

PURPLE 2022 Report

A short message from the President

Dear All,

Welcome to everyone and my thanks for all the hard work that has been done in our network over the previous twelve months. 2022 feels like a return to normality - in some ways anyway - and it was wonderful that so many PURPLE members were able to meet face to face in June at our 35th General Assembly after such a lengthy enforced time apart. Of course, events elsewhere, not least the war in Ukraine, serve as a reminder that we live in unpredictable times with few certainties.

Both our Working Group and Lobby Group have remained busy and productive in 2022 and we continue to pursue EU funding opportunities, with notable success in the case of the Horizon Europe *PLUS Change* project, news of the approval of which brought the year to a very positive end. Details of this work on funding can be found both here and on our website.

We continue to adapt our approach in arguing for greater recognition of peri-urban places, actors and interests, as I recall highlighting in my report of the previous year. That approach needs to take due account of the evolving policy and legislative frameworks, but also of our own collaborative work within projects and of our own membership needs and levels. The last point is one that I highlighted myself at our 2022 General Assembly and I continue to hope and think that these different elements have been, and will be, working in parallel lines to help ensure that PURPLE's aim and purpose remains both focused and faithful to its roots.

I very much look forward to PURPLE being able to press forward at speed on multiple fronts in the coming year and to being able to build on the achievements of 2022.



Helyn Clack

Key Moments:

- 35th PURPLE General Assembly
- PURPLE Working Group
- PURPLE and the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD)/ CAP Network
- Interreg Europe
- ROBUST project culmination
- ROBUST deliverables approved
- Horizon Europe (1)- pursuing opportunities
- Horizon Europe (2) – COST Transformers
- Horizon Europe (3) PLUS Change
- PURPLE and the Rural Pact 2022
- Small Urban Areas and PURPLE
- Governance and meetings

35th General Assembly

The 35th edition of the PURPLE General Assembly took place in Brussels on 15 June 2022, generously hosted by the Brussels Representation of the South Moravia region. Each member region was present with the half-day meeting serving as the first opportunity for members to meet face to face post-pandemic. The meeting included an Executive Board election for the period 2022-24 with the following appointments confirmed:

- Mrs Helyn Clack had indicated her desire to continue as network President in advance of the meeting. There were no other applications. Approved unanimously, **Helyn Clack (Surrey, South East England)** confirmed as President.
- Herr Rouven Koetter had indicated his willingness to serve as a network Vice-President in advance of the meeting. Approved unanimously, **Rouven Koetter (FrankfurtRheinMain)** confirmed as Vice-President.
- Mr Petr Springinsfeld indicated his wish to serve as an Executive Board member. Approved unanimously, **Petr Springinsfeld (South Moravia)** confirmed as Executive Board member.
- Mr Paul Van der Sluys expressed his willingness to continue as network Treasurer and ex-officio Executive Board member. There were no other candidates. Approved unanimously, **Paul Van der Sluys (Flanders)** confirmed as Treasurer

PURPLE Working Group

THE PURPLE Working Group convened on a total of seven occasions over the course of the year in a mixture of virtual and physical formats as travel restrictions related to the pandemic eased – see also table at foot of this document for details of format and date. The meetings tended to focus on funded projects opportunities as well as restarting the process of re-establishing thematic working groups and looking at the possibility of organising events with a peri-urban theme.

PURPLE and the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD)/CAP Network – Rural Proofing

PURPLE continued to play a participative role in both the Steering Group and General Assembly of the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) over the course of 2022 and as it morphed into the *EU CAP Network*. PURPLE Secretary General Vincent O’Connell took part in a ENRD Steering Group meeting held early in the year as well as the launch event of the *EU CAP Network* held in Brussels in early October, an invitation-only event restricted to ENRD members and selected guests.

The successor group is designed to come into being once CAP Legislation is finalised and CAP Strategic Plans (CSPs) for all EU Member states are in place, PURPLE was part of a discussion group at the launch event which considered how matters other than agriculture might be addressed by the new grouping given its inevitable refocusing on Pillar 1 of CAP and how the voices of sub-national public authorities might be heard effectively as part of new arrangements with a strong national-level focus.

