Government Representative for the support of least developed districts.

After long decades of debate on the necessity of removing regional differences, the S government has offered real tools to reduce these differences increase the competitiveness of the least developed regions and hence raise the quality of life. Act No. 336/2015 Coll. on the support of the least developed districts, and the amendments of some laws provide tools, measures and, of course, financial resources to put economic and social development and employment in motion. It supposes the support of a local initiative, a motivation for the joint process of towns and municipalities in the district, combined with measures at the level of self-governing region and at the central level.

Within this support, there are defined conditions for the districts covered by the special, preferential scheme and also tools for their support. Whether it is a priority approach to the support from European funds, or the conditions for obtaining investment incentives are considerably more favourable, when the minimum investment has decreased from 1.5 million to 200 thousand euros, or favourable conditions for job creation. This means the maximum concentration of support for economic activities so that they are very interesting for investors in particular; they automatically favour the least developed districts.

Special support for the least developed districts is also provided on the basis of Action Plans approved by the Government of the Slovak Republic.

The Action Plan is specific to each of the least developed districts, since each of these districts has its own specific causes of economic lag and requires a different concrete solution.

All of these tools serve a single goal - to give people in lagging districts jobs to ensure a better quality of life for their families, not to leave for work abroad, and have a place to return.

As a first, the Action Development Plan for the district of Kežmarok was approved by the government in February 2016. It has become a binding development plan for five years and is the basis for intensive cooperation between government, the self-governing region, the district, the towns and municipalities. Its goal is to reduce unemployment and support the creation of some 2 000 jobs by 2020. The plan projects a total budget of at least € 52 million, of which € 8 million is from private sources and € 44 million from public finances.

TURKEY

In 2005, The Project for Supporting the Infrastructures of Villages (KÖYDES) was put into action by the Ministry of the Interior during the preparation period of the ninth development plan of Turkey.

The project had the aim of providing infrastructure services to the rural districts that are deprived of those services. Major objectives of the project were to provide sufficient amount of drinking water, to improve the standards of the roads, sewerage provision and small-scale irrigation water supply. While it may be the most far reaching project aiming to regenerate infrastructure services for rural districts, it has also been criticized for being inattentive to the priorities of the population living in those areas, providing insufficient technical support and also insufficient supervision after conduct. Considering both the successes and shortages of this project would be beneficial for a better insight of the existing condition.

Case studies in support of Recommendation 2

"Community-led rural development programmes, such as LEADER, need to be designed so that they support and meet the needs of local people"

DENMARK

The inhabitants of my village decided to build their own Village House and, against all odds, they managed to do this between 2001 and 2004. The house is owned and managed by the village - and it is "our house". A brief summary is below and further information can be found **here**

Economic support was sought and given from the Municipality, the central Government and EU (§33 at the time)"

The village is small with only 3-400 inhabitants.

The municipality had given money to all the villages in the municipality to build a club house/cafeteria/changing-rooms (for football) – our village was the last on the list. € 100,000 was available for this. The municipality was selected by the government to be one of the few to receive LEADER-funding (this is part of the LEADER+ period), but the municipality turned down the offer. They did not see themselves as a rural municipality and did not want to pay the € 10.000 to manage the LEADER-process.

The inhabitants of the village had other / bigger plans and dreams. They wanted a "village hall" – a much bigger building containing everything we could dream of room and facilities for indoor sport, meetings, Internet-café, cafeteria, changing rooms, places for kids / youth clubs and office space for the organizations of the village.

A 'committee' was elected at an open meeting in the village to represent all inhabitants and their needs. The committee worked with architects to ensure the building was designed to include the best possible combination of all the requirements and with the Municipality to ensure approval to build the hall. There was substantial fundraising activity to raise the anticipated 1-1.5million Euros.

It was important to ensure that everyone was involved and could take' ownership' of the building from inhabitants to local associations.

