

## A note from the President

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Dear All,

2017 has been a year of achievement and progress for PURPLE when again I have been honoured to be President of our network. As ever, I am indebted to my political colleagues and their officials for the hard work and support I have received over the last twelve months. I hope this report gives our current membership and other interested parties a good flavour of the work we have been doing.

At the same time as not being blind to the challenges we continue to face in promoting the peri-urban cause at a time of intense debate over the future of the European project, and especially how that is to be shaped post 2020, I am confident of our ability to work together for common benefit over the course of 2018. I very much look forward to it.



Helyn Clack

## Key Achievements

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- First EU-funded project starts
- Setting out our views on the future EU Cohesion Policy
- Responding to the CAP Consultation
- PURPLE at EESC Civil Society Days
- European Rural Networks
- Promoting transnational networks as agents of change at the EWRC 2017
- Three-year Work Plan and Annual Activity Plan for 2017 approved
- Executive Board reconfirmed
- Five new signatories to our Peri-Urban Charter
- PURPLE Member Directory published
- Member Survey Exercise
- Governance and meetings

## H2020 Project ROBUST starts

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Horizon 2020 ROBUST project - the first EU level project in which PURPLE is a full partner - was approved by the EC in December 2016. Led by Wageningen University - ROBUST formally began on 1 June 2017. Its first full partner meeting took place a week later. The meeting represented an opportunity for all 24 project partners from 11 countries to spend time together and to learn more about their respective organisations, regions and the roles which they intend to play over the next 48

months of the project looking at rural-urban linkages. As previously reported, the overall project goal is "to advance the understanding of the interactions and dependencies between rural, peri-urban and urban areas and to identify and promote policies, governance models and practices that foster mutually beneficial relations". PURPLE's role in the project is to take the lead on work about policy recommendations whilst also having some input to all seven other Work Packages.

## Lobby Group Paper on EU Cohesion Policy beyond 2020

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In October PURPLE launched a Lobby Group Paper on EU Cohesion Policy beyond 2020 with a view to feeding into the debate on future Cohesion Policy. The official launch took place in Brussels on the occasion of the 'Regions and change - the transformative power of transnational

networks' event (see below). The paper, together with its related 'key messages' document, sets out core dimensions of what PURPLE considers to be essential principles for, and features of, a revised Cohesion Policy able to take due account of peri-urban Europe today.

## PURPLE Response to EC Consultation on CAP

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In May PURPLE responded to an EC questionnaire published as part of a wider consultation exercise on 'modernising and simplifying the common agricultural policy (CAP)'. Whilst PURPLE welcomed the consultation it regretted the fact that the territorial dimension was

largely absent and that the particular challenges and opportunities for peri-urban agriculture and other land-uses went unrecognised. In this sense PURPLE regards the current policy as 'place blind'. PURPLE expressed the view that the focus of the exercise

was very much on agriculture and that such a strong sectoral focus serves to hinder a broader consideration of rural policy as an integrated part of the Common Agricultural Policy, a consideration which Commissioner Hogan had himself expressed in an earlier exchange of letters with the PURPLE President.

Mrs Helyn Clack therefore also submitted an open letter expanding on points that she felt could not be made within the format of the questionnaire. A key point she raised was that balanced territorial development across Europe should be the starting point for any consideration of rural policy alongside (as opposed to within) the CAP.

## PURPLE at Civil Society Days 2017

On 26 June, PURPLE President Helyn Clack took part in an European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) event organised as part of Civil Society Days (CSDs) 2017. Mrs Clack was one of six panellists asked to consider how both urban and rural areas might best be developed in order that territorial social cohesion be achieved. Mrs Clack took the opportunity to welcome and echo the pronouncements made by those who had spoken before her, for example, that the rural and urban dichotomy was outdated and no longer appropriate for the purposes of understanding how places work in practice. She also lent her support to the notion that both urban and rural areas have distinct but not exclusive attractions. The main focus of what she went on to say was related to public services and public financial interventions, warning that public intervention should not stop where the city ends and emphasising that we must never lose sight of balancing the needs of people in different types of places and do so in an inclusive and participative way.

Following the event the EESC published key recommendations and workshop reports from the Civil Society Days. The report on the workshop in which Mrs Clack was a panellist duly highlighted her and others' calls for a more cohesive Europe where "people living in rural, remote and peri-urban areas are not economically and socially disadvantaged as compared to people living in the cities and towns".