Interreg Europe

PURPLE has set out to be fully involved in Interreg Europe (IE) 2021-27 – the only pan-European Interreg programme, with the PURPLE Secretary General producing and circulating an evolving series of “information notes” dating back to 2021 and ongoing in 2022. 2022 saw the first call for applications deadline and the Working Group continued to look at the sorts of pieces of work with a clear peri-urban dimension which might become the basis for a project application in the build up to that first deadline. Three ideas have been developed to the point of being useable as project outlines focusing on a) protected area regimes in the peri-urban, b) the assets of peri-urban areas in general and c) on peri-urban mobility – and, in each instance, on how these topics might be better incorporated into regional policy instruments.

A dedicated section of the *Lobby Group Resource Area* within the PURPLE website was maintained over the course of the year and IE has become a standing item on Working Group meeting agendas. Details of applications submitted to the first call were subsequently released by the programme secretariat and a short analysis paper was prepared and circulated to PURPLE Working Group members for their ongoing consideration.

ROBUST project culmination

The H2020 ROBUST project came to its conclusion at the end of November 2021 after 4.5 years as previously reported. As is normal though, that is not the end of the process or work. A final PURPLE partner report was prepared and submitted to the Lead Partner (and subsequently EC), and a final claim similarly submitted in order to trigger a fourth and final payment. Both were approved without amendment and final payment duly received. There was also a final (virtual) review meeting instigated by the EC and involving the two external assessors appointed to oversee the project. PURPLE Secretary General Vincent O’Connell presented details of the work that had been done by PURPLE in arriving at four deliverable reports

ROBUST deliverables approved

The four reports, each authored in their final versions by PURPLE Secretary General Vincent O’Connell, represented the culmination of work over the project’s lifetime with particular account taken of the inputs of other ROBUST project partners, and of work delivered on PURPLE’s behalf at earlier stages of the project by both Joanna Kubiak (Wielkopolska) and by Paul Van der Sluys (Flanders).

The four reports which are formally outputs within Work Package Six of the project consist of:

- A series of five complementary "**Topic Papers**" gathered together into a single document
- A **guidance document** on governance arrangements relating to rural-urban linkages and synergies
- A series of **Policy Recommendations** which make specific reference to 20+ EU level policy instruments
- A project **Manifesto** - calling for 30+ specific actions to be taken forward to build upon ROBUST’s work

Each was approved by the EC and external assessors. The assessors' report concludes that the **Topic Papers report**: "is very convincing and of great use for policy makers at EU, national and sub-national levels or anyone else with an interest in how policy might be contextualised in the context of rural-urban linkages and synergies between rural and urban actors, interests and places".

The **Policy Recommendations** are described as "well prepared", constituting "a rich set of policy recommendations arising from the work and findings of the ROBUST project and arrived at over a period of four and half years between June 2017 and November 2021".

The **Manifesto** meanwhile is judged to be "an important and extremely practical study that can serve not only as a set of rules and guidelines for policymakers, but also as a map of directions for further research useful for the scientific community".

Horizon Europe (1) – pursuing opportunities

PURPLE intensified its efforts to directly participate in Horizon Europe (HE) project partnerships, either as a partner in its own right (as in ROBUST), by facilitating opportunities for individual member regions to participate alongside the broader network itself, or by signposting member regions to opportunities they may wish to pursue independently - recognising that member regions all have their individual networks of contacts and working priorities.

To this end, the Working Group made a close study of draft versions of the Horizon Europe Work Programmes for 2023 and 2024 as these emerged over the year, identifying call topic texts of interest and beginning the process of attempting to identify the best way to establish or to join project consortia. As part of this broad intelligence gathering exercise, PURPLE Secretary General, Vincent O’Connell, took part in a number of online information events organised by the EC and related agencies, using these as valuable opportunities to gather information about specific call topics and in some cases to identify potential collaborative partners with which PURPLE might look to work.

As the year drew to a close, work had started on looking to develop specific project ideas around 3 or 4 identified calls drawn from within Clusters 5 and 6 of HE prior to a series of published deadlines fixed for the following March and April.

Horizon Europe (2) – COST Transformers

As reported in last year’s AAP, PURPLE developed a strong and ongoing relationship with *Czech Globe*, a research entity based in South Moravia who have a keen understanding of the peri-urban as places where change is ongoing and often complex and trendsetting. One area of this new cooperation was the inclusion of PURPLE as a “proposer” within an application made to the European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST) initiative, - a project named *Transformers* with a focus on bring about behaviour changes in economic sectors such as energy, textiles, and mobility. Disappointingly, the application submitted in spring 2022 was not approved but the feedback received inferred that a resubmission to the next (October 2022) application deadline might be a worthwhile investment of time and effort. To this end, considerable work was done on reshaping an application which was subsequently successfully submitted to time and the result of which should be known in mid-2023.