Due to the very strict regulations for building permits in rural areas, this is normally very difficult and time consuming. In our case it was unfortunate, that the Municipality had not kept their promise to the Region – and the Region decided to use our permit as a kind of hostage, to squeeze the Municipality.

Funding:

- € 13,000 from a national fund for rural development was the first funding we received
- € 120,000 from a national fund with focus on sport and architecture
- € 500,000 from EU/Region – part of the § 33, with very strict time-limited conditions
- € 100,000 from sponsors and private donors
- The municipality agreed the use of the € 100,000 for the house if it was free of debts when completed. This condition meant that mortgage loans could not be created. This made it extremely difficult.

Work started in 2001 and the project lasted for 3 years. The house was established free of debts at a financial cost of € 900,000 by using a huge number of volunteer hours.
The house is well used by and for local people.

Provided by Kirsten Birke Lund (ELARD)

ENGLAND

ACRE manages the Rural Community Buildings Loan Fund on behalf of Defra. It provides small amounts of loan finance (up to £20,000) for capital projects. The projects are led and managed by the community but supported by ACRE Network member organisations, often for many months and years.

Lund is a village in the East Riding of Yorkshire and is not classed as a deprived area but there are DWP (benefit) claimants and residents with long term illness. It has 140 households with around 310 residents in the village. The original Village Hall, built in 1924, was inefficient and therefore costly to maintain with no outdoor space. A hall with safer access for young and old was required. The committee managing the hall worked hard to gain the support of the whole community and worked with their local ACRE Network member, Humber & Wolds RCC, throughout the project.

Limited access to grants and trusts and a failed BIG Lottery bid meant that the committee had to consider where funding for the new Hall was to come from and a loan formed part of the funding package. £218,000 was raised by the community and £40,000 from local trusts and charities. It was hoped that repayments for the loan could be covered by the Feed in Tariff payments (a payment received for generating electricity).

In order to meet the criteria for applying for a loan from ACRE the project had to address the social, environmental and economic benefit to the community. Therefore Lund Village Hall Committee decided to replacement the village hall on a new site to provide a larger energy and carbon efficient hall with additional outdoor facilities and disabled access. The new hall needed to provide space for family celebrations, indoor sports and be used by the Parish Council for meetings.   It intended to house memorials currently located in the old hall. Overall it wanted to be a hub that people wanted to meet in and make use of.

Lund Village Hall, opened in May 2016, has a ground source heat pump; a permaculture garden and the Tree Council have funded 256 trees on the site. Unfortunately plans for a grasscrete car park and installation of photo voltaic panels were not possible. New activities such as indoor bowls, art classes, yoga and table tennis now take place. Films and plays were being shown in the old hall and have returned. It is possible to open out the Hall and attach a marquee so it is ideally placed for wedding receptions. The community have not considered incorporating a shop or other commercial type activity at this point. The hall is a focal point for community activity. There is scope for increasing income through adult education and catering and reducing costs as the building is energy efficient.

The new hall has provided a sense of ownership and encourages use and the development of activity, which automatically increases the social value and financial viability of the hall. It was necessary to bring together all the knowledge and extensive life experiences of the committee, with support from external agencies, in order to provide the new facility for the community.

Deborah Clarke, ACRE

LEADER funding for Community Shops

The Chalk and Cheese Local Action Group in the county of Dorset provided funds, under the LEADER measure of the national Rural Development Programme, which enabled the creation of the community shops in the villages of Broadwindsor and Thorncombe,.   These two villages were each threatened with the closure of a privately-owned village shop.   In each case, a village action group was formed, and it gained the support of the village people for the creation of a community shop. In Broadwindsor, the action group attempted to buy the existing shop from the private owner, but he asked for too much money.   So, instead, they purchased a disused telephone exchange building and prepared plans to convert it into a shop.   The Local Action Group agreed to give a grant of £29,000 (about €35,000) towards the total cost of £39,000 (about €47,000) of converting and equipping the building.   In Thorncombe, the village action group was able to take over the existing shop, and the Local Action Group gave a grant towards refurbishment and equipment.

