

Analyse von sechs ungarischen und sechs EU-geförderten Forschungsprojekten hinsichtlich der Beschäftigungseffekte im ländlichen Raum

Analysis of six Hungarian and six EU-funded research projects regarding good rural employment projects

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Zusammenfassung

RuralJobs ist ein gemeinschaftliches Forschungsprojekt, das teilweise durch das Forschungs- und Entwicklungs-Rahmenprogramm 7 der Europäischen Kommission gefördert wird. Die Ziele des RuralJobs Projektes sind die Output und die Auswirkungen der nationalen und von EU geförderten Projekte, mit Bestimmung von internationalen Projekten oder Untersuchungen, Analyse von internationalen und nationalen Projekten zu bestimmen und zu festsetzen. Diese Studie analysiert sechs ungarische und sechs EU geförderten Forschungsprojekte im Zusammenhang mit guten ländlichen Beschäftigungsprojekten. Es ist zu erwarten, dass diese Studie gute Übung bestimmt, um ländliche Beschäftigung zu stimulieren, was könnte endgültige Vorschläge und Verbreitungaktivitäten von RuralJobs Projekte illustrieren. Weil RuralJobs nützliche Mittel für diejenigen die Entscheidungen treffen, ist es wichtig die einsatzbereite Prozesse, die Beschäftigung und Jobs erleichtern und ermöglichen, zu identifizieren.

SCHLAGWÖRTER: Forschungsprojekte, Ländliche Entwicklung, RuralJobs

Summary

RuralJobs is a collaborative research project partly funded under the European Commission Research and Development 7th Framework Program (FP7). The aims of the RuralJobs project is to identify and assess the outputs and impacts of national and EU-funded projects, with a view identification of international projects and studies, analysis of international and national projects or studies. This paper analyses six Hungarian and six EU-funded research projects regarding good rural employment projects. It is expected to identify „operational good practice” for stimulating rural employment which could illustrate final recommendations and dissemination activities of the RuralJobs project. Because RuralJobs must bring useful tools to decisions makers, it is important to identify very various operational processes, facilitating employment and creating jobs.

Keywords: research projects, rural development, RuralJobs

1. Introduction

Many papers provide examples of good rural development practices. The Praxis Rural Entrepreneurship Toolkit developed by the Cross-Border Centre of Expertise in Rural Development is a document of 68 pages that collects good practice carried out by the partners of the Interreg IIC project called “Praxis – Making Rural Entrepreneurship Work” (I1).

FIELDSEND-BOONE (2008) pointed out that the Praxis project focused on the role of regional and local authorities in facilitating the creation of local partnerships and in providing the spatial planning framework and support for sustainable businesses to prosper in rural areas.

The Praxis Rural Entrepreneurship Toolkit details outputs, results and impacts of the project; the outputs are training programmes, expert meetings, new instruments and methods for policy making, newsletters, examples of good practice, policy recommendations, pilot projects and a conference. This output was described by Fieldsend-Boone, (2007).

The Cross-Border Centre of Expertise in Rural Development (CBCERD) is a partnership between six organizations including universities and rural development practitioners from Hungary, Romania and the UK. The objective of CBCERD is to encourage dialogue and exchange of

experiences between academics, students and practitioners in the subject of sustainable rural development (FIELDSEND ET AL., 2007).

CBCERD also collaborated with the Interreg III/C (www.praxisnetwork.net) project called "Praxis-Making Rural Entrepreneurship Work". CBCERD used the Praxis expertise to develop a questionnaire about the restrictive factors of cross-border rural entrepreneurship. The results of the questionnaire were reported by Fieldsend and Nagy (2006).

The University of Debrecen could take an important part in identifying good practices in rural development at EU level, which could be shared with rural development practitioners (I2).

The Rural Innova network gathers 15 European Regions and supports innovative development of rural areas through the transfer of experiences and the exchange of good practices: this project is supported by the European Union (I3).

European Regions for Rural Innovation (RUR@CT), initiated by the Limousin region in France, is a cooperation network of regions dealing with rural development. The main aims of the network are generating projects, selecting good practices and transmitting them to the partner regions. The network especially supports the international use of Structural Funds.

Two projects from the North Great Plain region were chosen among the 50 best practices during 2008: the project of the University of Debrecen, Local Centre of Expertise in Rural Development and the Partner in Partnership project completed by the Észak-Alföld Regional Innovation Agency (I4).

RUR@CT is a network for mainstreaming good practice. RUR@CT will greatly increase the long-term impact of RuralJobs by providing a network of mutual support which will promote "change through exchange" by building stakeholder capacity (FIELDSEND, 2008).