Horizon Europe (3) – PLUS Change

The HE application which came to be entitled PLUS Change "Planning Land Use Strategies: Meeting biodiversity, climate and social objectives in a Changing world" – a project name suggestion that came from PURPLE, also relates to behaviour change and also involves *Czech Globe* as lead partner – see preceding item.

The call topic within which PLUS Change has been developed is relatively unusual in having a two-stage application process with only successful stage one applicants invited to submit full applications. An intense period of work in the early part of 2022 saw a stage one submission made with PURPLE included as a named partner, the role of which would include the coordination a number of “practice cases” – not named individually at stage one. The invitation to proceed to full application came mid-year, allowing for a full, detailed and costed application to be submitted online by late September 2023. That intervening period was intense, with PURPLE securing partner roles for actors from current and former member regions – Mazovia, South Moravia, Flanders, Surrey, MHAL (3 Countries Park), and Ile de France. By the point of submission, PURPLE’s anticipated role has expanded to include leading work on EU level dissemination and coordinating EU level workshops, as well as on co-authoring a roadmap for post-project exploitation.

Just before 2022 came to a close, PURPLE was delighted to be informed that the “full” PLUS Change application had been approved for financing. The project consortium, of which PURPLE is itself a key member, and for which PURPLE Secretary General, Vincent O’Connell is the deputy project co-ordinator, now progresses to the grant agreement phase which is intended to be complete by March 2023 so that that project itself might formally begin delivery in June 2023.

PURPLE and the Rural Pact in 2022

PURPLE has been very closely involved in the development of the Long Term Vision for Rural Areas (LTVRA) 2050 - now more commonly referred to simply as the *Rural Vision* - from its inception. In part using its work in ROBUST, but also using its role within the ENRD (see separate items), PURPLE has maintained close contact with key players at all stages of the initiative, from initial roadmap consultation phase onward. One key element of the Rural Action Plan designed to deliver on the vision is the establishment and development of a "Rural Pact" open to all those able and willing to play an active part in varying aspects of rural development and the vision's implementation. To this end, PURPLE became a first-wave signatory to the Rural Pact on its launch in April 2022 and as such was invited to participate in the public launch event of the Pact held in Brussels in June

Small Urban Areas and PURPLE

PURPLE was delighted to receive an invitation from the CoR to become directly involved in work in developing a CoR Opinion on the topic of Small Urban Areas (SUAs) – rapporteur Kieran McCarthy. More specifically, and following a meeting with Mr McCarthy and the CoR team in March 2023, Vincent O’Connell was invited to speak at the public consultation event held the following month about both PURPLE and the peri-urban and in particular about rural-urban related work undertaken within ROBUST with a relevance to polycentric areas made up of interspersed SUAs. Prior to the July text submission date, PURPLE also prepared an updated version of its previous position paper on SUAs, emphasising that although SUAs and peri-urban territory are not synonymous, in many cases we will be referring to the same geographies, especially in the instance of the complex polycentric settlement patterns common in many parts of Europe. The PURPLE paper suggests that: "Locations such as those focused upon within the Opinion play a unique role, and have unique potential as places where the urban and rural actors and interests are interdependent, where they overlap and indeed combine, to form a distinct type of geography and sense of place. This role is valuable, often overlooked, ignored, or misunderstood, and has the potential to make a particular type of contribution that extends across both urban and rural policy agendas".

Governance and meetings

> One General Assembly meeting took place during the year, in June, this was the first face to face full-group meeting which it was possible to hold after the easing of pandemic-related restrictions on travel.

> Several Working Group meetings were held as reported in the main body of this report, and on the dates shown in the table below. For the third consecutive year, members decided to hold over further work by our Thematic Groups until it was possible to meet once again in person. By way of a reminder:

- Peri-urban agriculture - led by Flanders
- Peri-urban transport - led by South Moravia
- Peri-urban landscape- led by Wielkopolska,

> The Lobby Group continued to do most of its work by e-mail exchange, but occasional meetings were convened as indicated below.

> Executive Board elections took place in June 2022, there were no EB meetings in 2022.

The table provides an overview of formal PURPLE meetings of different types held over 2022.*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
General Assembly						15						
Executive Board												
Working Group		25 (v)	25 (v)	29 (v)						21 (v)	22 & 23	21 (v)
Lobby Group				01 (v)		01 (v)					04	

A 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.