These two community shops are each now managed by a Community Benefit Society, which is a non-profit organisation in which villagers have membership shares.   In each case there is a professional shop manager with retail experience, supported by a team of volunteers who (on the basis of an agreed rota) act as staff for the shop.   There is a good level of commitment among the village people, and notably among those who have subscribed membership shares, to use the shop from their daily purchases and to contribute to the voluntary management of the shop.   In addition, the national postal service (Royal Mail) provides postal services in each community shop for a limited number of hours each week.   These initiatives have the effect of sustaining a crucial service within these two villages

Provided by Michael Dower (PREPARE)

Finance raised within the community

The creation of a community shop in another English village – Westbury sub Mendip in Somerset – illustrates how a crucial community facility can be created and maintained with the funds and volunteer efforts of the village community.   For at least 80 years, this village had a commercial shop run by a succession of shop keepers as tenants of an historic building in the centre of the village. The shop was also a post office, and the tenant lived above the shop.   In recent years, the turnover of tenants became very frequent, and the community became concerned that the next change would see the closure of the shop.   After a public meeting, it was agreed that the attempt should be made to buy the building and to create a shop run by the community.   A Committee was formed, which took advice from the Plunkett Foundation on how this might be achieved.   The Foundation suggested the formation of a Community Benefit Society, on a non-profit basis, funded by membership shares (one per person) and managed by a committee to be elected by these members. This Society was formed; and there are now 260 shareholding members, which represents about one third of the population.

The Society negotiated the purchase of the historic building for £175,000.   Towards this, it raised £52,000 through the membership shares, and was offered an interest-free loan of £50,000 repayable over 25 years by a public spirited individual.   After trying unsuccessfully to secure a commercial loan for the remaining money, the Committee decided to launch a bond issue through which local residents would provide loans (each of £500 or more) earning 3% over base rate repayable after 5 years.   This bond issue raised £139,000, enough to complete the purchase of the building and leave about £60,000 to spend on repairs and conversion of the building.   The society took over the building in October 2014, with the shop tenant still in place.   There followed a long phase of repairs to the building, refurbishment of the shop and re-negotiation of the contract with the Post office.

The tenant shopkeeper left in January 2016, and the Committee took over responsibility for the shop, which is run by a manager, a deputy manager and two paid staff, who all work part-time and between them cover the contracted hours for the post office. The shop counter is manned by about 20 volunteers, working on a rota.   The upstairs space has been converted into a flat to be let at a commercial rent.   Further funding has been secured from the Post Office Community Fund to

support the upgrade of the post office facilities; and from National Lottery funds to transform the entire ground floor of the premises and to carry out work on the adjoining garden space

The Committee is acutely aware of its commitment to repayment of bonds and of the long-term private loan.   Meanwhile, the shop is flourishing, the post office services is being provided, and the volunteer activity continues.   The shop has a current turnover of about £150,000 per year, with around 750 customer visits per week and an average spend of about £4 per customer.   The story demonstrates the remarkable resources of energy and finance which can be generated within a village community by the communal desire to sustain the crucial community service of a shop and post office.

Provided by Michael Dower following a field visit to Westbury Shop

GERMANY

Creation and Role of Village Centres of four Villages in Brandenburg

The four points below are relevant to each of the four village projects:

- correlation of community spirit and need for village centres
- role of civic engagement in creation and using of villages centres
- the diversity of local conditions, forms and programmes
- possible role to meet actively the demographic change.

The four villages are typical for village structures in Brandenburg. It should be noted that there was a relatively high level of community spirit and need for communality as well as for village centres, because the villages had belonged to the GDR and so had suffered some serious social set-back after the political change of 1990:

- loss of community relations in form of cooperative farms,
- high unemployment especially in agriculture,
- decrease of infrastructure and services,
- loss of local self-determination by municipality reforms.

