
Framing Rural Employment Policy in the European Union in the Context of Sustainable Regional Development

ANDREW F. FIELDSEND¹

Abstract

Many respected academics have questioned the appropriateness of the continuing close link between the Common Agricultural Policy and its 'rural development' measures. The European Union (EU) Framework 7 research project 'RuralJobs' included case study research on current employment patterns and opportunities for, and constraints on, rural economic diversification in five contrasting NUTS2 regions across the EU. As a contribution to the current debate on the shape of EU rural and regional development strategies for the period 2014-2020, this paper presents the results of this analysis. Rural areas differ in their accessibility to urban centres with a population of 50,000 or more, but smaller population centres can be important employment and service centres for their rural hinterlands. An urban-focused approach to regional development could precipitate a 'race to the bottom' by excessively targeting funding at urban centres and contributing to the economic and social decline of the rural hinterlands. To comply with the priorities of the EU's Europe 2020 strategy, namely smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, regional development strategies should include a distinct rural component which recognises the potential contribution of natural capital, and therefore rural areas, to achieving a competitive regional knowledge economy.

Keywords: rural employment, European Union, regional development, accessibility

JEL classification: O18, Q01, R12

Introduction

Many respected academics have questioned the appropriateness of the continuing close link between the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and its 'rural development' measures. At European Union (EU) level Shucksmith (2010) relates how the term 'rural development' has acquired

¹ FP7 research coordinator, Department of Geography, University of Plymouth, Plymouth, UK

a new and highly contested meaning through the establishment of the CAP's second pillar, the rural development regulation (RDR). The CAP remains primarily a structural adjustment policy for agriculture and Shucksmith (2010) cites Bryden and Hart who wrote "the profound weakness of the [new] RDR becomes increasingly apparent when the scope of its menu of eligible measures is compared with what needs to be addressed if failing rural areas are to be turned around economically and demographically". Gorton et al. (2009) describe how in the New Member States (NMS) non-farming related interests are poorly represented and have struggled to be effectively included in RDR measures.

Marsden (1998) highlighted the need for a more regionally and spatially orientated rural development policy and Marsden (1999) suggested that "[o]ne possibility is a new Rural Development Objective and Fund, seeking to integrate elements of CAP, Regional and Social Funds, and implemented through Rural Area Programmes at regional/local levels ... They might also involve more refined definitions of priority areas through a new typology of rural areas at EU level, and methods of defining priorities from a cohesion point of view". In the current (2010) context the relevant 'elements' of the CAP would be Axes 1, 3 and 4 of Pillar I. Pillar I and Axis 2 of Pillar II focus on direct payments to farmers rather than rural development in its broader sense. The former has been more effective in maintaining farm employment rather than creating new jobs (EC, 2006) while agri-environmental payments (Axis 2) have led to little direct creation of jobs (Mills et al., 2010).

The results of the EU Framework 7 research project "New Sources of Employment to Promote the Wealth-Generating Capacity of Rural Communities" (acronym: RuralJobs) were expected to facilitate a better targeting of rural development measures and future evolution of rural development policies in line with the Lisbon Strategy. The research was founded on three hypotheses (Fieldsend, 2008):

- That a territorial approach to improving the wealth generating ability of rural areas through the creation of new sources of employment is required, whilst recognising the unique dimension of agriculture and other land-based industries in the rural economy;
 - Initiatives to create new sources of employment in rural areas must take account of the existence of markets for the products of labour;
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whether these are in the primary, secondary or tertiary sectors. Frequently, the largest markets are in urban areas;

- Rural areas in different parts of the EU are fundamentally different from each other in many respects and that a single, EU-wide ‘solution’ or ‘strategy’ for creation of rural employment is not appropriate.

It was anticipated that, through the study of a representative selection of regions, it would be possible to identify general principles which can be applied to different ‘types’ of rural area. The typology chosen for RuralJobs (Raupelienė, 2009) was applied at NUTS3 level and was based on an EU DG Regio study (Dijkstra and Poelman, 2008) which combines a new classification of remoteness, based on driving time to the closest city (of 50,000 inhabitants or more), with the OECD classification of rurality based on population density (OECD, 1994). RuralJobs combined this with the criterion of GDP per head, as used, for example in the EU Fourth report on economic and social cohesion (EC, 2007), with a threshold of 50% of the EU-27 average. The result is twelve ‘types’ of NUTS3 region of which four are urban. Of the remaining eight, there are very few intermediate, remote regions regardless of level of GDP, leaving six ‘types’ of rural area which occur widely.

