



Recommendations regarding

Philoxeniaplus project - European Territorial Cooperation

POLICY TO PROMOTE WELCOME AND ATTRACTIVENESS OF EUROPEAN COUNTRYSIDE FOR INDIVIDUALS AND BUSINESSES

Rural attractive territories, a chance to seize for the
future of Europe!

Within the Europe 2020 Strategy Framework

Partner MED: Local Employability (EM.LOC.)

Leadpartner of the Transnational Project



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Recommendations regarding the Policy to Promote Welcome and Attractiveness of European Countryside for Individuals and Businesses

**Lively and attractive countryside:
Chance to be tapped for Europe's future!**

Within the Europe 2020 Strategy Framework

Preamble

There are great differences between rural areas in terms of their demographic dynamics. Towards the end of the 20th century some of them were marked by a **slight demographic and economic decline**. However, these areas have managed to quickly re-gain the population growth during the recent years, while others have remained confronted to problems how to stabilise their population. It is typical for the latter that not only shops have massively been closing their doors, but also schools and other public institutions. In many villages and rural hamlets situation is becoming critical. If not remedied the rural wasteland, the picture of the future as often predicted in the past few years, is soon to become reality. Our villages might become predominantly inhabited by a limited secondary population only staying there during the summer season, few major owners of agricultural land and some retirees. On the other hand, it is known that even by a very large part of the population the concentration in urban areas is regarded as undesired.

It can thus be concluded that **a large proportion of the urban population actually wants to live in rural areas**. Many individuals and families from cities have been seeking to move to the countryside, looking for a new living environment and other social relationships than those in the urban areas. Vibrancy and new knowledge have been brought to the countryside by these new immigrants. By trying to take advantage of new opportunities and the economic, social and environmental potential offered by the countryside, they have set up new businesses. Due to lack of opportunities for employment and activity, but also because the rural environment has failed to draw up its own set of preferences their desire to stay in rural areas often remains a distant wish.

But there is a policy, which has set itself the objective to harmonise new development potentials offered by the rural environment by taking into account the new requirements of the young families tending to move there. The **Policy to Promote Welcome and Attractiveness of Rural Environment** is actually based on establishing innovative ways of welcome and support, tailored to people in the course of their migration or wishing to migrate in this environment. While the implementation of this policy has already become broad-based in France, it now comes down to the first attempts in many other European rural areas in particular in the Mediterranean countries including Greece, Cyprus, Malta, Italy and Slovenia.

By this "policy of welcome and support for new residents" new perspectives for geographical areas in question and their communities are provided. The policy in question is supporting the development of small businesses (micro-entrepreneurship), transfer of existing knowledge, responding to the demand for human resources from local businesses and promoting giving birth of new economic activities and competences. For this purpose local stakeholders are setting up new strategies and establishing new organisations for their implementation, but also using new tools and creating new partnerships. It is not only about keeping traditional business and employment in the countryside but also comes down to opening new potentials connected to new competences and new ways of life of these young families. So, for example, the micro-economy can contribute to the emergence of new economic activities in rural areas and at the same time meet the needs related to migration in this environment. Important to mention, the economy mainly consists of small and medium-sized enterprises by which the most new employments are opened up.

However, the individual initiative alone is not always sufficient and often needs additional support. Information on new opportunities is not always available and the support to holders of such projects is sometimes less well coordinated than desired. The costs of launching a new business may prove too high for an individual or a specific rural environment is just hardly apt to face difficulties due to its own poor recognition and, sometimes, inhospitability. So the Policy to Promote Welcome and Attractiveness of Rural Environment is focused on the creation of a better coordination of local actors when opening the actual potentials, including promotion of their own ranges of options, support to promoters and, as a consequence, facilitating the accommodation and integration of immigrants.

Implementation of this policy is also possible within your local environment. All it takes is some effort and ingenuity, since some experience has already been present elsewhere. Thus, it is not something entirely new and the implementation of this policy can be attached to existing examples of good practice. Not much more than some adjustment to local development planning issues is needed for its implementation.

Furthermore, it has to be highlighted that this policy **constitutes a profitable investment**, since its implementation is associated with low costs (one person responsible for local development, some organisational expenses, few brochures, and a website), especially if the costs are shared by a few villages or municipalities. This policy allows a gradual local development according to the needs of the existing population.

Finally, this policy may, at least in the experimental context, become part of the action programs of the European Union within the new program framework named Perspectives 2014 - 2020. In terms of its promoted intelligent and sustainable economic development including the social dimension it fits well in the framework of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

In this context it is essential, however, to collaborate with your political representatives and encourage them to integrate this policy in their respective thematic and regional operational programs. If your initiative is positively responded, this shall open you the access to funds you will need to implement the local development policies including the Policy to Promote Welcome and Attractiveness of Rural Environment. It is essential to act now, since the set-up of the contents of these operational programs (both general guidelines and concrete steps) is being shaped right at this moment. June will probably be too late. The Policy to Promote Welcome and Attractiveness of Rural Environment in terms of promotion of countryside development is possible to implement in your environment, **but the decision must be taken now.**

I. Even in your local environment the Policy to Promote Welcome and Attractiveness of Rural Environment is possible to implement.