Wulkow and its Eco-Storage (Oekospeicher)

Wulkow, 230 inhabitants (1990: 156!), near to Frankfurt (Oder), the German-Polish border
The initiative to create a village center was launched by an association, which was founded in 1990 and, together with the former municipal council, set up an "ecologically oriented " village development (In 1990 Wulkow was still a separate municipality of 156 inhabitants). The association founders had chosen an ex-grain store and called it "Oekospeicher"; so the name of the association became "Oekospeicher-Verein (Eco-Storage Association).   A number of civic ecological projects have been created successfully. In 1994 the association and the village received the "German Environment Award" 8as the first and until now only village to have done so. In 2000 Wulkow became an external project of the EXPO 2000 as a "model of ecological village development". Despite these successes the village was not developing a sense of community. After the village shop and the village restaurant had been closed, there was no meeting place in the village.

In 2007 the club decided after a two days externally moderated future workshop to reconstruct and expand the old storage building into a village community center. After subsidies had been rejected, the purchase and expansion of the storage was financed by "member loans", which brought of more than DM 100,000, and most members waived interest. Three ardent retirees as former builders and an energy engineer undertook the main work on a voluntary basis supported by the whole village. At

weekends, clay walls were built. Everyone, including visitors, was able to buy a mud brick with his name. Within the framework of an annual youth work camp, young people from all over the world were involved. This resulted in a four storey building with two larger rooms, several work rooms and beds for guests. It houses a voluntary small shop with biological and regional products as well as a privately run restaurant, which can be economically viable thanks to favorable agreements with the association and the various events which are being organized in the Oekospeicher

Certainly a somewhat extraordinary project that shows what a community can create on its own, with its own ideas and using its own potential. Not only the association, but the entire village has been growing as a community especially by their collective unpaid civic engagement.

The example shows as well that a village community in small villages can develop diverse and original forms of the use of the village center, which mostly result mainly from civic engagement and creative shaping.

In Wulkow regular evenings in which foreign travels by the villagers are reported and corresponding national meals are prepared and eaten.   "Folkfestival at the Storage" is held annually and time and content coincides with an International Youth Work Camp. A mutual group visits with a Romanian partner village, the annual Vitaregio Day, where regional villages are invited to workshops on topical themes of common interest. This supports the preservation of the restaurant and the voluntary village shop as well as reading evenings, showing movies and dancing events.

Own potential is being used , so as involving young villagers and pensioners, as well as contacts to scientific institutions and inviting artists and exhibitions which make Wulkow a "livíng" village with a rich community life. The village center is the heart of it.   Former shifts between old and new settlers did disappear by common activities (Wulkow grew since 1990 from 156 to 230 inhabitants).

A good functioning village center may also become helpful for integration of refugees. For example a Syrian evening was held in Wulkow. A meal was cooked and eaten together in order to experience other cultures. At the same time seed initiative was advertised "the 15th Garden", an international network that supports agricultural and horticultural production in war zones through seed donations, workshops and solidarity.

Gessin and its "Mittelhof" – Association

Gessin –has 75 inhabitants, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (typical size for a lot of villages in Brandenburg. Gessin is of special interest because it demonstrates the real possibility for small rural settlements to survive as a living and viable village if there exists or is a developing active community.

The project began with a stable on the occasion of a planned common Silvester celebration a resident made available his old horse stable. From this first joint action came the idea to turn a former farm into a village center and found a club. Various cultural projects and a village shop were created.

By voluntary work and without any external financial support they reconstructed what originally had begun with the stable to a village centre – the "Mittelhof" (farm in the centre of the village). Similar to a farmer's family the community do everything together from operating the communal kitchen to cultural activities in the leisure time such as billiards, football, meditation dance for women, regular activities for children and running the shop.

