

## A note from the President

Dear All,

This is the second occasion on which I have been asked to add a short message to our annual report. It gives me pleasure and pride to look back on a year where I have again placed huge value on the efforts and support of both my political colleagues and the officers in the regions and in Brussels who work so hard behind the scenes.

It was a year marked with notable achievements and for me the year ended on a particular high. It was wonderful to welcome Brandenburg to join us on our ongoing journey and I was especially delighted with news of the approval of the ROBUST project application. I see that success as pivotal for our future and as testimony to a huge amount of hard work in setting up the AISBL and being proactive in pursuing project opportunities. It gives us a wonderful launch pad into 2017, to which I look forward with anticipation!



Helyn Clack

## Key Achievements

- Welcoming a new member: Brandenburg
- First EU-funded project approved
- Highlighting the importance of the peri-urban at EWRC 2016
- Stating our position on the Urban Agenda
- Supporting the call for a White Paper on Rurality and a Rural Agenda
- Responding to and following up on the Cork 2.0 Declaration
- Contributing to CoR activities
- PURPLE at 3rd European Resources Forum
- Developing a new 3-year Work Plan and Annual Activity Plan for 2017
- Our Project Participation Paper
- Governance and meetings

## Welcoming Brandenburg

On 13 October 2016 the 25th PURPLE General Assembly approved Brandenburg's application for PURPLE membership. PURPLE President, Mrs Clack, and her Executive Board colleagues were delighted to support this application following a number of conversations and meetings over the previous months during which time both parties had had the chance to explore the advantages of collaboration on matters of shared interest. Among Brandenburg representatives on the day was Mrs Ines Jesse, State Secretary of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Spatial Planning of Brandenburg. Mrs Jesse gave a presentation explaining Brandenburg's motivation for joining a network focused on peri-urban matters, for example, their interests include urban development and housing with a focus on cooperation between municipalities and neighbouring communities; urban-rural cooperation; and transport with a mobility strategy designed to provide affordable transport

for all, everywhere, and in an environmentally friendly way.

## H2020 project ROBUST approved

PURPLE became a legal entity under Belgian law (an AISBL) in 2015 in large part to be able to fully participate in funded projects. A year later and for the first time in its history PURPLE is a full partner in an EU-funded project!

At the end of 2015 PURPLE was invited to join two Horizon 2020 project consortia looking at rural-urban linkages. Both bids were submitted in March 2016. One of them – the ROBUST project – was successful at the end of a two-stage application process which ultimately approved one of a total of 19 applications submitted to the EC. 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". ROBUST is led by Wageningen University and has twenty four project partners in total. PURPLE had considerable input to the shaping of the submitted application and will take the lead on developing the policy and influencing/lobbying dimension of the project over a four-year period from mid-2017.

## **EWRC 2016**

On 12 October, three PURPLE Regions (Surrey, South Moravia and FrankfurtRheinMain) and two non-PURPLE provinces (Val-d'Oise in France and Osijek-Baranja in Croatia) held a seminar entitled "Sustained and sustainable growth strategies around major urban centres". The event was part of the official programme of the European Week of Regions and Cities (EWRC 2016) formerly known as 'Open Days'. The event drew an audience of over seventy from nineteen countries. Speakers included MEP Ivan Jakovčić (REGI Committee), EESC Member Roman Haken, (Rapporteur on the EU Urban Agenda), together with representatives of the Slovak Presidency and expert practitioners from South Moravia and Mazovia. Delegates heard PURPLE president Helyn Clack remind them that "... growth strategies around major urban centres can only be successful if EU strategies and investments maintain a strong territorial focus with more specific attention being paid to peri-urban areas".

## **Declaration on the Urban Agenda**

Following intensive work by the Lobby Group in 2015 to ensure that the peri-urban dimension would not be lost sight of in the Urban Agenda and culminating in a response to the European Commission's consultation exercise 'The urban dimension of EU policies – key features of an EU Urban Agenda', PURPLE presented its draft Declaration on the EU Urban Agenda on 30th May 2016 in Amsterdam.

This presentation coincided with the signing of the "Pact of Amsterdam" by the Informal Meeting of Ministers responsible for urban matters. The final version of the Declaration was subsequently endorsed by the PURPLE General Assembly on 10 June. The purpose of this declaration (which brings together pre-existing PURPLE positions and specific contributions to the development of the Urban Agenda) is to underline the important and specific role of peri-urban territories in relation to urban areas, reminding stakeholders of the necessity to take account of the peri-urban dimension in EU policies.

