

Promote rural-urban partnership

A recent survey of rural-urban partnership practices shows that solutions to problems located in either rural or urban areas can be dealt with more effectively through enforced rural-urban cooperation (CMER, 2013). Promoting rural-urban partnership is thus a key recommendation to deal with contemporary issues in spatial development. Frequently addressed rural-urban issues, reasons to cooperate locally, have also high significance in the context of the Alps: transport, housing, local economic development, migration, public service provision and environment (see e.g. Rurbance project Policies Analysis Final Report), but also regional competitiveness, economic decline and territorial cohesion (incited by EU structural funds). Among the analysed AS projects, work in InnoCité, ACCESS, COMUNIS and Moreco recommends enhanced rural-urban partnerships, e.g. in order to ensure accessibility to basic services or to counter urban sprawl. The Rurbance project deals directly with the development of integrated policies and inclusive governance approaches in rural-urban functional areas. At the time of writing this document (12/2014), none of these projects has produced specific recommendations on how to promote rural-urban partnership directly. We thus might derive recommendations from success factors of rural-urban partnerships highlighted elsewhere, e.g. by the RURBAN study (Artmann et al., 2012) of the European Commission.

- First of all, it is important to **consider regional and local territorial contexts** before deciding which actions to pursue in promoting partnership. There should be a preliminary analysis of different prerequisites and already existing experiences regarding rural-urban partnership. For instance, rural-urban partnerships and their promotion reveal to be more successful if partners have some experiences in regional or local cooperation. It is thus essential to analyse whether there are linkages, common problems within a wider rural-urban context, and which partnerships already exist (if any).
- The essential basis for rural-urban partnership is the **existence of linkages and problems** that are mutually shared (sectoral, e.g. transport, or more integrated), and where a partnership solution might bring about a win-win situation between territories. Awareness on common issues and rural-urban linkages, but also on benefits of cooperation, should thus be raised among local rural and urban stakeholders.
- A **shared identity** at a regional scale among actors is another prerequisite. There should be some sort of agreement on a common strategy and its goals among actors, which is then downscaled to concrete projects.
- The creation of an **ongoing process based on governance** (see [Governance and participatory planning](#)) is decisive as various stakeholders should be included. However, forms may vary strongly depending on regional and local context, experiences and cultures.
- Constructing rural-urban partnerships is time-consuming. Time determines the effectiveness of project action, and it determines also the partnership's progress along its life-cycle. To achieve project implementation (operational action), maturity (sustainability) of partnership and prevent stakeholders from collaboration fatigue, the process should be **accompanied and managed** through time, e.g. by a project management body.
- To maintain a good dynamic and create a feeling of togetherness within the partnership, actions should **focus on small steps** and many concrete projects. In this way, a greater variety of stakeholders is included and a larger number of success stories emerge.
- Last but not least, the success of rural-urban partnerships is dependent on the **stakeholders** involved, their motivations, interests and on the power relations that exist between them. These processes demand expertise in accompanying participatory processes, especially in the initial stages. Finally, probably the most important factor (Artmann et al., 2012) is the presence of motivated stakeholders who are able to mobilize other partners and create dynamism in a partnership.

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Last update: **2014/12/21 12:12**

