



# RECOMMENDATIONS

ON THE ESTABLISHMENT  
AND IMPROVEMENT OF  
URBAN-RURAL COOPERATION  
AS A TOOL FOR  
TERRITORIAL COHESION



**HCU**

HafenCity University Hamburg,  
Urban Planning and  
Regional Development



Regional Office for Spatial  
Planning of Westpomeranian  
Voivodeship (RBGP WZ),  
Szczecin



State Ministry of Urban  
Development and  
Environment, Hamburg



Municipality Enschede



Tuscany Region



Municipality Borne



Lombardia Region



Pleven Regional Administration



Institute of Urban  
Development, Krakow

**URMA - Urban-rural partnerships in  
metropolitan areas**  
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**Lead Partner**  
**HafenCity University, Urban Planning  
and Regional Development**  
[www.hcu-hamburg.de](http://www.hcu-hamburg.de)

**Component 3-Leader**  
**Regional Office for Spatial Planning of  
Westpomeranian Voivodeship (RBGP WZ)**  
[www.rbpp.pl](http://www.rbpp.pl)

**Project Management**  
**REM - Consult, Hamburg**  
[www.rem-consult.eu](http://www.rem-consult.eu)

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**BACKGROUND**

The overall aim of the INTERREG IVC project URMA (2012-2014) was to support exchanges of experience with regards to the emergence and implementation of urban-rural partnerships in a selection of European metropolitan areas and their surroundings. In particular, three questions were focused on by the project:

- What is necessary to establish and stimulate a more intensive urban-rural relationship?
- In which sectors can urban and rural areas benefit from closer cooperation?
- How can urban-rural cooperation contribute to new forms of shared spatial responsibility, solidarity and territorial cohesion?

During the course of the project, all URMA partner regions provided examples that show urban-rural partnerships create mutual benefit for both the urban and rural regions, provided urban and rural actors meet on equal terms. By so doing, urban-rural partnerships help overcome the challenges of spanning the administrative borders of municipalities,

regions, and national states that separate the functional areas. Further, they foster cross-sector thinking.

In particular, three thematic fields were given top priority, because they can be addressed by urban-rural partnerships to achieve a better use of resources and support spill-over effects from urban to rural areas and vice versa:

- Improvement of accessibility and infrastructural links (including broadband internet connections) between the metropolitan core and its (wider) rural areas
- Development and restoration of regional agricultural production and delivery chains in metropolitan areas and beyond
- Stimulation of economic activities in both urban and rural areas through cluster cooperation on manifold topics

Equally, it has to be highlighted that to adequately create and support urban-rural partnerships it is necessary to understand the various planning and political cultures, as

well as the different socio-demographic and economic situations, and the dynamics on regional and national levels. European countries differ in their types of urbanisation and spatial development. Former socialist countries and recent EU member states are now catching up with some of the negative developments that have been taking place in the western part of Europe for several decades, e.g. the growth of urban areas and the negative impacts of urban sprawl. The historically conditioned differences in progress levels of regions in their economic and infrastructural developments give rise to distinct needs and interests when it comes to urban-rural partnerships.

The aim of these recommendations is to demonstrate how urban-rural cooperation could be better promoted and effectively implemented across Europe as an instrument to foster territorial cohesion. That is why the recommendations are addressed to policy makers on the EU, national, regional and local levels, as well as the stakeholders involved at all planning and implementation levels. In other words to all those who can „make a difference“ and are able to make an urban-rural partnership happen.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**One size does not fit all. Urban-rural partnerships have to address specific local/regional needs and potentials. Urban-rural partnerships should be regarded as a strategic approach at all levels of territorial cohesion policy and respectively supported.**

Within URMA, four basic types of urban-rural partnerships have been identified:



**The existing experience of urban-rural partnerships drawn from historical and current European and national programmes and projects should be used as a source of knowledge and points of contact to build up urban-rural partnerships. The successful and promising initiatives should be continued.**

### Examples

**Large scale partnerships:** supra-regional cooperation of a metropolitan region with its wider hinterland

- Hamburg with Schleswig-Holstein and the Danish regions of Syddanmark and Jutland developing a common spatial development vision
- Cooperation between West Pomerania in Poland and German regions Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and Berlin-Brandenburg, especially for improving the infrastructure
- Cooperation between Sofia's universities and Pleven region to realize a satellite university campus in Pleven
- Stockholm together with neighbouring counties in developing a long term spatial vision for Eastern Central Sweden

