

A note from the President

Dear All,

I have been delighted to be so involved with so many valued colleagues over 2015 working for the PURPLE cause. When I read this document I feel proud of what we have achieved and determined to do more. I hope that you too find this short paper both interesting and inspiring.



Helyn Clack

Key Achievements

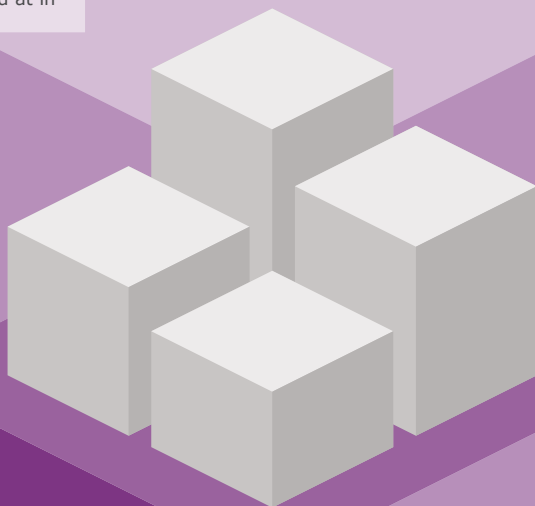
- Governance and meetings
- A two-year Work Plan launched
- Highlighting the peri-urban at Open Days
- Inputting to the Urban Agenda
- Securing AISBL status
- The EU Rural Networks Assembly
- Working with rural networks
- Secretary General appointment
- PURPLE at the Regional Studies Association
- Developing EU Project work

Work Plan

For the first time the network finalised a single, combined Work Plan setting out PURPLE areas of work and priorities over two calendar years. The Plan is designed to give greater visibility and more structure to the activities of the PURPLE network.

Various drafts and iterations had been produced going back to 2014 and these were looked at in

detail by both the Executive Board on numerous occasions and by the General Assembly. We were also able to incorporate the findings of the 2014 Member Survey exercise into our thinking in the hope of ensuring that PURPLE and its work remains relevant, valid and valuable to all its members.



Open Days 2015

PURPLE partner regions and others mobilised themselves to promote and defend the interests of peri-urban areas as part of the 13th Week of Regions and Cities (OPEN DAYS). Under the leadership of Ile-de-France, a project consortium comprising Brandenburg and Frankfurt RheinMain (Germany), Randstad (the Netherlands), Nord-Pas-de-Calais (France), Surrey (England) and Bjelovar-Bilogora (Croatia) combined to deliver a public seminar entitled The Urban Agenda & ESIF 2014-2020: Involving peri-urban territories in order to boost urban-rural links generously and expertly hosted by the Randstad region in the House of the Dutch Provinces.

Speakers included two Members of the European Parliament, together with representatives of both the European Commission and the forthcoming Dutch EU presidency. PURPLE and the individual consortium members are extremely grateful to them as well as to those who came and spoke about “on the ground” experiences of urban-rural integration measures in the Netherlands, Germany and the UK.

Bringing a Peri-Urban dimension to the EU Urban Agenda

As well as the Open Days event, Lobby Group members in particular worked more broadly and through numerous EU stakeholders and decision-makers (DG REGIO, CoR, EESC, the Dutch Presidency, etc...) in order to ensure that the peri-urban dimension was not lost sight of in the Urban Agenda. They produced a response to the European Commission's consultation 'The urban dimension of EU policies – key features of an EU Urban Agenda' arguing for recognition that “peri-urban regions are a growing and dynamic feature of EU territorial development and must be taken into account in any future urban policy agenda”.

They went on to argue that “An urban policy agenda mainly directed towards cities risks ignoring the functional interdependence across wider peri-urban territories that is essential for cities to prosper. This is a particular risk in complex polycentric territories and those with a longstanding peri-urban territorial development where there is a strong urban dimension across much wider areas around and between cities”.

PURPLE wins AISBL status

PURPLE has succeeded in securing Belgian royal approval to become an Association Internationale Sans But Lucratif (AISBL).

The Executive Board of PURPLE has for a long time deliberated the merits of attaining some kind of formal legal status for the network. That work and effort came to fruition with the publication of a Belgian royal decree conferring approval of its application to operate as an AISBL. The intention is that such a development will enable PURPLE to become directly involved in EU projects and other initiatives in its own right with the profile-raising benefits which that infers.

At a formal signing ceremony in Ghent in May 2015, Flanders, Ile-de-France, Nord Pas de Calais, North Holland, Flevoland, Frankfurt RheinMain, Surrey, Staffordshire, Mazovia, Wielkopolska, and South Moravia all became founder members of the PURPLE AISBL with others expected to join soon.

PURPLE and the EU Rural Networks Assembly & Steering Group

PURPLE was invited to apply for membership of this newly formed European Commission stakeholder group by DG AGRI and was subsequently accepted to act as a representative for regional and local authorities. This development represents a good opportunity for PURPLE to raise the profile of peri-urban issues and to find new contacts and allies among the network's members which comprises 200 members.