## **Support for the EU Rural Agenda**

For some years now, PURPLE has been working closely with - and is a member of - the European Countryside Movement (ECM), an informal grouping of networks and organisations brought together by the Rurality-Environment-Development RED group. In 2016 the ECM called firstly for a White Paper on Rurality, and later for a Rural Agenda. PURPLE supported both calls and regards an EU rural agenda as a natural counterbalance to the EU Urban Agenda.

On 19 April PURPLE Lobby Group co-ordinator, Mathieu Simon, spoke on behalf of PURPLE at a seminar co-organised by ECM and the Committee of the Regions entitled "For a rural agenda in the programming period post 2020 – A White Paper on Rurality as a strategic step". The PURPLE intervention was one of a series of presentations by ECM partners outlining their specific arguments on the need for a White Paper on Rurality. Following strong support at this event the fifteen partner organisations of the ECM broadened their call into a demand for adoption of an European Rural Agenda which would demonstrate strong political commitment and set a framework and guidelines for a specific policy for the development of rural territories in the future. The adoption of such an agenda would complement the EU Urban Agenda and ensure the full potential of all EU territories be realised.

## **Cork 2.0 Declaration**

In parallel to the above, and following the publication of the Cork 2.0 Declaration in September backed by the c300 stakeholders who took part in the Cork+20 European Conference on Rural Development, PURPLE President Mrs Clack wrote to the European Agriculture and Rural Development Commissioner, Mr Phil Hogan, to underline that she "fully shared the conviction expressed by the participants in the final declaration" and the assertion that "support should strengthen rural-urban linkages and align the sustainable development of both rural and urban areas". She also repeated her support for the ECM's call for a Rural Agenda (see above) and urged Commissioner Hogan to make the Cork 2.0 Declaration "...the spine of the EC's rural vision for the years to come".

The CoR brochure on a White Paper on Rurality referred to below sets out a range of views. Alongside CoR itself, the European Parliament Rural Intergroup, and a DG Regio representative, Commissioner Hogan contributes some words which - whilst rejecting the call for a White Paper

in its own right - emphasises the opportunity to revisit many of the issues raised as part of a broader consultation on CAP scheduled for 2017, an exercise in which he urged PURPLE to participate in his reply to Mrs Clack's original letter.

### **Contributing to CoR activities**

Over the course of the year, The Committee of the Regions invited PURPLE to contribute to a number of events and papers on urban and rural issues.

On 9 May for example, PURPLE President Helyn Clack was a panel speaker at a seminar in Innsbruck organised by the CoR Commission for Natural Resources and used her intervention as an opportunity to highlight the key role played by peri-urban areas in "urban" economic success and the daily interdependency between the two types of territories.

On 30 May, Mrs Clack, together with Vice President Michel Rijsberman and North Holland CoR member Cees Loggen, shared a platform at the CoR Forum on the Urban Agenda event held to coincide with the adoption of the Pact of Amsterdam. All three appeared as part of a workshop session entitled "Functional urban areas and urban-rural linkages". Mrs Clack warned against any overplaying of the link between urban and economic success pointing out that many public entities such as counties and provinces already manage both urban and rural issues on a day-to-day basis, managing urban/rural collaboration from within the same organisation! She also emphasised that although the importance of the urban to the rural is much highlighted - in reality the situation is two-way. Mr Rijsberman explored the sheer complexity of relationships between settlements of different sizes with different sorts of linkages and interactions in place. Jan Olbrycht MEP was one of a number of representatives at the workshop who responded to Mrs Clack's challenge to share thoughts as to how the European Institutions might help move the debate beyond an outdated urban-rural typology.

In November PURPLE was asked to be one of three European networks to contribute to a Committee of the Regions' brochure entitled "The need for a White Paper on Rurality from local and regional perspectives". It included a piece from Mrs Helyn Clack in which she reaffirmed PURPLE's conviction that any crude rural-urban dichotomy inadequately captures

reality and she went on to point out that "a White Paper on Rurality and an EU Rural Agenda ... would serve as a strong signal that the challenges faced by rural areas of all kinds (including peri-urban territories) must also be taken into account at EU level".

### **Third European Resources Forum**

PURPLE accepted an invitation to speak at the third European Resources Forum held in Berlin on 9 and 10 November. Hosted and presented by the Umweltbundesamt (UBA, German Federal Environment Agency), the event sought to "... continue the discussion of the current European approach to resource policy and work out new impulses for a resource-efficient Europe". PURPLE was invited to reflect upon experiences from peri-urban areas as to the ways in which the rural-urban interface might be designed for the benefit of resource-efficient land usage. The debate was also an opportunity to once again challenge the outmoded rural-urban typology and highlight the fact that land itself should be regarded as a valuable resource.

