

RuralProof

Empowering European Regions through Policy Transformation: A Paradigm Shift in Territorial Development (*RuralProof – Interreg Europe*)

Lead Partner:

Ministry of Public Administration and Regional Development – Hungary

Project Partners:

BURST Nonprofit Ltd. – Hungary

Marshal Office of the Łódzkie Region – Poland

Northern and Western Regional Assembly – Ireland

Region of Thessaly – Greece

LAG Alto Bellunese – Italy

Regional Development Agency Bačka – Serbia

Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development of the Republic of Latvia – Latvia

Albanian Institute of Public Affairs – Albania (participating as a “Discovery Partner”)

Total Project Budget: €1,903,188

Co-financing Rate: 80%

Planned Project End Date: 31 July 2029

Project Overview

Addressing regional disparities and the development lag of certain rural areas remains a major challenge across Europe. The relationship between urban and rural territories is often unbalanced, and in several regions the development gap has not decreased over recent decades but has instead widened. Fragmented municipal systems and structurally disadvantaged areas facing multiple territorial challenges are common phenomena in many European countries.

Although numerous EU-level initiatives and methodological proposals have been developed – primarily at the local level – to promote more effective management of rural areas, a comprehensive and integrated approach remains essential. The future direction of Cohesion Policy also points towards a stronger place-based approach, emphasizing the importance of local challenges, strengths and opportunities.

Recognizing these challenges in Hungary, the State Secretariat for Municipalities and the State Secretariat for Regional Development within the Ministry of Public Administration and Regional Development are jointly analyzing innovative regional development solutions under the RuralProof Interreg Europe project. These solutions are intended to be integrated into relevant policies and strategies in order to reduce disparities between urban and rural areas and to support the convergence of lagging regions and micro-regions.

A key objective of the project is to explore opportunities for joint governance in rural areas, taking into account socio-economic indicators, land-use patterns and access to public services and institutions. Throughout the implementation period, the full partnership – representing regions from across Europe – will identify and exchange good practices that can be incorporated into each partner’s policy framework. These practices are intended to contribute to effective, cost-efficient and sustainable territorial development policies in the long term.

Several analytical and evaluation documents will be prepared, summarizing and assessing the challenges and strengths identified in the participating regions. The project will also contribute to

improving the targeting of financial resources and EU funds dedicated to jointly managed regions and micro-regions, ensuring alignment with their specific needs and levels of development.

Main Planned Activities:

- Comprehensive description of rural areas in the participating countries and regions, including the identification, evaluation and comparison of existing policy instruments.
- Identification and review of barriers and drivers affecting rural development in partner countries, along with an analysis of development opportunities.
- Definition of tools and measures aimed at improving policies and support systems focused on disadvantaged rural areas, as well as the introduction of innovative methods of regional cooperation (coordination and joint governance), with particular emphasis on the bottom-up involvement of regions, micro-regions and municipalities.
- Identification of policy instruments and good practices in the fields of effective public administration, organization of public services, local economic development and agricultural development that can be introduced within newly strengthened territorial development units.
- Analysis of the effectiveness of national and EU support systems for disadvantaged rural areas and formulation of recommendations to improve the targeting of funds, in line with the coordination principles defined by the project.

Expected Results and Impact

Due to its nature, the project does not foresee the direct implementation of pilot actions in specific territories. However, upon successful completion, it will identify tools and development frameworks that contribute to enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of Hungary's regional development policy.

The project also includes the organization of several international networking events, facilitating the exchange of experience and knowledge regarding the specific characteristics of rural areas across participating countries. Experience-sharing and knowledge transfer form the foundation of successful development strategies.

Among the key planned outputs are so-called “masterclasses” designed to support Hungarian municipalities – at both local and county levels – through knowledge enhancement, awareness-raising and improved efficiency.

Further and continuously updated information about the project is available at:

- <https://www.interregeurope.eu/ruralproof>
- https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61577101140961&locale=hu_HU
- [RuralProof_Subsidy_Contract_signed](#)