The men in the community, many isolated when the women left to work outside the community every day, learnt to cook and they started to operate a communal kitchen for the village. This also meant that they were all eating healthily.   In addition a new project is that the association has

creates "Neues Altenteil", a housing community with four apartments and a community room around the village centre.

Bruchmuehle and its "Citizen and Creative House"

Bruchmuehle is near to Berlin with 560 inhabitants. A special situation of the village Bruchmuehle is its geographical position. In the middle of the Bundesland Brandenburg is situated the German Capital BERLIN, being an own Federal State, and Bruchmuehle with its 1.750 inhabitants is situated near to the edge of Berlin. That means the majority of the active people work in Berlin which can be reached every 45 minutes by public transport.

Many people were afraid that Bruchmuehle would become a "Schlafdorf" (sleeping village) or dormant village. Engaged citizens did not want to accept this as well as the fact that there was no shop, no restaurant, no meeting room, no medical care. A public questionnaire was the prerequisite for the local council to be able to implement the concept of a village center for Bruchmühle at the municipality of Altlandsberg. The village is a local part of the municipality Altlandsberg, which is a town and its municipal parliament has to decide about the development of the villages which belong to that municipality. The majority of the villages in Brandenburg came into that dependent position and lost its former self-determination.

A Youth and Culture Association of Bruchmuehle has been founded to promote the process. It took ten years until the concept became a reality. The construction was supported by 800.000EURO and the initiators were able to raise additional funds. The association organized a lot of civic engagement and voluntary work, organized the cooperation of the villagers in the construction of the building, and in particular the design and maintenance of the outdoor facilities.

The core of the village community grew step by step and there is a rich cultural life in and around the village centre, operated by the main Youth and Culture Association supported by other associations and interest groups. The maintenance of the village centre and one paid employee are being financed by the municipality.

Wittbrietzen and its Village Community House (Dorfgemeinschaftshaus)

Wittbrietzen has 1.600 inhabitants and is in the Southern part of Brandenburg. In Wittbrietzen, a village that arose in the 13th century, an old stable building served as a social meeting place in the middle of the village for many years. Thanks to a creative female Mayor of the village, who is also a member of the parliament of the city of Beelitz (the village belongs to the municipality town of Beelitz), a plan was created to build a real village community house in the village center. The project was sponsored by the city of Beelitz and the villagers participated in the construction with a lot of civic engagement. The old stable building was rebuilt and connected by a newly built hall, which represents a large hall, with an already existing building, which contained a "citizens' shop". This resulted in a multi-purpose building which, like a full-time force, is financed by the city.

The village community house in Wittbrietzen contains a restaurant, which cooperates closely with the citizens' shop and a butcher shop. There is a regular market. Several associations organize a variety of forms of cultural activity and multi-generation events. Seniors can stay and work during the day.

The village community house in Wittbrietzen was created expressly to face the demographic change. In general, services and infrastructure in the villages should be considered from the perspective of actively addressing demographic change. Premature "shrink-back" of the infrastructure, supposedly as a necessary consequence of demographic change, can in the long run strengthen its negative consequences. The possible diversity of programs also includes the real possibility of designing

specific programs for different demographic groups - for children, young people and the elderly, for men and women. Intergenerational events and intergenerational encounters have not only become "fashion," but have also been an instrument for actively addressing demographic change. For example, the village community house Wittbrietzen organized such encounters of children from the day-care center with senior citizens. In the meantime, the plan has been developed to set up the "village center" next to the village community house as well as a "senior day center" and to combine the children's day-care facility into a multi-generational house.