Even in your local environment the Policy to Promote Welcome and Attractiveness of Rural Environment is possible to implement since it has already been done so in many EU-countries, especially in France and some Mediterranean countries. By following the already existing practices and appropriate adapting The Welcome and Attractiveness Policy can be implemented in your local environment and you can fully benefit from it. In this way you can contribute to the economic development of rural areas and to effectively address the issue of economic and demographic demise. **The recommendations described below should help you make the first steps setting up your own Policy to Promote Welcome and Attractiveness of Rural Environment.**

1st recommendation: Inform and Inspire Yourself! It Has Already Been Done!

First, find all out about it! Some of the already existing websites may help you understand both the general principles and the details of this policy and how to implement it. Examples:

- France: www.installation-campagne.fr/
www.referentiel-accueil.fr/
These sites are edited by Collectif Ville Campagne.
- Greece: www.emloc.gr (see Philoxenia and PhiloxeniaPlus sections)
- On the European level see the PhiloxeniaPlus Project website: www.philoxeniaplus.eu

General information and various examples of the local approach provided by these pages may help you create your own Policy to Promote Welcome and Attractiveness of Rural Environment¹.

¹ In this context please refer to the article Collecting Experiences and Methodologies of the Network for Hosting the New Immigrants and Businesses, published by the French Limousin regional team. It is a very rich collection of experiences (unfortunately available only in French).
<http://www.reseaurural.fr/centre-de-ressources/recherche/recueil-d%E2%80%99exp%C3%A9riences-et-de-m%C3%A9thodologies-du-r%C3%A9seau-d%E2%80%99accueil-de-nouv>

2nd recommendation: Do Never Stay Alone While Preparing!

The implementation of the Welcome and Attractiveness Policy involves commitment of the local personnel. Already at the very outset it is necessary to set up a core professional team of two or three individuals, of which one should be responsible not only for project management and implementation but also the compilation of the baseline document containing all relevant information (therefore at least one reference person should be appointed!).

This step requires the establishment of a body with power to lead, establish, and maintain contacts and networks of actors. The next step is to identify all human resources, meaning appropriate partners for the implementation the Welcome and Attractiveness Policy, such as your local experts, elected representatives, municipality communities, economic partners including advisers, matchmakers, and CEOs who all shall provide their opinions regarding the implementation of this policy.

While preparing the implementation of this policy it may turn necessary to draw up a special working group composed of the following members:

- **Animator**, responsible for project operation (responsible leader)
- **Secretariat** to support the animator with the administrative tasks.
- **Staff Board** (max 4 to 10 members) playing the role of a counselling body, providing suggestions. The discussion shall be supported by their experiences.

3rd recommendation: Design (a Good) Initial Idea!

It is important to carry out an all-encompassing baseline analysis of local needs (in terms of activities, involvement and competences of local experts, residential facilities, services, living environment, support, and hospitality), **and explore the reasons and motivations why someone would move to your rural environment** (living environment, return to the roots, possibility of a new beginning, new business or takeover of an existing, etc.).

For this purpose, it is necessary to encourage the participation and engagement of all stakeholders in your area. Among the levers of Welcome and Attractiveness Policy consider the following options the environment should be capable of providing:

- ✓ spreading of earnings within the environment itself (trade, services, etc.);
- ✓ supply of residential facilities or building land adapted to the needs of the inhabitants including those coming;
- ✓ business start-up support including diversification of services, digitisation, organisation of short courses, etc.;
- ✓ facilitated takeover or transfer of the existing businesses;
- ✓ support of search for employment including companies and individuals;
- ✓ range of the available services adapted to the need of the inhabitants including those coming;
- ✓ facilitated immigrants' integration;
- ✓ improved image and offerings both in external and internal sense;
- ✓ developing a welcome culture.

Your Project Manager should play the core role as animator and central coordinator. By this person the initial analysis of needs and existing potentials shall be performed. In terms of how to meet and exploit these, an appropriate strategy should be formed based on the results of this analysis. Use this strategy to shape your approach to the relevant institutions. After all, you must be apt to convince the latter by demonstrating your way towards the objectives and showing that you are provided all the tools and guidelines needed.

4th recommendation: Establish Common Diagnostics - involve second opinion to confirm initiatives

During the process of creation of your working group (led by a responsible person) a public presentation and discussion shall be organised. This form of a meeting or seminar shall be possible broad-based (20 to 50 participants). Its purpose shall be to present the Welcome and Attractiveness Policy to a broader local community, elected representatives and all other stakeholders in the rural development project.

Meetings of this type are essential to present and clarify the initiatives and involve your local stakeholders. Furthermore, during these discussions new solutions and options might emerge. The discussion on the existing issues is facilitated and common diagnostics, guideline confirmations (at least one) and an assessment of the already existing opportunities may follow. Meetings of this type allow monitoring the latest dynamics of demographic development and work done so far, but also following up further requirements and the existing offer.

