

## PURPLE 2021 Report

### A short message from the President

Dear All,

Welcome. When writing a year ago I highlighted just what a strange year 2020 had been, how the Covid pandemic had impacted upon us all, in ways that no-one foresaw and how we had adapted our work in PURPLE to take account of these shifting circumstances. Covid continued to affect us deeply in 2021, and my optimism as to being able to come together again face to face proved ultimately to be unfounded. Nevertheless, there is much to report upon, not least perhaps our success in the ROBUST project, but as this summary report of the year's activities I think demonstrates, we have not been idle on other fronts either.

Both our Working Group and Lobby Group have remained busy and productive, the *consultation response compendium* document alone stands as testament to the work of the latter and I commend that to you. We continue to pursue EU funding opportunities in the ways in which you have heard me say on several occasions that I had hoped we would. Details of this work can be found both here and on our website.

As the short and longer-term impacts of the pandemic, and its aftershocks - if that indeed is what they prove to be - continue to be felt, we will no doubt continue to adapt our approach in arguing for greater recognition of peri-urban places, actors and interests. In some ways Covid has brought many of those issues into a sharper focus and certainly, I feel that we are in many ways better-placed to make many of those arguments than previously. At the same time though, the 'territorial policy' landscape remains contested. There is much in the EU's LTVRA for example to which we would wish to give our wholehearted support but the peri-urban needs not to be subsumed under any rural vision any more than under an urban one of course - our aim and purpose remains unaltered in other words.

With all of that in mind, I look forward to PURPLE being able to press forward at speed on some fronts and to being able to pick up on some areas which have inevitably had to be put to one side over the course of the last two years.



Helyn Clack

### Key Moments:

- Consultation Responses Compendium 2021
- PURPLE Working Group online
- PURPLE and the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD)
- Interreg Europe
- Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe (1)
- Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe (2)
- ROBUST project culmination and final conference
- ROBUST deliverables
- ROBUST Governance Workshop October 4<sup>th</sup> 2021
- LIFE Blue-Green Star
- CoR Opinion on the Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas
- Voices of Culture and peri-urban creativity
- Governance and meetings

### Consultation Responses Compendium 2021

For the second year, PURPLE's responses to public consultation exercises and similar have been pulled together into a single annual compendium. This has proved a popular way to bring together a broad body of work into one place – it serves to display the breadth and depth of the network's engagement across a wide range of topics. The 2021 edition includes several transport/mobility related items, as well as contributions regarding new funding programmes for the 2021-27, plus copies of PURPLE submissions on a number of discrete policy instruments such as the new EU Forest Strategy, new EU Soil Strategy, LULUCF, the new EU Organic Production strategy and – inevitably perhaps – the Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas.

### PURPLE Working Group online

Travel restrictions related to the pandemic meant the Working Group did not meet face-to-face in 2021, what it did however do was to establish a pattern of semi-regular online meetings, with the result that members convened for an unprecedented nine times over the course of 2021 – see table at foot of page 4. Although the work of our various "thematic groups" (TGs) did not lend itself so well to the virtual format, and therefore went unpursued during the course of the year (other than for some detailed planning as to what a TG looking at the use of EU Structural Funds in peri-urban areas might actually address), 2-2.5 hours on-line gatherings of WG members to discuss peri-urban issues on a monthly basis seemed to work well. Albeit acknowledged as no more than an adequate substitute for our quite recently adopted model of noon to noon face-to-face gatherings, the imposed alternative has served a valuable purpose in offering regularity of contact and opportunity for input from across the membership.

## **PURPLE and the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD)**

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 2021. With all meetings reshaped to take place virtually, PURPLE Secretary General Vincent O’Connell took part in two Steering Group meetings in May and in October and at the GA held online in December. CAP Reform and the process of arriving at CAP Strategic Plans (CSPs) formed a large focus for the year’s work alongside adoption of, and the follow up implementation of, the Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas.

The group also deliberated as to its own future governance with plans evolving for a new “CAP Network” to replace the existing ENRD arrangements once CAP Legislation is finalised and CSPs in place, PURPLE made a written submission to the secretariat making a case for continued representation for regional and local authorities as part of the make-up of any reformed entity.