The Transregional Toolkit for Micro Enterprises (TRATOKI) partnership developed the tools on the basis of good practice examples, success marketing, and a mutual learning process. The tools were tested via demonstration projects (DITHA, 2006).

2. Methodology

Scope of the work

The research work of RuralJobs is structured into five work packages. Work Package 2, Task 2.2. aims to identify and assess the outputs and impacts of national and EU-funded projects, with

- Identification of international projects or studies
- Analysis of international and national projects or studies

It is expected to identify „operational good practice” for stimulating rural employment which could illustrate final recommendations and dissemination activities of RuralJobs project. Because RuralJobs must bring useful tools to decision makers, it is important to identify various operational processes facilitating employment and creating jobs.

Operational research good practice allows listing the innovative research methodologies which have been used and which may also be used in RuralJobs:

- What is new in the project in terms of its research approach and/or methodology?
- In what way such approach and/or methodology is appropriate to understand rural development issues?

Beyond the clear scope of reviewing and summarizing a series of projects related to rural employment, there seems to be twisted goals in terms of good practice. On one hand, the review of selected “operational good practice” is expected to illustrate and support decision-making in the field of rural employment and has a policy remit. On the other hand, “research good practice” intends to open the way to further research practice for RuralJobs, with a specific research remit.

Sample identification

Each partner was asked to review and summarize the 6 most significant projects/studies on rural employment from their country, as well as 6 EU-wide projects/studies.

Template specifications

All project summaries were prepared by using a common template. Furthermore, each project summary has an Annex called “Operational Good Practice”.

The following instructions were given to redactors:

"Expected or actual results related to research issues" is a descriptive part and intends to answer the following questions: (i) what are the deliverables and outputs related to the project in terms of content? It describes the knowledge generated by the project; (ii) to what extent the project meets its objectives? In other words, it describes what the funding agency got in return for the money invested in the project.

"Results of the research relevant to the rural labour markets and job creation". Here, we are in a position of an analyst and evaluator. We need to interpret the results of the project specifically in respect to the needs of RuralJobs (i) what is the specific approach of the project? What is its theoretical or ideological background? Does the project adopt a cross disciplinary approach? (ii) What do the project's findings tell us about the factors influencing rural employment development?

"Main characteristics of the project in terms of research good practice" are related to the elements giving to the project an innovative/pertinent/powerful approach in terms of topic or methodology; it will be interesting to identify the main difficulties encountered.

Limits of this work

This selection of projects results from the gathering of spotted researches, studies or practices linked with employment in rural areas. It does not pretend to be exhaustive. However, it arises from several sources, including EU databases (CORDIS or Agrifoodnet), and request to EU (DG Regio, DG Agri and DG employ) officials, to our advisory board, and to some local researchers, to get more chance of having an overview of the main and most important ones.

This selection of projects results from the gathering of various researches, studies or practices linked with employment in rural areas. We chose projects that were in connection with job creation and rural employment.

3. Results

Indeed, each of these projects

- gives examples of good methodology of work that could be useful for our RuralJobs project,

- provides new pieces of information that further our knowledge on rural employment, and
- reveals several operational good practices on which we should focus more closely and investigate their transferability to another context. For this part, I have analyzed every relevant template, with special focus on those that seemed the most applicable to my research.

3.1. Brand new methods

The methodology used in *IDARA Project* was as follows: A number of issues were addressed within the framework of rural development. Different methodologies were employed for different issues. Inventories of current rural development policy measures were constructed for the EU and the three Central and Eastern European Country (CEEC) partner countries. An evaluation methodology was devised and employed to evaluate current EU rural development policy measures, which was then applied to Central and Eastern European Country (CEEC) policy measures. The methodology was drawn from existing EU evaluation guidelines and supplemented with current developments in evaluation theory and practice.

Traditionally, economic analysis and research of regional development tended to be based on factors such as natural resources and infrastructure. More recently, other so-called “softer” factors, including tacit knowledge, trust and collective capacity building, have been integrated into this notion of development. Such elements are collectively described as social capital, and are generally believed to be the result of networks: of the people involved, of information, and of resources. The *RESTRIM Project* concluded that it is more informative to consider the networks underlying these factors than the factors themselves.

The overall objective of the *SUPPLIERS Project* was to assist the sustainable development of small-scale food enterprises in lagging rural regions (LRRs) of the European Union and Poland through the development of new tools and models for supply/distribution chain integration leading to improved market accessibility and competitiveness.

