

Introduction and context

The Drôme department is characterized by its peri-urban nature. The territory is shaped by a diversified agriculture (grapevines, orchards, livestock breeding...), focused on high-quality products. Drôme is the French department with the biggest surface area of organic agriculture (AB) and the 2nd department of Rhône-Alpes regarding other quality certifications. The agricultural sector and the many jobs it generates are pillars of economic development for our department. Quality of life is a main asset for Drôme explaining among other things, its dynamic demographics.

Besides its efforts to maintain and diversify high-quality agricultural productions, our department also benefits from important transportation assets such as the Rhône river, the national road 7, the A7 autoroute, and more recently the high-speed (TGV) train. An industrial economy has also grown up in the Rhône valley (between Lyon and Avignon) which has to take account of both the environmental quality and transport accessibility. The Ecoparc of Rovaltain is a good illustration of this situation: dedicated to tertiary activities, research and services, this centre has been structured and developed since 2004 around the Valence TGV TER railway station. Entirely built on former agricultural land, its way of functioning has evolved as it now seeks to make better use of space, notably through a compacted urbanisation (higher density development and land use optimisation).

Local representatives have always been attentive to this duality of our territories. We can obviously learn from other European regions' techniques to reconcile agricultural uses and urban needs. Reciprocally, we would like to share our own experience with our European neighbours, so that they may also benefit from it. The organization in Drôme of the next General Assembly of the PURPLE network, with the presence of a delegation of representatives from various European peri-urban regions, is a key opportunity for the AMD (Association of Mayors and Presidents of Federation of Municipalities of the Drôme) to confront its members with the practices of other European countries. This is the reason we suggested hosting a meeting in Valence the day before the General Assembly of PURPLE, so that our local representatives and the members of the European peri-urban network may exchange views.

PURPLE (<http://www.purple-eu.org/>) is a network which was set up in 2004 and brings together 15 European regions. All of them are dealing with peri-urban issues linked to their multi-functionality: food, housing, economic development, transportation and infrastructure, living environment, natural resources. PURPLE members are working to raise awareness about the specificities of European peri-urban areas, their complexity, their features, their assets and potential. They are advocates for the recognition of peri-urban areas across Europe and in the European decision-making process.

One of the main peri-urban issues consists of finding a right balance between urbanisation on the one side, especially through the development of transportation as it is the case in the Rhône valley, which is a key link between Northern and Southern Europe, and, on the other side, the development of an efficient agricultural economy, located in the same territory.