By these meetings the elected representatives' and local population's awareness and knowledge are strengthened and appropriate acknowledgment of initiatives provided. In this way the operational character of the core ideas (and details) is clearly demonstrated and making the necessary contacts supported.

Even if some additional effort is required to organise these meetings, their benefit is obvious. After all, a broader reflection is initiated on how to enhance the newcomer-friendliness, and, in a more general view, the development of countryside as a whole. The exchange of experiences, good practices and external testimonies shall contribute to a better understanding of the development of this policy.

Meetings of this kind contribute to change the inhabitants' view on their own environment and demonstrate the full potential brought by the changes in terms of repopulation and, consequently, creation of new small businesses.

5th recommendation: Produce a Baseline Document for the Preparation of Project

A high quality baseline document may prove helpful. The document shall summarise the main idea of the project, explaining in which way it responds to

the existence of certain needs, and displaying the entire set of. It should enable a convincing approach to local authorities and institutions (mayor, regional authorities, ministries, administrative bodies, etc.). At this moment (1st semester 2014) **it is crucial to promote the idea of the Welcome and Attractiveness Policy, compose a starting project and on this basis apply for appropriate funding.** »Details« of the implementation of the idea and the development of the »system« to promote welcome and attractiveness of the countryside can wait for later.

Other aspects of the policy shall be developed at a later stage, including the creation of the system to detect the persons potentially interested in settling in a rural environment, setting up the initial reception, preparation of strategies to support business sectors, system to monitor the satisfaction of new residents after their migration and promotion of sustainable success. If included in the regional development plans concerning the rural areas, these aspects shall be focused on within the regional financing framework during the period 2015-2020. At this point it should be reminded that various experiences already exist elsewhere.

6th recommendation: Establish Your First Institutional Contacts

Implementation of the Welcome and Attractiveness Policy requires collusion between several institutions and structures of power. It is about the development of the organisation of local cooperation between different actors such as communities, consultative bodies, associations and companies. **To manage the operational work such a cross-regional organisation is necessary and helps you identify opportunities, conduct research, gather information and provide support to individuals who wish to settle in rural areas, or create or take over an existing business.** The local level can be defined by a territory of a municipality or community of municipalities. Next to the district and regional ones this level is essential in terms of financing, communicating and evaluating the Welcome and Attractiveness Policy, but also providing expert help including diagnostics and long-term development.

So the contacts shall be established in order to develop a culture of collusion between different levels with the objective of responding to three key questions: What is financed by whom? Why? With what requirements? Establishing contacts also facilitates the dissemination of ideas of the Policy to Promote Welcome and Attractiveness of Rural Areas.

Furthermore, it is highly advisable to establish contacts with further institutions, such as regional authorities, agencies for the implementation of community programs, etc. ...

If the Welcome and Attractiveness Policy is integrated in the regional development programs, the acquisition of financial assets (at least partially) to implement this policy may also be defined by these at the first stage (see Part 2) since this is more or less an experimental phase. It is crucial, therefore, to keep contact with relevant authorities and regional (inter-municipal) councils if

your project is of municipal character or city government and other local authorities if your project is of regional character.

7th recommendation: Communicate WIDELY the BACKGROUND idea and pass your initial experience to other rural areas.

The ideal would be to design a network of a number of local areas (either municipal or inter-municipal) to promote both exchanges and discussions on the possibility of developing Policy to Promote Welcome and Attractiveness of Rural Areas. In this case not only the policy implementation-related costs would be mutually shared, but also a way would be opened for a strengthened-up position of rural areas when discussing the allocation of financial and technical resources at both regional and national level.

By no means shall a state of competition be created by promoting the circulation of information, learning from others and providing guidance to others. On the contrary, in this way the options are multiplied to obtain information relevant to the development of new projects. The wider the idea of promoting welcome and attractiveness of the countryside is disseminated, the more likely your opinion will be taken into account when creating your region's development plan. Dissemination of the idea shall help you join the efforts for its implementation. The estimates of the intended measures this way obtained will help you defend the interests of this strategy focused on the direct provision of hospitality and keeping the population in a given area.

II. It is now the time to introduce the Policy to Promote Welcome and Attractiveness of Rural Areas.

The bodies by which the operational programs of the regional development (RDP) are at this moment being elaborated need to timely recognise the importance of the rural development in terms of ensuring regional cohesion and integration. For this purpose **at least one of their guidelines must be dedicated to the development of the rural areas and measures to implement the Policy to Promote Welcome and Attractiveness of the Rural Areas.** This shall include support of the projects, communication, global analyses on development potential, creation of local development plans, professional education of stakeholders and new residents. This will allow a more efficient use of European funds (especially agricultural). The above recommendations are written with a view to demonstrate that for all of the above, there are real possibilities for realisation within the Europe 2020 Strategy. However, all this needs to be specified and entered in the work programs financed by the European Union.

8th recommendation: Convince your regional and national authorities of the importance of territorial cohesion at the rural level as a tool to receive funding within the programming period 2014-2020.