The OECD classification system for regions (i.e. predominantly rural, intermediate and predominantly urban) provides a systematic, if crude, assessment of their rurality. Within this system many kinds of rural space exist and the future development trajectories of different types of rural area will differ. The choice of 50% as the GDP threshold, rather than 75% which is currently used by the EU at NUTS2 level to define ‘convergence’ and ‘competitiveness and employment’ regions, reasonably clearly divided the regions of the EU-15 and post-socialist NMS into separate groups. Pakurár and Kovács (2008) had demonstrated major differences in the characteristics of the rural labour market of the two types of region.

Thus the RuralJobs typology addresses all three RuralJobs hypotheses and in so doing allows the potential for rural employment creation in different parts of the EU to be contrasted in the context both of urban-rural relationships and sustainable regional development strategies. As a contribution to the current debate on the shape of EU rural and regional development strategies for the period 2014-2020, this paper presents the results of this analysis.

Methodology

Case study research on current employment patterns and opportunities for, and constraints on, rural economic diversification was conducted in five contrasting NUTS2 regions across the EU. The research covered the following ‘types’ of region: ‘high GDP - urban - accessible’ and ‘high GDP - intermediate - accessible’ (UK); ‘high GDP - predominantly rural - accessible’ and ‘high GDP - predominantly rural - remote’ (France); ‘low GDP - intermediate - accessible’ (Bulgaria); ‘low GDP - predominantly rural - accessible’ and ‘low GDP - predominantly rural - remote’ (Hungary); and ‘low GDP - predominantly rural - remote’ (Romania). Thus all six most common ‘types’ of rural region were included in the research.

In order to examine the interaction between different types of rural area and the evolution of labour markets, travel to work areas and changing work patterns (as specified in the call for project proposals), ‘labour market’ or ‘employment’ areas (LMA) were used for the case study research. Remarkably, in most countries represented in the research, evidence was available which allowed LMAs to be defined, as follows: ‘Travel to Work Areas’ (TTWA) in the UK (Bond and Coombes, 2007); ‘Local Labour Systems’ (LLS) in Hungary (Radvánszki and Sütő, 2007); and ‘agglomeration areas’ in Bulgaria (Anon., 2007). In France, a ‘Pays’ is the result of a collective bottom-up approach with regional approval of its boundary. Only in Romania was it necessary to use an administrative territory (a NUTS3 region) as a case study area.

The evidence base for the research consisted of (a) information gathered from the interviews with local actors/key experts, (b) quantitative data sets and (c) previously published (mainly local) studies. In each case study area, a SWOT analysis of rural employment potential was conducted from the results of the field research. Further details of the SWOT analysis methodology are given in Fieldsend and Kerekes (in press).

Results

The NUTS2 regions in which the RuralJobs case studies were located are shown in Figure 1. A description of each region, based on the RuralJobs data analysis, is presented below and the components of the SWOT analyses which directly relate to accessibility of rural areas to urban centres are summarised.