## **Interreg Europe**

PURPLE set out to be fully involved in preparations for Interreg Europe 2021-27 – the only pan-European Interreg programme – and made this a Working Group priority area for 2021. PURPLE participated in the public consultation exercise which closed in April 2021 with PURPLE welcoming the broadening of programme scope to take greater account of regional policy instruments beyond those developed as part of ESIF programmes. It also welcomed the broader thematic focus and the opportunity to devote more resource to delivering transnational pilot actions.

Thereafter the PURPLE Secretary General produced and circulated an evolving series of “information notes” (April, June, November, December) for use by Working Group members or other colleagues within member regions if they so wished. A “fact file” was also produced towards the very end of the year, by which time the Working Group had begun to look at the sorts of pieces of work with a clear peri-urban dimension which might become the basis for a project application to the first call for proposals, once the date and other details of this became known.

## **Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe (1)**

PURPLE has stated its intention of building upon the value of participation in the ROBUST project by pursuing other opportunities to directly participate in other Horizon 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, 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 looked closely at the Horizon Europe Work Programme for 2021 and 2022 and the possible opportunities for collaboration on issues of peri-urban interest. Having first looked at this in May/June, the group returned to its deliberations when it met again in September, and began the process of analysing a number of calls within clusters 5 and 6 of the programme which specifically highlight or otherwise reference the peri-urban. The group reaffirmed its commitment to actively pursue opportunities to collaborate with other stakeholders in formulating proposals with a clear peri-urban dimension as part of their design.

## **Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe (2)**

Over 2021 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. This working relationship has enabled PURPLE to pursue its ambition of being actively involved in Horizon projects itself, at the same time facilitating individual member regions in participating directly as pilots/case studies etc on a case by case basis. PURPLE worked on three distinct project applications straddling the 2014-20 and 2021-27 programmes. The first call to which we applied was part of the final H2020 European Green Deal call, the second was organised within the European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST) initiative, the third formed part of the first cluster 5 call under the new Horizon Europe programme, all related to bringing about behaviour change.

One knows how competitive and how time-consuming Horizon project development and application form preparation is, at the year-end we were in a position where we had learned our application under the final Horizon 2020 call had not been successful, albeit we took some comfort from learning that the SWIFT Change application had scored in the top decile of the 111 applications received. The project application TransformERS, submitted under the COST initiative, was still under consideration and work was progressing towards a submission of what had become the PLUS Change project by the February 2022 deadline.

### **ROBUST project culmination and final conference**

The H2020 ROBUST project came to its conclusion at the end of November 2021 after 4.5 years. The year saw a number of virtual project assembly meetings (ultimately the partnership was never able to meet face-to-face after its meeting in Riga in November 2020). In many ways, this was unfortunate as PURPLE's role was always intended to become more central in the later stages of the project and, arguably, the lack of physical meetings robbed us of some impetus and momentum.

Nevertheless, PURPLE was able to play an active role in the two assemblies which did occur – in April and September, and in the online Final Conference which took place on September 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> (see also separate item below for details of the European Workshop of October 4<sup>th</sup> co-hosted by PURPLE). The conference set out to wrap-up many of the project's activities and to present a number of key findings around rural-urban governance. PURPLE's Secretary General was one of a panel of three speakers invited to share their reflections on the "main findings and lessons learned from the empirical work that was carried out in the project, and what this means for governing rural-urban relations and for rural and territorial policies".

### **ROBUST deliverables**

With the project concluding in November 2021, PURPLE was charged with submitting four written deliverables by the end of the project's 54<sup>th</sup> and final month. These were each delivered on time, submitted to the European Commission and hence registered on the official EU portal as "deliverables". 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 and by Paul Van der Sluys. 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 and findings

### **ROBUST Governance workshop October 4<sup>th</sup> 2021**

PURPLE co-hosted a European level workshop on the governance arrangements relating to rural-urban linkages as a part of its role and contribution to the ROBUST project. The event set out to, (and was successful in) attracting an invited audience of 25 active participants, selected to take part in light of their specialist knowledge in this area.