The Welcome and Attractiveness Policy also represents an important tool to cope with the consequences of the economic crisis and to accelerate the economic recovery. Social cohesion not only requires promotion on the inter-

regional level, but also on the rural one. For this reason your local actors and stakeholders should be the first to clearly indicate this aspect in their 2014-2020 plans. Welcome and attractiveness represent a profitable social investment which only should provide benefits to the local and regional structures. A survey concerning the French District of Auvergne was issued by the National Research Institute of Technical Sciences for Environment and Agriculture (IRSTEA) in 2011 showing that the newcomers' consumption between 2001 and 2006 indeed contributed to new openings or preservation of existing employments. In 2006 the contribution amounted to about 2.3% of all employments in the district. Of course, great differences (of between 1.7 and 3.3%) were noted between municipalities. From 2001 to 2006 the immigrants have spent ca. €74 million in their local environment in the average directly, this figure also varying from municipality to municipality.

EU Institutional Support

Nevertheless, local stakeholders and actors should be aware that they will never be left alone to make this step. A variety of financing options for such policies are provided by the European Union, if only the national and regional authorities integrated them in their development plans².

In terms of the European Budget and funds the year 2013 including at least the first semester of 2014 has been marked by a transition in the direction of the new programming period 2014-2020. There are some novelties present (especially at the national and macro-levels), but also elements of continuity with the previous programming period.

What definitely remains unchanged for these regions is the possibility of obtaining funding for specific projects in rural areas through financial tools, such as European structural funds. These are subject to a new classification following the new Directive issued by the European Commission. Its purpose is to align funding rules and workflow, and, in particular, to improve the efficiency.

Europe 2020

Since 2014 the Community Programs must be based on priorities (reasonable, sustainable and inclusive growth) and contribute to the implementation of these towards the achievement of common goals³ of the Europe 2020 Strategy. This in particular means development of the following areas:

- Employment
- R&D and innovations
- Environmental protection
- Education
- Decrease in poverty and social exclusion

² Please consult the following website to find more information on the guidance by the European Commission regarding the programming process in each Member State:

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/what/future/program/index_fr.cfm

http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/europe-2020-in-a-nutshell/targets/index_fr.htm

In a very appropriate way the described development of territorial cohesion matches the above objectives in view on the rural areas. Projects within the Policy to Promote Welcome and Attractiveness of the Rural Areas to individuals and businesses are indeed in full accordance with the Europe 2020 Strategy⁴. To be more precise, a well-structured Policy to Promote Welcome and Attractiveness of the Rural Areas based on the needs of the rural areas shall serve as an additional tool for a **smart, sustainable and inclusive growth** of the European countryside. Still, it is (at the moment) not at all clear if the goals and guidelines of the Policy will actually become part of the regional or topic-related operational programs.

The above described eight recommendations clearly show that during the period 2014-2020 projects related to the Welcome and Attractiveness Policy may be provided support from the EU funds, but this support needs first to be obtained.

Search for how to fund the Welcome and Attractiveness Policy

9th recommendation: Look for relevant information regarding the options offered by the European Social Fund (ESF)

The general objective of the ESF, one of the EU Structural Funds, is to reduce poverty and social exclusion. For this purpose the Fund seeks to improve job opportunities, education and training of those unemployed, especially the young and long term unemployed. In addition, it is necessary to take into account that 20% share of the ESF is earmarked for measures for social integration and support for disadvantaged groups, such as migrants or marginalised groups. All this is in one way or another related to our countryside.

So do not hesitate for too long. Get as soon as possible in touch with the your authorities and present your interest regarding the Welcome and Attractiveness Policy. Put yourself clearly on the side of the rural development. Find out who your contact persons are (names, email addresses, telephone numbers) and call for an interview!

<http://ec.europa.eu/esf>

<http://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=524&langId=el#gr>

10th recommendation: Seek out information about the options offered by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)

The mission of the ERDF is to reduce regional imbalances and promote structural adjustment of regional economies. All European regions may receive funding from the ERDF, although the regions lagging behind enjoy a preferential status.

³For example, activities of the financial sector, digital services, tourism, supporting growth and employment in rural areas.

As proposed by the European Commission, the regulation foresees a support to small and medium-sized enterprises of up to 80% (lower threshold) in the developed regions and up to 50% (lower threshold) in the less developed regions. For more information, please consult the link below and don't hesitate to call: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/manage/authority/authority_en.cfm.

By ERDF the regional operational programs are funded. These must include at least one guideline aimed at rural development. Inform your regional administrative bodies about this.

11th recommendation: Find out about the opportunities offered by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)

By EAFRD a balanced development of rural areas in the context of the Common Agricultural Policy is promoted (25% co-financed by the CAP). The program has as its main objective to improve the competitiveness of agriculture and forestry, but projects for local development driven by local stakeholders are also financed, which includes the Local Communities For Local Development Project, formerly known as LEADER, promoting transition to a low emission economy and concern for the economic diversity (creation of many small businesses opening new jobs).

http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/agriculture/general_framework/l60032_fr.htm

Here, too, there are potentials for the implementation of the Policy to Promote Welcome and Attractiveness of Rural Areas ready to exploit.