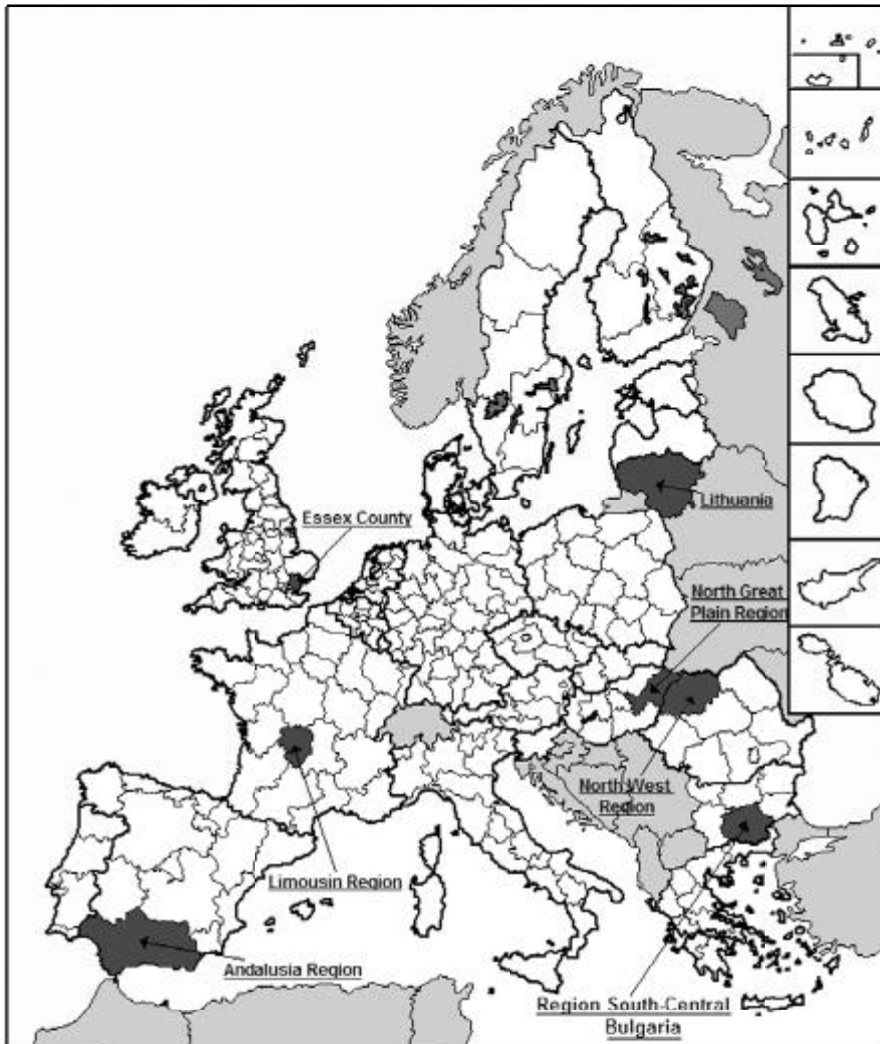


Figure 1. NUTS2 regions included in the RuralJobs research. The case studies described in this paper were located in all of these regions except Andalusia Region and Lithuania.

The Chelmsford and Braintree TTWA, Essex, UK

The Chelmsford and Braintree ‘Travel to Work Area’ (TTWA) is defined as a single labour market by Bond and Coombes (2007). In 2001 the TTWA had a population of 348,677, and it covers an area of 1313 km². It is located close to London (ca. 35 minutes from Chelmsford by train) and includes five towns, ranging from Chelmsford (population 97,451) to Halstead (population 10,000). Rural areas account for 37.7% of the population and 87.8% of the area. The TTWA is defined as ‘high GDP - intermediate - accessible’ in the RuralJobs typology as 100% of the population can access urban areas by car in 45 minutes or less. The population of the rural and urban areas increased by 6.2% and 5.0% respectively between 2001 and 2007 as did the percentage of people aged 65+, reaching 22.0% in rural areas and 17.2% in towns. The economic prosperity of rural and urban residents is similar and the mean number of cars in rural households was higher in rural areas (0.88 c.f. 0.81).

Thames Gateway South Essex, Essex, UK

Although the Thames Gateway South Essex (TGSE) sub-region is split between two ‘Travel to Work Areas’ (Bond and Coombes 2007), the territory is designated by the UK Government as a ‘National Growth Area’ and treated as a single entity. It is located on the north bank of the estuary of the River Thames and very close to London. It has just 38,095 rural residents out of a population of 633,687 and is dominated by the Southend-on-Sea urban area (pop. 266,749). TGSE covers 530 km² and although it is defined by RuralJobs as ‘predominantly urban - accessible - developed’, settlements of 10,000 or more cover less than 30% of the land surface. Even so, rural areas are feeling increasing pressures related to urbanisation. Rural land is used mostly for farming (arable and grassland), country parks and wildlife reserves.