## ERN Steering Group

PURPLE was represented at the European Rural Networks (ERN) Steering Group on 23 October and its Assembly meeting on 14 December. The ERN brings together the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) and the European Innovation Partnership (EIP-AGRI) network. The ERN's Assembly was launched in 2015 as the main governance body

of the ENRD and EIP-AGRI network and as a forum for debating the strategic framework for their activities, covering all aspects of the Rural Development Policy 2014-2020. PURPLE is a member of both the ERN's Assembly and Steering Group, valuable both from PURPLE and ROBUST project perspectives as a number of key players in evolving policy debates as well as implementation strategies and review – both from other networks and organisations and from the European Commission – take part in the ERN.

## EWRC 2017

For the third year running PURPLE was showcased at one of the official workshops of the European Week of Regions and Cities (EWRC) – formerly Open Days. On 11 October, two PURPLE regions (Surrey and Flanders) together with 3 non-PURPLE regions (Regione Toscana, IT; Vallée de la Bruche, FR; and Krapina-Zagorje County, HR) co-organised a workshop entitled 'Regions and change – the transformative power of transnational networks'.

The event took place at the Liaison Agency Flanders-Europe (VLEVA) in Brussels. It aimed to increase appreciation of the relevance, value and contribution made by transnational co-operation networks in bringing about change. Along with PURPLE three other such networks - FEDARENE (European Federation of Agencies and Regions for Energy and the Environment); ERIAFF (European Regions for Innovation in Agriculture, Food and Forestry); and FECOF (European Federation of Forest Municipalities) - shared experiences, thoughts and future aspirations, giving the assembled group of 70+ from fourteen countries the chance to learn about transnational networks' role in policy development and project delivery.

In her speech PURPLE president Helyn Clack highlighted that "a key point about transnationality and the value of networks such as PURPLE (is that) if I want to find my real peers I may have to go some distance!! Having found them of course we want to explore how best to collaborate. PURPLE is a result of exactly such an exploration!!" Indeed it transpired that transnational networks such as those featured in this workshop have a key role to play in both developing high-quality policy and in implementing that policy through projects, ongoing work and other means. In all instances, networks with either a thematic or territorial starting point or focus make a significant contribution to the positive development of both policy and practice – they bring by their very nature, a breadth of experience, a depth of understanding and a cross-representation of members.

## PURPLE 3-year Work Plan and Annual Activity Plan 2017 approved and implemented

In June, following endorsement by the Executive Board in January, the 26th PURPLE General Assembly formally approved PURPLE's Work Plan for the three years 2017-19, together with the Annual Activity Plan 2017. The Work Plan presents the strategic priorities (Priority

Areas) for PURPLE's work and outlines the core activities (Key Actions) PURPLE intends to focus on in the years 2017 to 2019.

The Annual Activity Plan for 2017 was designed as a more detailed work programme for the year. In December, the Secretary General, in consultation with PURPLE members, carried out a progress review of the Annual Activity Plan 2017 with a view to shaping a refreshed Annual Activity Plan for 2018.

### Executive Board reconfirmed

On 27 June 2017, the 26th PURPLE General Assembly unanimously agreed the following Executive Board make up for the next two year, very similar in form to that of the last two years:

**President:**

Helyn Clack (*Surrey-South East of England*)

**Vice Presidents:**

Ludger Stüve (*FrankfurtRheinMain*), Mark Winnington (*Staffordshire-West Midlands*) and Wojciech Jankowiak (*Wielkopolska*)

**Treasurer:**

Paul Van der Sluys

Mrs Clack thanked all those present for the opportunity to continue in post and suggested, as a next step, a series of bi-lateral meetings with all re-elected members to take place as soon as possible.

### Five new signatories

Following the publication of an introductory document to PURPLE's Peri-Urban Charter providing key information to potential signatories earlier in the year, colleagues from South Moravia, have been busy in the last quarter of 2017 discussing the PURPLE network and its remit with local and regional organisations in the Czech Republic. As a result, five organisations have signed up to PURPLE's Peri-Urban Charter the aim of which is to widen recognition of peri-urban issues and challenges in Europe.

The new signatories include two academic establishments with an interest in regional and territorial development; an environmental foundation; the South Moravian regional development agency and the Association of Municipalities and Cities of South Moravia. A short description of each of these organisations can be found on the PURPLE website together with that of previous signatories.