12th recommendation: Also obtain information regarding the options offered by the New Program for Employment and Social Innovation.

This new program (PESI 2014-2020) shall include elements of the so-called PROGRESS (EURES-financed micro-financing programs). It shall also support development and integration of policies for social investment, development options for various policies, pilot policies (and, to add, why not the Policy to Promote Welcome and Attractiveness of Rural Areas?). In terms of social experiments, the most promising policies are expected to be later supported by the European Social Fund for a further large-scale implementation.

See for more information: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1081&langId=en>

13th recommendation: Are there any other sources of funding?

RURBAN

The consequences of urban development may sometimes prove detrimental to the surrounding countryside. It may also turn difficult to provide access to social services for inhabitants at these places. Therefore, so-called urban-rural partnerships can serve as a tool to improve competitiveness of cities, smaller towns and countryside by deploying new approaches of flexible cooperation between the neighbouring areas.

The effectiveness of such partnerships is, of course, rather difficult by following what American economists call 'hard facts'. Still, there are already many examples of work and urban-rural cooperation⁵ running in Europe these days.

Policy to Promote Welcome and Attractiveness of Rural Areas could become an integral part of the cooperation between the urban and rural environment. In this way the cities would be partly discharged the burden of unemployment since fresh economic dynamism shall be established in disadvantaged areas affected by the decline in population and incomes.

To support sustainable urban-rural partnerships ERDF and EAFRD may complement each other.

European Territorial Cooperation

European Territorial Cooperation helps Europe's regions to collaborate in the direction of solving common problems. It is organised in three sets:

- Cross-Border Cooperation (financing projects linking regions and local authorities from both sides of the border);
- Transnational Cooperation (financing projects linking national, regional and local in the whole geographical area larger scale);
- Interregional Cooperation (programs aiming at encouraging the dissemination of best practices on innovation, energy efficiency, urban development, etc.).

By the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) assistance with finding a new job or acquiring the necessary knowledge is provided to employees who have lost or will lose their jobs as a result of structural changes in the global exchange, e.g., in the event of closure of the factory or the transfer of production to countries outside the EU.

For more information on the possibilities provided by your country's authorities see: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=581&langId=en>.

Integral Territorial Investment (ITI)

Integral territorial investment allows the EU Member States to implement operational programs in a horizontal manner and combine different budgets of several priorities into one or more operational programs in order to ensure the development strategy, integrated in a given area. Actions can also be co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), European Social Fund (ESF) and the Cohesion Fund (CF).

At this point the attention is to be drawn to the option of delegating the management of the ITI. This allows devoting a stronger role to "infra-regional" (i.e. local and urban) actors during preparation and implementation of the program. For more information please consult:

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/informat/2014/iti_fr.pdf

4 See e.g. http://bookshop.europa.eu/en/partnership-for-sustainable-rural-urban-development-existing-evidences-pbKN3213306/?pgid=y8dIS7GUWmdSR0EALMEUUsWb0000gq4O6pGI:sid=tvirVPW_hGriaeVAG4185easSuth_JssCs=?CatalogCategoryID=STYKABstM7MAAAEjmpAY4e5L, pages 4-5

It may also be inspiring to check the following experience from the French Limousin region: <http://www.auvergnecentrelimousin.eu/vie-de-lantenne/item/909-le-limousin-et-linvestissement-territorial-integre-iti> or http://www.partenariat20142020.fr/developpement_territorial_integre.html

14th recommendation: Request a consultation on the objectives of the work programs and the potential use of financial resources from European funds.

It is responsibility of the government bodies in charge for drawing up the operational programs to provide you advice (following the so-called Partnership Agreement, Common Provision Regulation). The said undertaking in respect of consultations is also mentioned in the Regulation of the European funds such as ESF and ERDF. National authorities must therefore include various stakeholders in the formulation of topics-related or regional operational programs financed by European financial funds. Ask for advice and attend various consultative meetings. For this purpose ask which of the meetings are held under the organisation your authorities.

15th recommendation: Persevere and Activate Yourself

You should know that you have the right not only to be advised but also to express your opinion. In this sense, each member state will be obliged to sign a special Partnership Contract which provides for consultation with all the interested. Mayors, professional associations, NGOs, etc. are therefore the right address to communicate your opinion. It is the key of the Europe 2020 Strategy. Be demanding and activate! Request the dates of the coming meetings organised by your regional administration. You must be presented the contents of future regional operational programs. In the event of any blockages contact your country-assigned geographical unit at the European Commission, Unit I, Directorate for the Social Market Economy in the Member States: ESP. You will be provided support!

http://ec.europa.eu/staffdir/plsql/gsys_www.branch?pLang=FR&pId=459&pDisplayAll=0
http://ec.europa.eu/staffdir/plsql/gsys_www.branch?pLang=FR&pId=447&pDisplayAll=0

16th recommendation: Write your requirements to include the Welcome and Attractiveness Policy in the operational programs, particularly those of a regional nature.

