

PURPLE 2019 Report

A short message from the President

Dear All,

Welcome to our annual activity report for 2019 and my thanks to all those involved in producing it and to all those who participated in the work it describes. Sometimes, it is only in turning to a document like this that one realises just how much has been going on.

I would like to take this chance to thank my colleagues for the faith you have shown in me by re-electing me as your President in May 2019. I very much hope to repay that faith and look forward to working closely with everyone within the network and with those beyond who take an interest in the peri-urban.

2019 was of course the year that saw a new European Parliament and Commission installed and the gradual rolling out of more detailed budgetary and programming plans for the next seven years and beyond. This coincides with the adoption of a new three-year work plan for PURPLE from the start of 2020, to which I look forward with enthusiasm, in the meanwhile however please take the chance to read more about our work in the year now ended and how that has contributed to the peri-urban cause to which we all remain committed.



Helyn Clack

Key Achievements:

- General Assembly in Brandenburg
- PURPLE NUTS3 analysis (how others see us!)
- PURPLE Board election results 2019
- Thematic Working Groups tackle new topics
- PURPLE at the Council of Europe
- Peri-Urban Charter Signatories
- Peri-Urban Characteristics Paper
- PURPLE Lobby Group revisited
- Voices of Culture
- The ROBUST project
- Green4Grey
- European rural matters
- Developing a new PURPLE Work Plan
- Governance and meetings

General Assembly in Brandenburg

PURPLE was delighted to accept an invitation by our newest member region, Brandenburg, to host its 30th General Assembly in late May 2019. Delegates were addressed by Kathrin Schneider, Minister of Infrastructure and Spatial Planning, and were welcomed to Potsdam by Ines Jesse, State Secretary in the Ministry of Infrastructure and Spatial Planning. There was the chance to take part in a symposium addressing peri-urban cooperation in a development area as well as to join a study visit to a proposed development site at the Kramnitz former military complex. Dinner was hosted by PURPLE General Assembly member Jobst-Hinrich Ubbelohde and a warm vote of thanks for everyone's efforts was offered by the General Assembly itself at its formal meeting the following day.

PURPLE NUTS3 analysis (how others see us!)

The Working Group undertook a study looking at how their respective regions fared in terms of the official EU typology regarding urban/rural and metropolitan status. The exercise was linked to a Lobby Group (see separate story) consultation response on new EU proposals for territorial classifications (TERCET). This might seem arcane but is actually important in terms of establishing eligibility for EU funding as well as accurately conveying the nature of a place to outside audiences. The exercise threw up some quite interesting results with many noting a gap between how they would characterise their regions and what the official statistics suggest – we also noted the wide variance in population sizes within NUTS3 unit areas Full details on request.

PURPLE Board election results 2019

The PURPLE General Assembly elects a President and Executive Board every two years. On the occasion of the 30th General Assembly held on May 29 2019 in Potsdam, PURPLE Treasurer Paul Van der Sluys took the General Assembly through the formal process of seeking and voting upon nominations for positions on the PURPLE Executive Board:

- **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 Mark Winnington** had expressed a wish to continue in his existing role as Vice-President in advance of the meeting. Approved unanimously, Mark Winnington (West Midlands) confirmed as Vice-President.
- **Mr Miroslav Kubásek** indicated his wish to serve as an Executive Board member. Approved unanimously, Miroslav Kubásek (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.

Thematic Working Groups tackle new topics

After their successful launch in 2018 we resolved to hold three more thematic meetings to follow the two which had taken place the previous year. Our objective remained to develop meetings around particular themes of interest to peri-urban actors – the hope being that a tighter focus on a given topic might enable colleagues to cooperate more closely to an agreed end – for example the production of a paper, event, funding application or targeted lobbying work to be carried out by Lobby Group colleagues.

Three further events were scheduled:

- Peri-urban transport and mobility – led by South Moravia
- Peri-urban landscape – led by Wielkopolska
- Peri-urban Structural Funds – led by Brandenburg

The first took place in March 2019 and the second in September 2019, the third was scheduled for November 2019 but was subsequently postponed to a later date. Our intention is that the work on transport will result in a Topic Paper on peri-urban mobility and transport, whilst the second will culminate in a public event for EU level policy-makers addressing peri-urban landscape challenges and opportunities.

PURPLE at the Council of Europe

PURPLE Secretary General Vincent O’Connell was invited to address the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities Europe (CLRAE) of the Council of Europe at its meeting in Várpalota, Veszprém County, Hungary in June 2019 on the subject of the “rural-urban interface”. He spoke about PURPLE’s history and mission with regard to winning recognition for areas where rural and urban interests coincide and cooperate, to an audience of over 50 local politicians and others from more than 12 CoE member countries. The presentation was followed by a lively Q&A session where delegates were able to share their own reflections on just how peri-urban many of their areas actually were – without their having ever necessarily conceptualised them in those terms - and just how distinct peri-urban areas actually are when compared to urban or rural territory.

Peri-Urban Charter Signatories

PURPLE colleagues, with the guidance of Vice-President Mr Jankowiak, from the Wielkopolska region, undertook at the end of 2018 to refresh PURPLE’s use of the Peri-urban Charter, something they achieved with huge effect during the first months of 2019 by the end of which almost fifty local authority bodies from within the region had signed up. This represents an exponential increase from previous levels and led the Working Group to propose that serious thought should be given to PURPLE events specifically aimed at Charter signatories with just such an event planned for 2020.

As a reminder: the Peri-Urban Charter is intended 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.