Pays de Tulle, région Limousin, France

Pays de Tulle (PdT) lies entirely within the Tulle ‘employment zone’ (EZ) and, with a population in 2006 of 49,789 and an area of 1253 km², is defined by RuralJobs as ‘high GDP - predominantly rural - accessible’. Even so, its only town, Tulle (for which PdT serves as a catchment area), has just 15,734 residents; Brive-la-Gaillarde (population 50,009) and Li-

moges (population 136,539) lie outside PdT. Two out of three people live in a municipality with less than 150 inhabitants km⁻². The population of PdT fell between 1962 and 1999, but there has since been a slight reversal in this trend, especially in rural areas surrounding Tulle, mainly owing to the in-migration of older people (the 65+ age group now makes up over 26% of the population); the population is ageing as young workers are still departing for more attractive centres. The motorisation rate in rural areas is higher than in Tulle (715 c.f. 474 vehicles per 1000 residents).

Pays de Guéret, région Limousin, France

Pays de Guéret (PdG) approximates to the eastern half of the Guéret EZ and is a 'high GDP - predominantly rural - remote' region. It covers 938 km² and in 1996 had a population of 37,540, of which two out of three lived in a municipality with less than 150 inhabitants km⁻² and 13,789 lived in the town of Guéret. It is estimated that over 97% of the territory is rural and that no part of PdG is located less than 50 minutes by car from Limoges. Since 1999 the urban and rural populations have stabilised after a period of decline as the slightly positive (+0.5%) annual migration balance offset the negative natural balance (-0.5%). Overall, the population is ageing: nearly 27% of the population is aged 65+. Areas of ageing population are concentrated in the north of PdG while younger, working age people live in the Guéret area or close to the main N145 road.

Pazardjik 'agglomeration area' (AA), Pazardjik Oblast, Bulgaria

The case study area, with a population in 2007 of 198,055 and covering 1907 km², consists of the six LAU1 municipalities in central Pazardjik Oblast. The main towns are Pazardjik (pop. 118,561), Peshara (21,653) and Septemvry (8,778). The case study area is defined as 'low GDP - intermediate - accessible' as 45.4% of the population live in rural LAU2 regions. Since 2000 the population has declined on average by 3.4%, but in the villages the average decrease was almost 5% (c.f. 2.5% in the towns) and in Belerovo municipality was 6.5%. In 2007, 57% of the rural population was of working age (c.f. 64% in the towns), up from 53% in 2000 and 28% was over working age (c.f. 19% in the towns), down from 31% in 2000. The number of people under working age is declining and the population is ageing. Rural natural population balance in 2007 was -4.6% (c.f.

0.1% in the towns). 8-10% of the working age population is working abroad but some retirees have returned to rural areas to gain an income from farming.

Hajdúszoboszló LLS, North Gt. Plain Region, Hungary

The case study area, which actually consists of Hajdúszoboszló LLS and two neighbouring villages, covers 768 km² and in 2007 had a population of 43,691, of which 23,800 lived in Hajdúszoboszló. It is defined as 'low GDP - predominantly rural - accessible' as the density of all LAU2 regions is less than 150 persons km⁻² and 100% of the residents can access the city of Debrecen (population 207,270) by car in less than 45 minutes. Between 2001 and 2007 the population remained declined slightly, as did the percentage of working age (68.5% in 2007 c.f. 68.1% in 2001) but the percentage of older people increased (from 14.0% to 15.7%) and that of younger people declined (18.0% to 15.8%). Both the migration and natural balance (the latter particularly in Hajdúszoboszló) have been negative since the 1990s. 2007 motorisation rates were comparable to the regional average of 260 cars per 1000 residents, c.f. 190 in 2001.

Karcag LLS, North Gt. Plain Region, Hungary

This case study area consists of Karcag LLS and two neighbouring villages. It covers 877 km² and in 2007 had a population of 46,170, of which 21,824 lived in Karcag and 12,224 lived in Kisújszállás. It is defined as 'low GDP - predominantly rural - remote' as the density of all LAU2 regions is less than 150 persons km⁻² and only around 40% of the residents can reach the city of Szolnok (population 75,474) by car in less than 45 minutes. Both the natural and migration balance have contributed to a 6% decline in the population (affecting almost all settlements) since 2001. Roma account for 8% of the population (13% in Karcag) and many are unskilled, long-term unemployed. The percentage of working age increased from 65.9% in 2001 to 68.1% in 2007 but the percentage of young people declined (from 19.2% to 16.8%). 2007 motorisation rates were substantially below the regional average of 242 cars per 1000 residents.