Provided by Kurt Krambach, Association Village Movement

FINLAND

Mallu does the rounds is a project that provides an easy to access medical service to people in rural areas of Finland using the Mallu bus. The service covers an area of a potential 100,000 patients. Data collected from Mallu's daily activities is being used by health authorities to support the design of their existing service network, plus new operating models in South Karelia and nationwide. More information **here**

The Village Optical Fibre Network Cooperative of North-Western Kuhmo. This is a community broadband initiative that delivers fast broadband access to hundreds of residents in a sparsely populated region of Kuhmo in Eastern Finland. Villagers improved their access to service, rural business and tele-work opportunities and learned that bottom up initiatives and taking the future in their own hands can really make a difference. More information **here**

Republic of IRELAND

Flexibus is a fleet owning company based in Co. Meath, Ireland established in 2002. It serves the areas of Meath, Louth and Fingal (Co. Dublin). Unable to get operators with accessibility in 2002 the Board of Directors made a decision to invest in accessible vehicles to meet the demand of our passengers. Flexibus, a Social Enterprise, have expanded the services to include work with the Health Service Executive (HSE) and other disability service providers. It is the operator of first resort for transport services in Co. Meath as providers or co-ordinators of services. The range of services offered includes volunteer cars, accessible hospital service, and a self-drive programme with community groups in the county. Recruitment for staff is from the 'live register' through Solas or Meath Job Club and a comprehensive training scheme is in place. The Board of Directors are from the community and are answerable to the community.

Provided by Miriam McKenna, Meath Transport

LATVIA

Mobile care complex provide help in rural areas - Samaritan Association of Latvia has created 6 specially equipped vehicles which provide mobile care services. These vehicles have an autonomous power generator, shower with warm and cold water, a toilet, gas stove, washing machine, refrigerator, and specialized equipment for cutting hair and for foot care. This project is quite unique in Europe, with the creation of these vehicles it has enabled us to bring the service to the people and not the people to the services. Video can be seen **here**.

Provided by Anita Selicka, Latvian Rural Forum

WALES

Narberth Pool

Is the first community owned swimming pool in Pembrokeshire and the first low carbon one. It's energy needs are met by <u>Narberth Energy</u>, a Community Benefit Society operated in the interests of the people from Narberth and Pembrokeshire.

It is run for the benefit of the community at large, and all profits are re-invested back into the provision of this community owned and run service.

Solva Care

Solva Care is a not-for-profit social initiative, which has been set up by Solva Community Council to offer friendly, local support and help to those who need it in Solva and the surrounding area. It is a community based project focusing on social care. It was set up in 2015, in response to wishes of the local residents, to support individuals and families with a variety of services. The initiative has been extended following the success of the Pilot Project.

- The aims of Solva Care are to maintain and improve health and wellbeing by:
- enabling residents to stay in their own homes and remain part of the community
- offering a way to counteract loneliness, isolation and social disadvantage
- providing extra support for those who are caring for relatives

The Green Dragon Bus Service

A small group of people from Brynberian, Tegryn, Newport and Llangolman (Pembrokeshire) formed the Preseli Rural Transport Association in December 2002, with support from Pembrokeshire County Council. The PRTA with its Green Dragon Buses, Clydau car club, and scooter scheme is now well established and meeting the transport needs of people living in rural and isolated communities.

Antur Waunfawr

This social enterprise provides employment and training opportunities for people with learning disabilities in their own communities. Antur Waunfawr demonstrated that, by giving people the chance of working in the community, and thus serving the community, they would be accepted as equal citizens. Antur Waunfawr is committed to developing in a sustainable way – which means that protecting the natural environment and developing green businesses is integral to the values of the company.

Car Chums Pembrokeshire

The LEADER project in Pembrokeshire, Arwain sir Benfro, funded PACTO (Pembrokeshire Association of Community transport Organisations) to carry out a feasibility study to assess the potential for encouraging and facilitating lift-sharing in Pembrokeshire and the extent to which this could help to address unmet transport needs within and around the County. This has led to the Take Me Too Project creating and promoting a system to facilitate lift-sharing across rural Pembrokeshire known as Car Chums. The project will: address unmet transport needs; provide access to services, activities

and opportunities which are otherwise out of reach; build stronger more connected and resilient communities, and tackle issues of transport poverty.