It remains a general truth that words go and records remain. Forward your written interest in the Policy to Promote Welcome and Attractiveness of Rural Areas to your regional governmental bodies. Send them a letter by registered mail and request a response.

As you may find there are many options for financing the development of rural areas and Policy to Promote Welcome and Attractiveness of Rural Areas. However, the Policy must first be entered in the operational programmes.

And finally, if I had to provide you one single recommendation, that would be the following: DEMAND CLEARLY FROM YOUR REGIONAL AUTHORITIES TO INTEGRATE THE POLICY TO PROMOTE WELCOME AND

ATTRACTIVENESS OF RURAL AREAS IN THEIR NEXT REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2014-2020.

Nobody will be thinking about the countryside in place of residents living in these environments and their elected representatives. Let's work on this. So their interests will be taken into account, which means respected. There is a clearly expressed desire (request) to remain or return to the countryside. Let us support its implementation. Let's work on drawing up an attractive, but realistic deal for a sustainable development of our rural areas.

Annexes in Addition to the

Recommendations from the PhiloxeniaPlus Community Project aiming to develop the Policy to Promote Welcome and Attractiveness of European Countryside for Individuals and Businesses

Annexes

The Welcome and Attractiveness Policy has proved useful to both mobilise local stakeholders and develop our rural areas. The Policy is being fed by the positive experience and everything that has so far been delivered within the PhiloxeniaPlus Project. If you are interested in developing the Welcome and Attractiveness Policy, you should most urgently turn to your local responsible persons and encourage them to include this Policy in their thematic and/or regional operational programs within the Europe 2020 Strategy. It is during the coming summer and fall months that all decisions will be taken.

At the first stage, inform yourself. For that purpose use the websites listed in the Annex 1. These shall help you define in detail what a welcome and attractiveness policy should look like in your own region and local environment. Then, to develop the Welcome and Attractiveness Policy, set up the necessary budget for your local welcome cluster. Follow the Annex 2 for this matter. Consider what this may mean for the regional operational program (see Annex 3). Establish your institutional contacts and plan what could be a *contract* with your potential partners. For this purpose you are provided the necessary guidelines in the Annex 4. Consider, however, that your most important task at the moment is to define in detail your demand towards the decision makers by elaborating the operational regional development programs. Then make sure that the Welcome and Attractiveness Policy is included in there. While you are provided an appropriate template for that matter, let us remind that other programs likely to include the Welcome and Attractiveness Policy for the rural areas intended to develop the countryside areas, corresponding human resources, social inclusion or territorial cohesion (see Part 2 of our recommendations) exist as well.

Annex 1 - References to several experiments (It is possible)

Indeed it is possible to implement the Welcome and Attractiveness Policy even at your local environment since it has already been done. In France, for example, it has already been successfully running for more than fifteen years. By providing you two additional references, Annex 1 is intended to complete our 1st recommendation, called ***Inform and Inspire Yourself! It Has Already Been Done!***

These two cases (only partially described in the annexes) concern the French Midi-Pyrénées and Limousin regions. These two regions have provided a major share in developing the Welcome Policy in France. Both can serve as a useful source of inspiration not only for the global sense of their rural zones

development-related strategies, but also for all those practical elements showing how things can really run well, including the websites set-up, the studies performed, the contracts concluded between stakeholders, the local (cross-municipal) development clusters established, and the precision achieved in terms of contents of welcome offers.

1 - Welcome Policy in the Midi-Pyrénées region

Here, this policy is being presented both in the economic section of the regional <http://www.midipyrenees.fr/-Accueil-Economie-Societe-> website and the Support Contracts, Attractiveness of the Area, and Accompanying Structures sub-sections. Articles and acts on the Rural Area Welcome Policy can be found there, just like the corresponding reports and testimonies on the development of rural networks. This policy is part of carefully thought-through process and sustainable practices.

On the more local level, the information on the networks is decentralised. At the level of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI), for example, promoters of the Project for Economic Activity can be provided support:

<http://www.gers.cci.fr/accueillir-les-soho-solo.html>

These activities are conducted in collaboration with the County (of Gers, in our example). See <http://www.soho-solo-gers.com/> for more. Not only the county is presented there, but also contacts and options for support for a possible settlement in the County of Gers are provided. This website is also available in English, since many foreigners might be interested in settling down and keen to ask for information for that purpose.

2 - Welcome Policy in the Limousin region

The Limousin region has also proved very enterprising in terms of welcome policies, as shown by its website, more precisely, its *Settle in Limousin* section:

The call for proposals there-presented is its most interesting element, addressing at “the territories of Massif Central engaged in the Welcome Policy for Economic Activities and Enterprises, and, hence, new populations”. See <http://www.region-limousin.fr/Appel-a-projets-Politiques-locales>. Here some major guidelines on the welcome-promoting policy applied are defined, inviting the interested parties to settle down in Limousin. <http://www.region-limousin.fr/S-installer-en-Limousin>

On the local level the regional welcome clusters now allow constituting a relay (<http://www.region-limousin.fr/les-Poles-Loeaux-d-Accueil>) to implement this regional strategy. As the local welcoming stakeholders the Local Welcome Clusters act at closest to the project leader of the territory. With their great volume of knowledge on installation opportunities they act as a "referent" for the project leader providing him daily support in matters of project analysis, identification of responses, mobilisation of intermediates, but also follow-up concerning the periods prior to and after installation. The South-East Creuse Welcome Cluster's <http://www.region-limousin.fr/Pole-Local-d-Accueil-Sud-est> website provides contacts and leads to the <http://www.cc-aubusson-felletin.fr/> website of the municipality, its regional project partner.