3.2. Surveys to specific population

We are not going to get a full overview of every kind of survey that can be conducted in this report. The idea of this part is only to get a rapid feedback, according to what has been done in the reviewed projects, and what appears to be necessary when you decide to conduct a survey on issues related to employment in rural areas. Surveys can have a very important place in a programme, since a whole project can hinge on surveys.

The sequence of research activities in the *SUPPLIERS Project* started with the development of the project's theoretical framework, and assessment of the food supply chain environment was ascertained using secondary information sources and a 'Delphi' 2 study employing a panel of key informants. The main supply chain survey and analysis examined the activities and views of producers, chain intermediaries and customers in turn.

For the purpose of the *Regional Criteria of Social Economy in Hungary, Project* three sample areas were selected during the research to get information about certain elements concerning the regional differences of the domestic social economy, and the characteristics of its appearance in city and rural areas. The aim of examining regions and counties was to assess the extent to which economic, employment and demographic conditions justify the appearance of social economy and to get to learn what causes the regional differences in the development level of the sector.

The sample of the *Volunteers in the Non-Profit Sector Hungarian Project* was established by examining the features of 1671 societies, and focusing on non-profit organizations as a basis. Two hundred and forty-seven questionnaires were sent out by mail. As for the methodology, a new feature of the research was that the examination targeted the non-profit organizations and their volunteers simultaneously.

3.3. Forward-looking models and scenario foresight

Many projects intended to foresee what may happen in rural areas, according to their characteristics. Thus, some projects tried to initiate models or set up potential scenarios for the evolution of rural development and employment.

In the *IDARA Project*, there was some sector-modelling, which aimed to explain the effects (direction and value) of certain agricultural policy scenarios. In modelling the impact of adoption of the CAP, the Copenhagen agreement was used as a basis.

The *SUPPLIERS Project* developed new models of supply chain integration which assist market access and competitiveness whilst encouraging business growth, employment, value-added generation and innovation amongst food producer Small and Middle Enterprises (SMEs) in lagging rural regions. Twelve enterprises were selected for case study analysis. These were selected because of their success in regional, national and international markets through utilizing a range of supply chains. A number of best practices are highlighted in these case studies.

3.4. The labour market in rural areas

According to the *Hungarian Project on Social Economy*, employment of social strata with disadvantages has always been in the main focus of employment policy.

The *RESTRIM Project* found out that the local availability of education and training is a key part of successful economic performance in rural areas. The project found that the willingness of the municipality and other actors to take risks in development strategies could be identified as significant. If local government can diversify its own activities, in the form of new networks, a more participative approach to both service provision and rural development could be envisaged more generally.

The *PhD Thesis on Human Resource Development in Agriculture* covers the problems of the job market directly. The need for a new type of manager and for the utilisation of qualified human resources can also be observed in agriculture. A new type of manager can negotiate, has good skills in establishing contacts, and is sensitive to problems, creative, and innovative. In the current situation of the agricultural sector, the efficient utilisation of human resources can be one of the most important points in the future.

The *Employment in the Non-Profit Sector Project* stated that mobility is mainly important from the aspect of social integration. In the social groups where the permanently unemployed congregate, employment is the only way out among the channels of mobility.

The Student Careers Hungarian Project, which worked on students' career concepts, found that the increase of higher education is relatively unfavourable for those recently graduated. The research showed that the conceptions and job plans of young people are extremely complex. It is hard to tell immediately – even only from the aspect of the job market – how they see their future.

3.5. Rural employment policies across Europe

The *ESPON 2.2.1 Project* found two main ways in which the Structural Funds may influence spatial development. The analysis of the case studies illustrates that the Structural Funds can positively influence the spatial positioning of the region in question.

In Hungary, the examination of the financial relations of social supply, through the *Social Security System Project*, shows the imbalanced distribution of burden. There is a specific Eastern European model of poverty in Hungary, due to the former housing policy and regional development policy. The research pointed out that local authorities only very rarely undertake the solution of the problem of those permanently unemployed. Lack of strategy is only one of the problems.

4. Discussion

In view of gathering this knowledge-base in the most appropriate manner, we propose to concentrate on the identification of best operational practices. They result from the scrutiny of RuralJobs team members while trying to extract lessons learnt in a multitude of contexts, and this is where we believe innovative aspects of the reviewed panel are to be found. These projects cover a variety of aspects related to rural development.

5. Conclusion

RuralJobs must bring useful tools to decision makers. It is important to identify very practical processes, facilitate employment and create jobs. Each of these projects gives examples of exceptional methods of work that could be useful for our RuralJobs project. They provide new pieces of information that further our knowledge on rural employment and

reveal some operational good practices on which we should focus more closely and see their transferability to another context.

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