

*Our Interreg Europe proposal is approved.*

## **P-IRIS;**

*Policies to improve rural areas' innovation systems by professionalising networking activities and use of innovation tools*



Central Ostrobothnia in Finland and 5 Euromontana members – Sogn og Fjordane (Lead partner, NO), Sodebur from Burgos (ES), Heart of Slovenia (SI), PINS from Primorje Gorski kotar (HR) and Poliedra (IT), with Letter of Support by the Lombardy Region – are the partners.



The 5th of October we received the very much wanted message: The application is approved. (But still some conditions have to be clarified.)

The application was initiated at Euromontana's General Assembly the 18th of November 2015.

### **Why P-IRIS is important**

Economic development in rural areas depends on our ability to work smart together. It is widely recognized that effective cooperation between researchers, businesses, end-users and public authorities<sup>1</sup> is a key success factor for enhancing innovation. We believe new ICT-technology and the young generation's ability to network and use new tools, provide rural areas with new opportunities for economic development. It is necessary for rural areas to address the topic "rural innovation systems".

### **Better insight in and practical management of rural innovation systems is needed.**

Rural areas show a wide variety of situations in terms of innovation systems. The rural areas that take part in this project initiative view themselves as diversified and not at all marginalized. Moreover, P-IRIS areas believe that rural innovation systems should not copy lessons and solutions from metropolitan areas but must strive for solutions that are tailored to the specific features of the rural context.

Some key points:

- The rural context: what is different with respect to urban areas?
  - Asymmetric relations and uneven resources between public, R&D and SME actors.
  - Not complete innovation systems; e.g. shortage of scientific knowledge specifically tailored to rural areas.
- P-IRIS aims at addressing operational improvements; innovation nursed by well managed triple or quadruple helix networks and the use of related innovation tools.
  - Professionalising of network management includes: improving network strategies, tackling network challenges such as lock-ins and fragmentations and/or improving network functions in terms of knowledge sharing and efficient use of limited time.
  - Examples of related tools: business centres, incubators, living labs, structured dialogues, innovation brokering, competence brokering and similar.

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<sup>1</sup> Often referred to as triple or quadruple helix networks

- How may ICT open up possibilities for rural innovation systems to include distant sources of knowledge? This might be at far distances, but also from nearby metropolitan areas.
- Can rural areas' innovation networks access relevant tools for the different steps of an innovation process?
- P-IRIS will sum it all up by producing a tool-box to help developing practical skills in innovation network management in rural areas.
- We are addressing the creation of attractive jobs for well-educated and creative young people in rural areas. This implies, e.g., facilitating creative and knowledge intensive businesses and eco-innovation.
- We are addressing policy improvements, since this is the frame set by Interreg Europe. Policy improvements require stakeholder involvement.

A 3-step interregional learning process will be applied:

1. Mapping challenges & opportunities in managing triple helix or quadruple helix cooperation in rural innovation systems.
2. Exchanges of experiences in thematic seminars and demonstrations of potential good practices in study visits and workshops.
3. Preparation of regional action plans, aiming at the improvement of policies supporting innovation in rural areas, to be implemented in phase two of the project.

Negotiations with Interreg Europe will clarify details; including some budgetary issues and the date for start-up.

### **The policy learning platform - an additional advantage especially for the lead partner**

The Interreg Europe programme will during the week of regions and cities 2016 launch the Policy Learning Platforms, a whole new Europe-wide policy learning space. There like-minded policymakers, practitioners and experts will engage in peer-to-peer learning and collaboration. Our project is part of the topic research and innovation. The aim of this learning and collaboration is to improve structural funds and other regional development policies.

Contact the lead partner for more information:

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