Navigating through these sites provides a tangible source of inspiration on what a promotion of the Welcome and Attractiveness Policy might look like on the regional and local levels. Finally, let us remind you that this Policy has been presented during the PhiloxeniaPlus Project Study Days. See the corresponding PowerPoint presentations on www.philoxeniaplus.eu and www.emloc.gr (Philoxenia and PhiloxeniaPlus sections).

If here just some of the participants have been privileged with these references, namely those either assigned the status of partner or just linked with the PhiloxeniaPlus Project, there are still further references available. See for example the www.reseaurural.fr or the websites linked to the corresponding Employment Clusters Committees.

Annex 2 - How much does all this cost? It's a wise investment anyway.

This annex is focused to complete in terms of budget the 2nd recommendation named ***Do Never Stay Alone While Preparing!*** It is about providing indications on the budget necessary to set up the Welcome and Attractiveness Policy and to assure its expected "return on investment". Obviously, the cost may vary according to countries and communities. Returns on investment may also differ depending on the professional quality of the stakeholders. So what here is indicated is an order of magnitude. However, it is always recommended to remunerate the reference person and all other partners sufficiently in order to stabilise the stakeholder base. It cannot be stressed enough how destructive a possible constant flow of personnel could prove for the professionalization of operations and thus for the sustainable development of the Welcome Policy.

The said Welcome and Attractiveness Policy can be set up by the local clusters as shown in the Limousin case. These clusters require an engineering capacity to promote the offer, inform, support, facilitate, establish and foster the links as well as set up a stakeholders' network. The cost mainly concerns hiring a facilitator who will be the responsible for the operational project (the responsible person). His/her task should be to support the implementation of an innovative welcome system and tailored support for people in mobility. The said costs shall include promoting operations and setting up of premises.

For example, the following items should be foreseen by the multiannual budget:

- Remuneration of the facilitator;
- Expenses related to premises and equipment of such premises;
- Expenses related to exploration and providing of information to potential new micro-entrepreneurs (primarily via internet);
- Expenses related to animation of person(s) responsible for steering the local welcome policy focused on the following three major missions:
 - a - Work with potential migrants and the newly installed;
 - b - Collecting and structuring of information;
 - c - Setting up offers in terms of businesses/jobs and installation.

- Mobilisation and awareness-related activities performed by local stakeholders, the latter including elected officials, associations, and population;
- Elaboration of the assessment criteria and indicators such as:
 - Frequency of the website utilisation;
 - Number of holders of applicant-provided information-focused projects;
 - Number of holders of website-related projects;
 - Number of installation offers;
 - Businesses existing 1 year / 5 years after the start of welcome policy;
 - Evaluation of direct and overall contribution to the rural community.

If one element of the assessment of the activities regarding the South-East Creuse Local Welcome Cluster during the years 2009, 2010 and 2011 is to be considered, the following result may be expected:

	2009	2010	2011	Total
Project holders accompanied	94	128	97	319
Project holders installed	13	13	14	40

The approximate costs related to development of the Welcome and Attractiveness Policy activities may be assessed on regional level as follows:

1 and 6-year costs

Facilitator-related costs: €25,000 annually or €150,000 for six years.

Activities-related costs: €25,000 annually or €150,000 for six years

Assessment-related costs: €5,000 annually or €30,000 for six years (two follow-up and assessment studies)

Support-related costs: €52,000-€56,000 (i.e. 13 to 14 businesses x €4,000 or, applying to approx. 80 businesses: 80 x €4,000 = €320,000 for six years).

So the total annual costs are estimated at €55,000 (or €60,000 to round up) or approx. €110,000 including the €4,000 financial incentives assigned to the 13 to 14 new businesses starting annually. Over 6 years (2015-2021), the budget thus amounts to around €360,000 or €680,000 including the incentives of 40 small entrepreneurs in total.

Please note two things. For one, the sum of €4k incentive per each new small entrepreneur is much lower compared with the allocation assigned to small businesses by the Greek Employment Agency (this amount varying between €10,000 and €18,000, depending on program). As a consequence, if the participation in welcome policies is compatible with these small business-supporting incentives, the annual cost should actually not exceed €57,000 to €60,000. This amount covers providing of information and support to hundred-odd promoters of which 13-14 shall actually install within a rural zone. The second point is to stress that each new small entrepreneur is expected to spend an important part of his/her revenues for him/herself and his/her family at the local market (and, hopefully, will pay taxes if the business grows satisfactorily).