Peri-Urban Characteristics Paper

The PURPLE Working Group has for many years now been involved in the production of numerous reports and papers – not least our ongoing series of PURPLE Topic Papers of course. In 2019, they turned their attention to the subject of the peri-urban more generally. This process was sparked by a number of member regions pointing out that on occasions it still remained difficult to explain just what the peri-urban actually is. As a network, we established many years ago that peri-urban is extremely difficult to define but relatively straightforward to characterise; this was taken as the starting point for a paper which drew upon numerous past pronouncements as well as capturing the results of three group discussions. Copies of the final paper are available from the members' section of the website or upon request by contacting info@purple-eu.org

Lobby Group revisited

We reported last year on an exercise that had been initiated late in 2018 looking at how the PURPLE Lobby Group operated and how it might maintain productivity levels despite limited resource levels. This work continued in 2019 with officers from a number of member regions giving generously of their time in both planning new arrangements and in developing a set of PURPLE policy responses, for example:

- An initial Discussion Paper on the EU Sustainable Europe 2030 draft reflection paper - February 2019
- A consultation response on the CoR Opinion regarding Regional Development Strategies (RDSs) - April 2019
- A consultation response regarding *harmonised application of territorial typologies (TERCET)* - May 2019
- A consultation response on CoR Opinion on metropolitan regions and cohesion policy - September 2019

With regard to the last of these, and to give a flavour of our approach, the text for finalised text of that Opinion now includes specific reference to metropolitan regions having "...strong links with peri-urban and rural areas" as a result of representations by PURPLE.

Voices of Culture

PURPLE's application in late 2019 to take part in the "Voices of Culture structured dialogue between the European Commission and the cultural sector". was one of forty selected from almost 180 submissions. The nature and potential of culture and cultural activities in peri-urban settings is a topic that has been looked at previously by the Working Group and this past work informed the application. The Structured Dialogue poses itself the question "What can the EU do to promote culture in the peri-urban spaces?" Written submissions from all successful applicants are to be collated and published before a full group meeting scheduled to take place in Germany to discuss and compare thoughts in February 2020, preparatory to a high level meeting with EC officials to take place in Brussels in April 2020.

The ROBUST project

The Horizon 2020 ROBUST project - the first EU level project in which PURPLE is a full partner - began in mid 2017 and is scheduled to last four years. The project looks at rural-urban linkages with an overall goal "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. Two full project meetings took place in 2019, in May in Helsinki and in November in Riga with PURPLE participating fully in the three-day meetings themselves as well as the project Steering Group meetings. We also successfully submitted, and subsequently received approval for, our first partner report and claim for the first 18 months of project up to November 2018, by the January 2019 deadline.

As part of the project's work it also held a breakfast seminar entitled "*Fostering the Circular Food Economy through Stronger Rural-Urban Linkages*" in Brussels on Thursday April 11 2019 at the premises of PURPLE member region partner the Flemish Land Agency (VLM)

Green4Grey

September 2019 saw the culmination of the EU LIFE programme funded project Green4Grey. PURPLE has been a listed supporter of the project from the initial application and has worked closely with the project lead partner, and PURPLE member, the Flemish Land Agency (VLM) over the past three years. PURPLE was strongly represented at the highly successful final project conference and study visit event in late September where a full pack of event materials together with a series of project publications was made publicly available: for copies, see: <https://green4grey.be/en/knowledge-base> Amongst the suite of final publications is a manual providing details of demonstrable good practice related to peri-urban green infrastructure as well as presentations from the day and details of various workshops and case studies from across Flanders.

European rural matters

PURPLE continued to participate in both the European Rural Networks (ERN) Steering Group (SG) and its Assembly, attending both the 12th SG and 6th GA during the course of 2019. 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's membership of both the ERN's Assembly and Steering Group, continues to add value to our work from both PURPLE's and the ROBUST project's 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.

Developing a new PURPLE Work Plan

The 31st PURPLE General Assembly held in September 2019, asked that the Working Group develop a draft of a three-year Work Plan to replace the one which was due to expire at the end of 2019. That work was completed shortly before Christmas with the intention that it be submitted to the Executive Board for approval early in 2020.

For the first time, the proposed 2020-22 Work Plan includes a short list of focus areas for activities which are mapped against key European Union policies, against the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the proposed Priority Objectives within the 2021-27 cohesion policy and funds. Should the Plan meet with the Executive Board's approval, it will be submitted to the 32nd General Assembly for ratification in line with AISBL constitutional requirements.

Governance and meetings

Elections to the Executive Board, took place as part of the 30th General Assembly with results as detailed on Page 2, Board members serve in positions of trust representing and protecting the interests of the wider membership. Unusually no formal Board meeting took place during 2019.

Two General Assembly meetings took place during the year. The first in Brandenburg (see Page 1) and the second in Brussels at the kind invitation of the Flemish Land Agency (VLM, BE) the day following the final meeting and conference of the Green4Grey project (see Page 3).

There were four "standard" Working Group meetings held over the course of the year as well as two new-style "thematic" Working Group sessions as follows:

- Peri-urban transport - led by South Moravia – meeting March 2019, next steps, circulation of papers and outlining of draft Topic Paper
- Peri-urban landscape- led by Wielkopolska - meeting September 2019 – next steps, a high-profile Brussels event aimed at policy-makers

The Lobby Group did most of its work on line or in smaller gatherings but one full meeting was also convened.

The table provides a brief overview of formal PURPLE meetings of different types held over 2019.*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
General Assembly					29				27			
Executive Board					29 (cancelled)							
Working Group			25 26				10		18 19		20 21	
Lobby Group					16							

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.