Bistrița-Năsăud county, North West Region, Romania

Bistrița-Năsăud county area covers an area of 5355 km² and in 2009 had a population of 317,205, of which 119,334 lived in rural areas. The ur-

ban centres and (2009) populations are Bistrița (84,471), Beclean (11,574), Năsăud (10,906) and Sângeorz Băi (10,912). As less than 50% of the rural population can access Bistrița (or any other major city) by car in 45 minutes or less it is defined as 'low GDP - predominantly rural - remote' in the RuralJobs typology. The towns are located in the centre of the county while the NE (mountain) and SW (hilly) areas are entirely rural. The rural population declined by 1.4% between 2002 and 2007 while the urban population increased by 1.0%. Rural society is both elderly and ageing: 65.6% of the rural population was of working age in 2008, compared to 63.1% in 2002, and 76.7% in towns in 2008. International migration is important, but there are no reliable registered figures on its extent. In 2008 the number of cars per household was 0.36 in urban and 0.16 in rural areas.

Components of the SWOT analyses which directly relate to accessibility

'Good accessibility to/from major markets and service centres' (by road, rail, air and sea) is a Strength in the Chelmsford and Braintree TTWA, as are 'Good service links', 'Close proximity to industry and markets' and 'Good transport links' in Thames Gateway South Essex. Here, 'Links with industry' is an Opportunity although 'Urbanisation' is a Threat. In Pays de Tulle 'Proximity of Brive-la-Gaillarde', reputed to be more dynamic, is an Opportunity together with 'Infrastructures to leverage the economy and employment' (including Brive-Lille high-speed train, high-speed line to Limoges, Brive Airport), which is linked to the Strength 'Quality of communication infrastructures' (road and air transport). A Weakness is that 'Aid for regional purposes is concentrated along the motorways' which accentuates the disadvantages of the rural areas which are not close to major roads. 'Genial geographic and transport location' and 'Relatively higher density of road infrastructure and networks compared to other parts of the country' are Strengths in Pazardjik AA. A Strength in Hajdúszoboszló LLS is 'Good accessibility and infrastructural condition of the settlements'. Thus all 'accessible' case study areas recognise the value of accessibility for rural employment.

Despite being 'remote', 'Easy (transport) access to the area' is a Strength in Pays de Guéret although 'Capture of purchasing power and business by neighbouring centres' (Montluçon (more dynamic), La Souter-

rairie (more accessible)) is considered to be a Threat. In Karcag LLS a Weakness is that *'There are several settlements of difficult access in the area, the infrastructural conditions are weak'*.

In the NMS pilot areas, infrastructure improvements are an Opportunity for job creation, as follows: *'Significant resource which is available for amelioration and completion of the road infrastructure'* in Pazardjik AA (where a Weakness is *'The road infrastructure at 3 and 4 classes is in a despicable condition'*), *'Infrastructural development'* in Hajdúszoboszló LLS, *'Infrastructural and economic development'* in Karcag LLS and *'EU and national funds for the improvement of physical infrastructure'* (roads, utilities, etc.) in Bistrița-Năsăud county where *'Inadequate physical infrastructure'* is a Weakness. *'Poor rural transport infrastructure'* (including roads) is a Weakness in the Chelmsford and Braintree TTWA; although the current provision is clearly much better than in the NMS, higher demands are placed upon it leading to problems such as traffic congestion.

Discussion

Accessibility, remoteness and urban v. rural

By coincidence, perhaps, there was a consensus amongst the case study areas in Bulgaria, France, Romania and the UK that rural areas were composed of the territory outside settlements of 9,000-10,000 people or more. By contrast, in Hungary, Hajdúszoboszló (pop. 23,800) and Karcag (pop. 21,824) were considered by RuralJobs to be rural (although the North Great Plain Regional Operational Programme (NGPOP, 2006) also uses a threshold of a daytime population of 10,000 to define urban and rural areas). In Karcag LLS, defined as entirely rural, only 26% of residents live in settlements of less than 12,000 people.