### Metropolitan regional partnerships:

cooperation within a metropolitan region between a large city and its surrounding peri-urban and rural areas. This also includes polycentric structures

- Milan with its peri-urban areas, preserving undeveloped and agricultural areas with initiatives like the Rice Field Park
- Florence and its neighbouring towns in Tuscany, creating the Park of the Plain, a regional park
- Szczecin with its surrounding rural areas, developing concepts to avoid urban sprawl
- Krakow with the distant rural district of Gorlice, developing a common initiative on regional food
- Polycentric Twente region, developing common strategies to preserve and sustainably develop the urban fringes

### Partnerships between small and medium-sized towns:

in networks with their rural hinterland

- Towns in Denmark and Schleswig-Holstein forming regions with their rural hinterlands; these towns are functioning as stepping stones to link larger cities such as Hamburg and Aarhus
- City of Pleven cooperating with its region to develop sustainable tourism
- Central Zone of West Pomerania, as a remote area of the region supported by regional capital of Szczecin

### Trans-local urban-rural cooperation:

cooperation between urban and rural actors, irrespective of physical proximity and based on virtual interaction

- Amsterdam Responsible Capital, cooperation between Amsterdam and remote peripheral towns in the Netherlands, e.g. in the fields of culture, social services and education

### Examples

- Calls for projects like the German Federal Demonstration Projects of Spatial Planning 'MORO' on urban-rural Partnerships
- LEADER region Twente South being a basis for urban-rural partnerships in Twente
- INTERREG IV A Schleswig-Syddanmark offering experience on German-Danish cooperation that is being used for the larger scaled Jutland cooperation
- International, national and regional events, such as EXPO Milan 2015; Westpomeranian Sailing Route/ Zachodniopomorski Szlak Żeglarski; International Garden Exhibition Hamburg 2013

The multi-thematic character of urban-rural partnerships demands holistic and locally appropriate approaches. Multi-level governance and cross-sector organizational models are the appropriate solutions.

Urban-rural partnerships should be treated as functional and spatial entities that span urban and rural areas and are recognised in strategic and spatial planning at all levels.

The existing institutions and appropriate new functional bodies at a sub-national level should play a strategic role and act as the facilitators and coordinators of urban-rural partnerships.

Urban-rural initiatives involving a wide range of stakeholders following the triple or quadruple helix approach should be encouraged and supported by public bodies, in order to ensure the proper embedding of such projects in various thematic fields.

The European Commission, national, regional, and local governments should adapt their financial instruments to take into account aspects of urban-rural cooperation. New instruments such as ITI and CLLD should be supported and monitored. Financial incentives, starting capital and calls for project ideas will help to initiate urban-rural partnerships. Thus public funding should be used to remove existing barriers, improve communications and allow for matchmaking opportunities. However, urban-rural-partnerships should be based on needs and not be forced. Existing good experiences should be further supported and disseminated.

The EU Parliament and the European Commission should further develop policies and practical instruments that are based on the achievements of the RURBAN initiative for how to integrate urban-rural partnerships into European territorial cohesion policy.

### Examples

- The Hamburg Metropolitan Region has a steering committee that includes the Federal State and municipal / county representatives. Moreover, it garners stakeholders from various government levels during regional conferences and thematic working groups
- In the Lombardy region, the Rice Field Park is an example of both cross-sector (public, NGOs, farmers) and multi-level (municipalities, region) governance
- The Tuscany region involves a variety of stakeholders in the participation process (Charrette method) to develop the Park of the Plain in the metropolitan area of Florence

### Examples

- Metropolitan areas with their rural hinterlands that develop a common organisational and financial framework across administrative boundaries, such as BrabantStad working on an internationally competitive and sustainable urban network
- Identification of functional regions in Poland's West Pomeranian region
- Network-City Twente including urban-rural partnerships in its spatial strategy

### Examples

- „Voivodeships” in Poland; „Oblasti” in Bulgaria; Regions and Provinces in the Netherlands; (metropolitan) regions in Germany, „Regione” in Italy



### Examples

- The Green Knowledge Portal of Twente applies the quadruple helix approach, involving municipalities, research and education institutions, enterprises and citizens to develop and improve regional food cycles
- In Tuscany, the Slow Food Association of Prato connects public institutions, enterprises and citizens to develop educational offers about regional food
- In Milan, Buon Mercato di Corsico, an association of citizens, farmers, stakeholders and local authorities is preserving and redeveloping the South Milan Agricultural Park and its agriculture