The audience was invited to acknowledge the fact that "new ways of living and working serve to blur the divides between urban and rural areas, creating ever-larger and ever-more important peri-urban areas, with their own specific characteristics, problems and opportunities" and that resource-efficient land use is of critical importance as a direct result.

### **PURPLE Work Plan - review and draft**

In mid-2016, a review of progress against PURPLE's two-year work plan (2015-16) was carried out to ensure we were on track to deliver our objectives. Overall PURPLE had made very good progress and, recognising the benefit and value of having a plan to work to, the Executive Board asked the Secretary General to lead on the development of the next iteration. In the last quarter of 2016 a new draft Work Plan was developed for the next three years, ensuring its readiness for approval by PURPLE's Executive Board in early 2017 and by the General Assembly later in the year.

The new Work Plan presents the strategic priorities (Priority Areas) of PURPLE and outlines the core activities (Key Actions) PURPLE intends to focus on in the years 2017 to 2019. It is expected that a longer-term plan than what was previously used, will provide greater structure, certainty and visibility to the network, both internally and externally.

Whilst the Work Plan is an overarching plan for the years 2017 to 2019 and gives some strategic direction to the work of PURPLE, there will also be Annual Activity Plans for each of those three years. This marks a departure in the way that network planning is done. It is intended that the Work Plan and Annual Activity Plan work together and reflect one another, with the Annual Activity Plan providing much greater detail on key actions for each year, including timescales – where appropriate, responsibilities and measures of achievement. A draft Annual Activity Plan for 2017 was produced in the last quarter of 2016.

### Project Participation Paper

Given the success of the ROBUST Project application (see above) it is timely to report

that PURPLE has, for the first time, developed a Project Participation Paper which was approved by the General Assembly in October and which addresses the practical implications of PURPLE taking direct part in EU funded projects. The paper tries to capture a broad range of issues and considerations – from how PURPLE might best process and agree funding applications, to choosing who will participate, to how PURPLE will implement delivery and manage the finances etc – all without being too rigid or prescriptive so that it can all be made to work on a case-by-case basis which is both flexible and fair. The processes and protocols it contains will now in part be tested through the implementation of ROBUST as well as, hopefully, by pursuing other opportunities for the network to be directly involved in funded project work.

### Governance and meetings

The Executive Board, elected in November 2014 with Helyn Clack from Surrey as its president, met on four occasions over the course of 2016. 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 2016.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
General Assembly						10 <sup>①</sup>				13 <sup>②</sup>		
Executive Board	18 <sup>②</sup>			18 <sup>②</sup>		8 <sup>③</sup>				13 <sup>②</sup>		
Working Group				5 <sup>②</sup>	24 <sup>②</sup>				27 <sup>②</sup>		23 <sup>②</sup>	
Lobby Group	12 <sup>②</sup>		14 <sup>②</sup>		25 <sup>②</sup>				26 <sup>②</sup>			15 <sup>②</sup>

① The Hague    ② Brussels    ③ Rotterdam

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 April 18, PURPLE President Helyn Clack and Board Member Michiel Rijsberman met with MEP Lambert van Nistelrooij. They discussed the approach that might be adopted to funding regimes post 2020 and how that will need to be capable of taking account of the needs, potential and priorities of different places including peri-urban territories. On June 23, Mrs Clack had a similar discussion when she met with Jan Olbrycht MEP.

PURPLE represented the peri-urban cause at the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) 5th and 6th Steering Group Meetings (in June and October respectively) and at the 3rd European Rural Networks Assembly – which brings together the ENRD and the European Innovation Partnership (EIP) network – in December.

In September the PURPLE Lobby Group Coordinator attended an event organised by the CoR entitled A Strong Renewed Regional Policy for All Regions Post 2020, a Europe-wide bottom-up regional initiative aiming at the prolongation of regional funding for all regions and the preservation of an EU regional policy post 2020.

In early October PURPLE seized an opportunity to contribute to a leaflet of the European Parliament Intergroup on Rural, Mountainous and Remote Areas (RUMRA) entitled 'towards a rural agenda'. Drafted by MEP Franc Bogovič, Vice President of the RUMRA Intergroup and Chair of its "Rural and urban interrelations" working group for his contribution on the theme 'rural-urban balance', the resulting text makes clear references to the peri-urban.

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