Annex 3 - Regional Operational Programs

Assigned to one such action within a local welcome cluster, the 6-years budget could amount to approx. €360,000. If for your region three such local welcome clusters are foreseen by the selected European operational program (regional, for example), the total 6-year budget is to be planned at €1,100,000. Important, these expenses, or at least 80% of them, must be considered eligible by the program, while the resting 20% may be covered by the municipalities or cross-municipal CCI. So this action called *Promotion and Development of Entrepreneurship in Rural Zones* should be integrated in different operational programs and in one of the latter's priority axes (either within the thematic programs such as *Competitiveness* or *Rural Development*, or the regional operational programs).

To assure the possibility of developing the Welcome and Attractiveness Policy within the operational programs you must remain assertive and ensure that your decision makers make pressure to develop our rural municipalities.

Finally, let us stress that these actions can be linked with economic support programs for new entrepreneurs (such as employment agencies), but also with accompaniments actions (such as those foreseen by several Chambers of Commerce and Industry (CCI)).

Annex 4 - An institutional arrangement: contracts between regions and municipalities

Here, we wish to precise our recommendation No. 6, *Establish Your First Institutional Contacts*. To unite the energies and develop local resources it is first necessary to clarify who does what (terms of reference) and what is financed by whom.

Inspired by the European programs the financing of such welcome action could be supported by the various European funds if such funding is planned within the operational programs. Depending on the region (i.e. the degree of its development) and the program selected, the support provided could rise up to 50%, 75% or 80% of the total cost. The resting 50%, 25% or 20% of €360,000 per welcome cluster (or €180,000 or €90,000 or €72,000) should be covered by the national investment. Both the municipality and the county in question should share it; for example, the region may cover the remuneration of the facilitator and the activity-evaluating studies, while all the operational expenses apart from compensation of the facilitator may be financed by the municipality or the according cross-municipal body.

An institutional arrangement consists of sharing the roles and tasks between the municipalities especially where the welcome actions are already running, and the follow-up and the evaluation of the Welcome and Attractiveness Policy could both be financed by the regions. The costs related to the remuneration of the facilitator may be covered by the region or eventually shared.

Regarding the terms of reference, this can be elaborated on the municipal (or eventually cross-municipal) level in the form of a Local Welcome System (LHS) with the following main functions:

- Prospection and information on installation provided to candidates;
- Providing advice and orientation to the potential candidates;
- Structuration and promotion of a global welcome offer.

Obligations of the region concerning the financing shall be specified on the regional level. Being the main financer on the national level the region should also be responsible for the follow-up and assessment of the activities (as the main funder, European Commission might also choose to assess these).

An example of terms of reference, that is to say the description of the allocation of funding and activities, is shown by the French Limousin region (See the 2008-2013 Limousin Local Welcome Cluster Terms of Reference (check <http://www.region-limousin.fr/Appel-a-projets-Politiques-locales> below). Terms of reference can serve as a starting point for negotiations related to the elaboration of a master agreement.

Nothing prevents you from developing other institutional arrangements or drafting other types of master agreements such as the consular ones (welcoming, advising and supporting the business creators or buyers in their economic approach and validating their professional project in the territory concerned) or contracts concluded with the local employment agencies. These examples may constitute a basis for elaboration of a master agreement adapted to the region and rural zones implied by the welcome policies, as well as organisations involved in the project. Financing through a regional operational programme might be conditioned by drafting such a master agreement.

Annex 5 - Template letter: request for insertion of the welcome policy in the operational program

You might remember our ultimate recommendation: *If we had to provide you one single recommendation, that would be the following: **DEMAND CLEARLY FROM YOUR REGIONAL AUTHORITIES TO INTEGRATE THE POLICY TO PROMOTE WELCOME AND ATTRACTIVENESS OF RURAL AREAS IN THEIR NEXT REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2014-2020.***

Write therefore a letter to those responsible for preparing operational programs (see for the corresponding managing authority) and local decision makers. Follow the model shown here-below to encourage them to already consider the development of rural areas.

Dear Sir/Madam,

We want to draw your attention to the importance of implementing the Welcome and Attractiveness Policy in the rural zones and hence the importance to provide funding within the various operational programs, including the regional, for the period 2014-2020.

No need to recall that our rural areas have both demographically and economically gradually disintegrated. We all know that unless we act now, it will be too late in a few years to reverse this trend. Help us now!

The Welcome and Attractiveness Policy constitutes a suitable means to conduct an efficient action. It helps promoting our rural zones, developing entrepreneurship and supporting settlement of new migrants in our rural areas. All this has already been done successfully in many of the European countries. We are by no means starting from scratch.

To integrate the Welcome and Attractiveness Policy in the framework of the operational programs for the period 2014-2020 means in other words to invest in the development of small municipalities and rural areas.

We count on you to intercede in this sense to the political authorities and management of European programs. If you wish, we would be happy to put you in person with this project. Please consult our videos on the following PhiloxeniaPlus Project websites: (<http://www.emloc.gr/index.php/fr/philoxenia-plus/leptomereies> and <http://www.philoxeniaplus.eu/>..

We count on you to help us and thank you kindly for informing us of your steps in this direction.

With best regards