The link between 'accessibility' and settlements of 50,000 or more requires careful interpretation. The following 'accessible' case study areas included settlements of 50,000 or more: Chelmsford and Braintree TTWA (Chelmsford, pop. 99,962) Thames Gateway South Essex (Southend-on-Sea urban area (pop. 270,000) and others) and Pazardjik AA (Pazardjik, pop. 86,744). Bistrița-Năsăud county also contains a large population centre (Bistrița, pop. 83,571). This case study area was defined by RuralJobs as 'remote' on the basis that less than 50% of the *rural* population can access the city by car in 45 minutes or less. In fact, 67% (i.e. approx. 212,000 people)

of the population lives within 30 km of the city. It should be noted, however, that the RuralJobs research was conducted in the 'remote' northern (mountainous) and southern (hilly) parts of the county. In four case study areas, therefore, there is a significant integration of the labour market between the rural areas and the urban centres of 50,000 or more.

By contrast, the largest settlement in the 'accessible' case study area of Pays de Tulle is Tulle and in Hajdúszoboszló LLS is Hajdúszoboszló. Although 'accessible' to Brive-la-Gaillarde, almost 87% of the active population living in the Tulle employment area work in the employment area. Tulle is a major employment centre: its jobs density (number of local jobs per resident of working age, for example see Hastings, 2003) is 1.87 compared to 0.71 in Pays de Tulle as a whole. Similarly, Hajdúszoboszló LLS is bordered on three sides by the much larger Debrecen LLS centred on the city of Debrecen. Thus, in both cases, towns smaller than the RuralJobs typology threshold of 50,000 are strong employment centres for their rural hinterlands. In Tulle, the main reason is the high level of public sector employment there, while Hajdúszoboszló is the most important spa area in Eastern Central Europe. The latter may be reinforced by the fact that commuting the fairly short distance to Debrecen is described as "tiring", which may be a cultural point or may reflect the relatively poor standard of the transport infrastructure in the case study area.

While the two other 'remote' case study areas, Pays de Guéret (France) and Karcag LLS (Hungary), differ from the 'accessible' case study areas in those countries in that the average driving time to the closest city of 50,000 inhabitants or more exceeds 45 minutes, they are otherwise similar in being centred on medium-sized settlements, namely Guéret and Karcag.

This overview confirms the importance to policy of the potential significance of medium-sized settlements as centres of employment (and services such as financial services, healthcare and secondary school education) for their rural hinterlands, and also the inappropriateness of a simple urban-rural divide. This is not a new finding. In the UK, for example, the potential of 'market towns', defined by their capacity to act as a focal point for trade and services for the surrounding countryside, and having populations approximately in the range from 2,000 to 20,000, (CA, 2003), has long been recognised (e.g. Courtney and Errington, 2000, Courtney et al. 2007). Their importance is emphasised in many strategies such as the

current North Great Plain Regional Operational Programme in Hungary, and in the UK the 'Market Towns Initiative' was seen as good practice (Fieldsend and Boone, 2007). CA (2004) used the concept of 'settlements in the rural domain' for those with populations under 10,000. The RuralJobs research cannot elaborate extensively on present knowledge on this topic, but it may be appropriate to describe settlements under this threshold as 'small' and those above it as 'medium-sized' population centres in the 'rural domain'. A similar threshold has been used elsewhere, for example by van Leeuwen and Nijkamp (2004) in the Netherlands.

Where the number of jobs in a rural territory is insufficient, the working age population may respond by commuting to urban centres. In this case, high residence-based rural employment rates may thus conceal a serious lack of rural jobs, as measured by jobs density. Commuting is closely associated (although not inextricably linked) with counter-urbanisation, the demographic and social process whereby people move from urban areas to rural areas. Thus with counter-urbanisation the rural area is the place of residence while the urban centre is the place of economic activity.

Commuting is normally only a solution for those who live in 'accessible' rural areas (i.e. those who live in a labour market area which includes a population centre of significant size, such as a market town or a city) and who are mobile and/or can afford the cost of travel. The RuralJobs research shows that whilst in the EU-15 pilot areas car ownership (motorisation rate) tends to be higher in rural areas than in towns, in the NMS the opposite is the case. In the latter, travel costs as a percentage of salaries tends to be higher, and infrastructure tends to be poorer. Thus, the ability of rural residents in NMS to access jobs by (daily) commuting tends to be lower. However, where the intrinsic ability of rural areas to support employment is low, such as in the Pazardjik AA and Bistrița-Năsăud county, commuting can help to maintain their economic viability and therefore population levels.