Provided by Jessica Morgan, PLANED

Appendix B: Ranking of Importance of Infrastructure and Services for Rural Communities by Country

Infrastructure	Wales	Turkey	Germany	Armenia	Slovakia	Latvia	Moldova	England	Average	Rank
Drinking water	6	5	1	3.5	1	5	1	1	2.9375	1
Irrigation	9	7	10	3.5	5	2	3	9	6.0625	5
Electricity supply	2	2	2	3.5	2	3	2	2	2.3125	2
Sewerage provision	8	10	4	7.5	4	6.5	6	6	6.5	7
Public lighting	7	3	5	9	7	9	9	8	7.125	9
Roads	5	1	6	3.5	3	1	4	3	3.3125	3
Transportation	3	5	7	7.5	6	8	7	7	6.3125	6
Pavements	10	8	8	10	8.5	6.5	10	10	8.875	10
Broadband	1	5	3	3.5	8.5	4	8	4	4.625	4
Rural Economy Infrastructure	4	9	9	3.5	10	10	5	5	6.9375	8

Services	Wales	Turkey	Germany	Armenia	Slovakia	Latvia	Moldova	England	Average	Rank
Education facilities primary & secondary	2	9	6	3	3	4.5	4	3	4.3125	4
Education facilities infant & early years	3	8	2	3	1	2	6	4	3.625	1
Education university & Higher Education	8	10	9	3	4.5	12	5	7	7.3125	7
Health (doctors and hospitals)	1	12	3	3	8	1	1	1	3.75	2
Shops	4	2	5	7	2	4.5	8	6	4.8125	3
Social Care	5	11	7	8	8	7	2.5	5	6.6875	6
Dental provision	7	7	8	13	8	8.5	11	8	8.8125	11
Youth services	9	6	4	6	8	10.5	9	9	7.6875	8
Banks	11	3	11	10.5	4.5	3	10	10	7.875	9
Vets	12	1	12	3	12	8.5	7	12	8.4375	10
Libraries	13	4	10	10.5	8	10.5	12	11	9.875	12
Places to meet (village hall)	10	5	1	10.5	8	6	2.5	2	5.625	5
Other	6	13	13	10.5	13	13	13	13	11.8125	13

APPENDIX C

Sustaining rural services and infrastructure project survey

Name:

Organisation:

Region/County/Country:

Contacts for communication:

1. **Infrastructure**

Which of the following types of infrastructure are important in your rural community? Please rank in order of importance

Type of infrastructure	Please rank in order of importance from 1 to 10	In general terms what are the condition, sustainability and access to each in your rural community?	Please state who is the MAIN provider of the infrastructure: central Government, members of the community or another provider?
Drinking Water supplies			
Irrigation Water supplies			
Electricity supplies			
Sewerage provision			
Public lighting			
Roads			
Transport			
Pavements			
Broadband and telecommunications			
Rural economy related infrastructure (banks, markets and business facilities which could include cold storage and milk collection)			
We would be interested to know of providers other than the MAIN provider as well as any other comments you wish to make.			

2. Rural Services

Which of the following services are important in your rural community?

Rural Services	Please rank in order of importance from 1-12	Please state who is the main provider of the service: central Government, members of the community or another provider?
Education facilities – infant, kindergarten		
Education facilities –primary and secondary school		
Education facilities – higher education and university		
Health – Doctor and hospitals		
Shops		
Social care – baby clinics, chiropody & other services		
Dental provision		
Youth services		
Banks and financial services		
Veterinary services		
Libraries		
Place to meet (village or community hall or centre)		
Other service		

		Yes or No?
3. In general terms are services equally distributed, sustainable and accessible in your rural communities?		
4. Where within the structure of the settlement are services generally located?		
5. What main factor inhibits the better provision or threatens the future viability of rural services and infrastructure?		
6. What main factor favours the provision, viability and improvement of rural services and infrastructure?		