As a reminder: the Peri-Urban Charter was launched a few years ago and is for organisations that - like members of PURPLE - have an interest in peri-urban policy issues, research and practical initiatives but - unlike members of PURPLE - are not regions or local authorities and therefore cannot be members of the network. By signing up to the Charter - and thereby making a public acknowledgment of their support for PURPLE's vision and supporting PURPLE's work - it is hoped that such organisations can help give PURPLE's voice more power.

### A PURPLE Member Directory

Following requests from members, an internal Member Directory has been developed and shared. The PURPLE Member Directory is a document that brings together the contact details of member region representatives for each of the PURPLE groups. It was originally produced to enable further interaction between members and provide a single reference point when looking to contact a member region. It was further expanded later in the year to include the names and contact details of PURPLE Member Region's MEPs and CoR members. The Directory is available for download from the member-restricted section of the PURPLE website.

### Member Survey 2017

In the late spring, our Secretary General carried out a Member Survey exercise the aim of which was to identify what members value about PURPLE and how the network can improve how it operates, both for its members and for the peri-urban cause more generally. The responses were analysed and a summary of results was shared with the General Assembly in June. Discussions were then held in each PURPLE group about how the Member Survey findings might be used to help each group reflect on their course of actions and inform how they might function in the future.

## Governance and meetings

The Executive Board, as elected in November 2014 with Helyn Clack from Surrey as its president, met in January 2017. Following the election of the new Board on 27 June (see above) re-elected President Helyn Clack took the chance to hold a series of bilateral meetings in July with Board members to discuss how each can best give leadership to take PURPLE forward in their renewed mandate.

Board meetings are opportunities for PURPLE politicians in particular to meet with each other, share views and experiences, question and challenge officers and provide both guidance and scrutiny to the network. Members serve in positions of trust representing and protecting the interests of the wider membership.

The table provides a brief overview of formal PURPLE meetings of different types held over 2017<sup>1</sup>

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
General Assembly						27				11		
Executive Board	30						B.M.					
Working Group			28		17					24		18
Lobby Group			28		18				15	2		

<sup>1</sup> Exceptionally, in 2017 all PURPLE meetings were held in Brussels.

<sup>2</sup> Bilateral meetings

In addition to a full set of formal PURPLE meetings, PURPLE officers and politicians were involved in a wide range of other meetings and events with a peri-urban dimension. For example:

On 18 May, the Secretary General and a number of representatives from PURPLE member regions attended a CoR conference on an "Alliance on the Future of Cohesion Policy in the EU". This event, organised in collaboration with leading territorial associations, aimed to send a strong message of support for cohesion policy beyond 2020, following the adoption of the CoR Opinion on "The Future of Cohesion Policy beyond 2020" at the CoR Plenary of 11-12 May 2017 and in view of the 7th Cohesion Forum (to be held at the end of June).

On 1 June PURPLE was represented at a Breakfast Briefing on Cohesion in Rural Europe at the European Parliament with MEP and Chair of the European Parliament RUMRA Intergroup Mercedes Bresso, and MEP and President of the Urban Intergroup Jan Olbrycht.

On 7 July the PURPLE Secretary General attended a conference organised by DG Agri 'The CAP: Have your say' to present the results of the EC consultation on CAP (see story above). This event was an opportunity for the EC to hear further comments from participants – a cross section of farming, food industry, government and NGOs representatives.

On 17 and 18 October specialists in green infrastructure from a number of PURPLE member regions took part in an expert group workshop on the development of strategy for green infrastructure within the land-use and land development policies of peri-urban regions across Europe. This workshop was part of a project on green and blue infrastructure for grey peri-urban landscapes, Green4Grey which is led by PURPLE member region Flanders, represented by The Flemish Land Agency (VLM) and funded through the EU LIFE+ programme.

A very short explanation as to the intended purpose of each type of grouping within PURPLE is provided here for reference.

**General Assembly:** consists of political representatives from all member regions. The General Assembly manages the network and meets twice a year, normally this happens once in Brussels and once in one of the member regions. These meetings usually coincide with a PURPLE conference or event on peri-urban issues.

**Executive Board:** currently consists of six political representatives from the member regions plus an ex officio Treasurer. The Executive Board is elected by the General Assembly to administer PURPLE. It is principally responsible for the overall political steering of the network; setting the political agenda and defining the overall vision of PURPLE.

**Working Group:** consists of officers and experts from member regions who meet regularly in Brussels to plan actions and events and to share experience.

**Lobby Group:** consists primarily of Brussels-based officers in the representations of member regions. The Lobby Group coordinates PURPLE's Brussels contacts and actions and monitors EU policy development.