Management of rural employment policy and funding streams in a regional context

The RuralJobs research has described the considerable potential contribution of EU rural areas in general to regional employment and economic prosperity based on the sustainable exploitation of natural capital

(Fieldsend and Kerekes, in press). The list of rural growth sectors identified by RuralJobs is similar to that provided by CRC (2010): low carbon economy including environmental and renewable technologies; Food and drink; Tourism; Business and professional services; Digital and creative industries; Health and social care sectors; ICT; Construction; Retail and Advanced manufacturing. The relative importance of the different sectors to rural job creation varies widely in different rural areas across the EU, but natural capital is a common theme. At the same time, rural job creation depends upon product and process innovation linked with skills development of the workforce. Many innovative initiatives are related to the environment, including bioenergy, showing them to be emergent sectors of innovation (Rapido, 2008). Yet Hepworth et al. (2004) stated “Regional economic strategies suffer from ‘double vision’: a competitive knowledge economy vision for urban areas and a sustainable community vision for rural areas – what is needed is a unified regional vision of the knowledge economy and sustainable development”.

The ‘city regions’ approach to economic development (see, for example, <http://www.rce.org.uk/?P=HOME>) assumes that larger urban sub-regions, cities and their hinterlands will disproportionately drive economic growth. Rural areas within these regions can therefore be expected to benefit. However, if implemented wrongly, an urban-focused approach such as this can push knowledge-based employment into the towns and neglect the potential economic contribution of rural areas. Indeed it could precipitate a ‘race to the bottom’ by excessively targeting funding at urban centres and contributing to the economic and social decline of the rural hinterlands manifested in trends such as ageing populations. This could be a particular concern in the NMS where, as previously noted, motorisation rate, and therefore the ability to commute, is lower. To comply with the priorities of the EU’s Europe 2020 strategy, namely smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (EC, 2010), regional development strategies should include a distinct rural component which recognises the potential contribution of natural capital, and therefore rural areas, to providing employment and in so doing achieving a competitive regional knowledge economy.

The need identified by Marsden (1999) for a more integrated approach to rural development (employment) policy and funding remains, as the agenda must move beyond creating employment only in the food, far-

ming and tourism sectors. Even if a case can be made for a separate Rural Development Fund after 2013, the development of the Programme must be much more closely coordinated with those of EU Structural Funds and other funding instruments. The funding programmes themselves need to be better aligned with each other (and with national funding) to increase their impact. This does not mean targeting programmes even more precisely, such as via a menu approach, as this can create inflexibility and funding gaps. Also they should be investment orientated and objective-focused rather than subsidy orientated and beneficiary-focused so as to maximise their favourable impacts on the region as a whole, including with respect to employment.

As part of the coordination agenda, Rural Development and Structural Funds should be managed at the same geographical level. In line with the principle of subsidiarity, Member States are best placed to select the most appropriate level, although it may be noted that Structural Funds are frequently managed at NUTS2 level. The increasing integration of 'urban' and 'rural' economies strengthens the case for 'mainstreaming' rural job creation into a single regional programme. For this to be successful, such programmes should be designed from the start with rural in mind. 'Rural proofing' applied to an urban-focused programme as an afterthought, using a 'tick-box' approach, is not sufficient. Finally, whilst management of all funding in a region by a single body is an option (such as in England by the (NUTS1) Regional Development Agencies), management of different funds by separate organisations working in close partnership may be an approach preferred by some Member States.

The RuralJobs research identified several weaknesses in the evidence base required to ensure that rural employment creation programmes are as effective as possible. For example, more research is needed to formulate a definition of LMAs which can be applied across the EU. The concept of a self-contained LMA is one in which all commuting occurs within the boundary of the area. Although in practice it is not possible to divide territories into entirely separate LMAs as commuting patterns are too diffuse, leading to elements of subjectivity in the methodology (including defining the appropriate minimum and maximum thresholds for numbers of jobs and workers), LMAs have been invaluable to RuralJobs and have also been used by other researchers (e.g. by Simmie and Martin (2010) in their

work on economic resilience of regions). By contrast, EU-wide definitions of 'urban' and 'rural' would not be helpful. In fact, the rather arbitrary definitions officially adopted in some NMS and used for classifying territorial data have been unhelpful to the RuralJobs research.

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