For the Country lead organisation:

Please provide the information below together with your summary of the information collected in Questions 1 to 6 above.

A. Settlements	Please state the % of population for each of these settlements in your Country?	Do you regard this category of settlement as rural? Please state yes or no
Cities		
Large towns		
Small town sometimes called a Market town		
Villages		
Scattered residences/hamlet		
State other		
Total		

Note that for the purposes of this survey a small town or village should not have a population of more than £10,000.

Other comments:

B. **Please provide case studies and examples, positive and negative, in provision of infrastructure and rural services. If appropriate, please name the project and donors if any.**

C. **What does your analysis imply for future action by rural people, service providers, governments and the European institutions?**

Appendix D

REPORT FROM THE PROJECT EVENT – SHIPHAM, SOMERSET, ENGLAND

The project event was held on 6 September 2017 at Shipham Village Hall in Somerset, England. Representatives from five partner Countries, ERP initiating bodies, local people (individuals and Councillors) and staff from ACRE Network organisations attended.   The project event supported the local rural economy by:

- Staying in local privately owned accommodation;
- Using a local business to supply catering and a meeting in a local community cafe;
- Hiring a community owned and managed building to hold the event;
- Using local community transport to visit two community owned and managed projects; Westbury sub Mendip Shop and Roxy Cinema in Axminster.

The aim was to share, discuss and adopt the draft Report, hear about the role of the European Rural Parliament and wider European initiatives and to share information about local projects as detailed below:

- The Smart Villages EU initiative and the ENRD working group provides an opportunity for partners in the ERP to share what works in rural communities more widely.
- The EESC initiative on villages and small towns as catalysts for rural development – this proposal provides additional support to the ERP research as it reinforces the material provided in this project report and the discussions at the project event.
- Education and Post Offices in Czech Republic.
- LEADER funding in the West of England: this one off programme has demonstrated what can be achieved in a short amount of time with targeted funding.
- Agents for change: supporting Somerset's vulnerable residents – this project demonstrates the importance of the development of rural strategy at local level through working with local agencies to understand need on the ground.
- Avalon Community Energy: this project demonstrated the need for flexible easily accessible funding for initial feasibility studies prior to significant investment.
- The importance of village centres in Brandenburg, Germany reinforced the message that working to maintain culture and provide services based around community space helps to create viable and sustainable communities. However the incentives need to be driven at local level. See the detailed case studies in **Appendix A.**

The discussions at the event were wide ranging providing some suggestions for minor additions and alterations to the Report, but more importantly the key findings and messages identified in the research were endorsed.

The following points offered by delegates at the event should be taken into account when considering how the recommendations in the Report can be taken forward:

- One size doesn't fit all. It is necessary to recognise the diversity of the different Countries, the mix of skills, the risks and the differences in public sector involvement. Funding programmes are not adapted to what is actually needed. The real potential of LEADER is not being fully utilised.
- The European Rural Parliament needs to act to become a strong voice as rural communities appear to have lost their 'strength of voice' at national level.
- The next generation need to be empowered and inspired to take a lead. Investing in communities to enable transition to the digital age is vital.
- Leadership in rural communities – should this come from participation by local activists and local people or by elected leaders or a mix of both? How can they work together especially where funding criteria and rules are not 'bottom up'?
- It's not always about 'top down' policy, but what local people want and need.
- The ERP needs to take into account where rural communities are not thriving as the case studies in this Report tend to focus on the successes. For instance there are communities where rapidly decreasing populations are creating inertia within the community and from the municipalities.
- Social enterprise is a growing phenomenon particularly in the UK. To what extent should it replace services traditionally delivered by statutory providers?

Deborah Clarke, ACRE

Appendix E

Partner Country Reports: These have been supplied separately to the ERP Co-ordinating Committee where they are in a format to be able to do so.