It discusses how Rural Development programmes work in practice and how they can be further improved in future. The Assembly brings together the existing European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) and the new European Innovation Partnership (EIP) network with a remit which includes increasing the involvement of all stakeholders in the implementation of rural development; improving the quality of rural development programmes; playing a role in informing the broader public on the benefits of rural development policy; and; facilitating the exchange of expertise and good practices. The PURPLE Lobby Group will lead on our engagement here and assess the value and effectiveness of our role.

Working with the European Countryside Movement and a Parliamentary/CoR conference

PURPLE is always keen to work collaboratively with other bodies whose interest and views coincide and where joint working or joint representation might make a positive difference. This includes the European Countryside Movement (ECM) an informal grouping of networks and organisations brought together by Rurality-Environment-Development RED and with which PURPLE has been closely involved over the year. At the same time, Lobby Group members have liaised and interacted with the European parliamentary "Intergroups" URBAN and RUMRA and been directly involved in the RUMRA Conference on "Rural territories in the 2014-2020 policies of territorial cohesion and inclusive growth" on 22 September 2015 in the Committee of the Regions.

PURPLE has also been working closely over a number of months with the ECM on an initiative calling for an EU Rural White Paper – this topic formed a key focal point for the September 2015 event and work continues with further events scheduled to take place in 2016.

Secretary General appointment

Late in the year PURPLE president Helyn Clack was able to announce the successful appointment of Géraldine Mateu as its new Secretary General. Géraldine arrived with a wealth of experience of the peri-urban and as Mrs Clack said "I am sure (she) will make a huge contribution to PURPLE's ongoing success. My colleagues and I directly involved in the recruitment process are confident that in Géraldine we have found someone of exceptional talent who will facilitate all our hard work in an efficient and effective way".

As the year ended Géraldine had embarked upon a process of meeting individual PURPLE members and learning more about the network's history, ongoing work and plans. She explained to the group that "My professional background is in local and regional government in the United Kingdom and I am French by birth. My early career focussed on European affairs, including EU funded projects. In the more recent part I have been a project manager working closely with local government departments delivering a wide range of services in peri-urban areas, I am sure this experience will be very useful in my new role with PURPLE".

PURPLE at the Regional Studies Association

PURPLE responded to a call for papers for an academic conference organised by the Regional Studies Association (RSA) in Lisbon, Portugal, in October 2015. A paper entitled "The Peri-urban within Territorial and Cohesion policy programming, the missing imperative" was accepted and a presentation subsequently delivered at an event which attracted an audience of about 70 from various academic institutions.

Taking part in such an event was an attempt to position key PURPLE messages within the academic arena with an eye to future project development in programmes such as H2020, Interreg and ESPON. The approach will be pursued into 2016 with the emergence of further opportunities to shape messages in the academic arena – be this via papers, events or discrete projects with a research dimension.

PURPLE in EU Projects

The Working Group met on numerous occasions over the year to look at available opportunities within EU 2014-20 funding programmes. It spent considerable time and effort considering how various project ideas might be developed in ways that would enable them to be funded within different programmes. This work included the submission of a project outline under the first call of the new Interreg Europe programme and the development of a number of other project ideas that PURPLE members continue to work on bilaterally or in small groups with an eye to submission in 2016.

Working Group members also engaged with two invitations for the network to directly participate in H2020 project proposals due for submission in early 2016. In addition to the sort of project work that PURPLE members might themselves generate this reflects a growing trend which is seeing PURPLE being asked to directly participate as subject specialists or experts in other people's work.

Governance and meetings

The newly appointed Executive Board, elected in November 2014 with Helyn Clack from Surrey as its new president, met on three occasions over the course of 2015. 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 position 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 2015. A very short explanation as to the intended purpose of each type of grouping is provided below for reference.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
General Assembly					11 ²					15 ¹		
Executive Board	29				10 ²					15 ¹		
Working Group		24		29			8		21			
Lobby Group	29	24		29			8		21			1

1 Brussels

2 Ghent

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, Lobby Group members took the lead in the preparation of the PURPLE General Assembly discussion with Lewis DIJKSTRA about the EU regional social progress project. They also participated in several events/conferences in Brussels on relevant issues for PURPLE, including:

- 2nd European CITIES Forum on June 02 2015 to discuss the urban dimension of EU policies and the next steps towards an EU urban agenda
- The "GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE: A EUROPEAN SUCCESS STORY" – conference of May 05 2015 co-organised by the European Commission, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the Committee of the Regions (CoR)
- The EESC conference "The territorial impact of EU policies– a consistent and inclusive approach" (Brussels, September 09, 2015)

PURPLE Board members too were in attendance at relevant events including EXPO MILANO 2015: where PURPLE lent its support to the "Lombardy" position paper about "Promoting European Local Food Systems" and subsequently attended a roundtable event on October 22 2015.

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.