PURPLE was co-organiser, with LUKE (The Finnish Institute for Natural Resources) and Wageningen University of this half-day event consisting of a number of short presentations followed by a series of complementary small-group workshops. PURPLE Secretary General, Vincent O'Connell gave a short presentation on five key principles underpinning rural-urban governance arrangements as part of the event. A Workshop Report was subsequently compiled and published as a "deliverable" within the ROBUST project with Vincent O'Connell credited as co-author and including a copy of the presentation he had delivered on PURPLE's behalf.

### **LIFE Blue-Green Star**

PURPLE was in the happy position of being able to resume its close working ties with the Three-Countries Park over the period of 2021. In particular it was able to work with a number of public sector authorities and third sector NGOs from Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands in shaping an application for the EU LIFE programme. The Blue-Green Star project was to have focused on the governance arrangements surrounding the management of peri-urban landscapes – especially across administrative border when inter-body cooperation is a sine qua non. Much to everyone's great disappointment - and it might be added, surprise - the application was not successful. Nevertheless, a task group including PURPLE Secretary General Vincent O'Connell, has been formed to explore the possibilities for taking this work forward through relevant Interreg programmes as first calls are opened under the 2021-27 programmes. A revisiting of the revamped LIFE programme offers another possible way forward, all is to be returned to and explored in greater detail in 2022.

### **COR Opinion on the Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas**

PURPLE made a number of written submissions to public consultation exercises of different sorts as alluded to elsewhere in this report. It was particularly closely involved in the work in developing a Committee of the Regions Opinion on the Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas. PURPLE submitted an eight-page response to the relevant CoR

administrative team to be forwarded to Juan Manuel Moreno Bonilla, President of the Region of Andalusia, in his capacity as rapporteur for the Opinion. The response was in part based upon points raised in discussion at the Commission’s virtual event on the subject in late September upon which a meeting note was prepared by the PURPLE Secretary General for the benefit of members of the PURPLE Lobby Group who subsequently discussed its content with the response itself being written in light of those discussions

PURPLE was delighted that a number of points it had made were included in the final Opinion text. It was especially heartening to see multiple references both to rural-urban linkages, and to the peri-urban itself, (absent entirely in the initial note) in the text agreed in late November. The PURPLE paper itself consisted of multiple sections and sub-sections as well as an annex dedicated to the findings of the ROBUST project with regards to rural-urban linkages and interdependencies. PURPLE included particular points with regard to rural proofing, the Rural Pact, rural and urban typologies and strengthening rural urban relations. Of course, it also contained background information about PURPLE and the crucial role played by peri-urban actors and places.

### **Voices of Culture – and peri-urban creativity**

The Voices of Culture initiative looking at non-urban culture and creativity suffered as a result of the culmination of its work coinciding with the early stages of the Covid pandemic, meaning that its final report somewhat disappeared when published in April 2020 and its planned final event due to be held in conjunction with European Commission officials in Brussels turned into a much truncated online event behind closed doors. It was gratifying therefore to see this work was brought back into prominence in the Staff Working Document (SWD) accompanying the EC Communication on the LTVRA published just over a year later In June 2021. The SWD highlighted the chapter on peri-urban culture and creativity authored by PURPLE Secretary General Vincent O’Connell. Downloadable at: [THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN NON-URBAN AREAS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION – Voices of Culture](#)

### **Governance and meetings**

> One General Assembly meeting took place during the year, in virtual format at the end of June as dictated by pandemic-related restrictions on travel. Disappointingly it meant that for the second year in a row we had to postpone plans to meet face-to-face in Frankfurt and to combine the GA itself with a study visit.

> Several Working Group meetings were held on-line as reported in the main body of this report, and on the dates shown in the table below. For the second 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 exchanges, but occasional virtual meetings were convened as indicated below.

> With the Executive Board elections due to take place in 2021 held over until 2022, there were no EB meetings in 2021.

*The table provides an overview of formal PURPLE meetings of different types held over 2021\*.*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>General Assembly</b>						28						
<b>Executive Board</b>												
<b>Working Group</b>			12	16	07	11	09		10	22	12	10
<b>Lobby Group</b>		02 24	02	08		18	13		16			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.