

1. PUBLISHABLE SUMMARY

Summary of the context and overall objectives of the project (For the final period, include the conclusions of the action)

LIVERUR is an EU funded research and innovation project dedicated to improve existing business structures in rural areas by helping farmers and small and medium agricultural enterprises implement a circular economy approach in 13 selected pilot zones all over Europe, as well as selected countries in Africa and Asia. LIVERUR achieves this objective by expanding an innovative and dedicated business model called Living Labs among those rural regions. Living Labs are ecosystems which operate in a territorial context, integrating research and innovation processes within a public-private partnership and in a co-creation process with all relevant actors in the territories.

The diverse and complex nature of rural areas and agricultural businesses in Europe calls for Communitarian policies which are able to include and target all relevant stakeholders, while providing adequate training and incentives for the utilization of public-private-people partnership tools. After years of experience, LIVERUR project proposes a set of key messages and policy recommendations based on the lessons learnt collected during the development of the initiative. Unique methods, such as the RAIN concept and the RAIN Entrepreneurial tool, are reported as ready-to-use supports for future and present rural policies.

Overall, LIVERUR identified and compared the differences between the new approach of Living Lab and more entrepreneurial traditional approaches (mass production, development of prices, optimizing cost structures with companies, rationalization) in order to implement a circular economy within each territory driven by waste reduction, new business creation and overall expansion of business opportunities for SMAEs.

Finally, LIVERUR created an interactive online platform, featuring videos with guidance from business and agricultural experts, relevant data of the territory, support for linear and circular rural business creation and funding opportunities

Work performed from the beginning of the project to the end of the period covered by the report and main results achieved so far (For the final period please include an overview of the results and their exploitation and dissemination)

Phase 1 consisted of an analysis of the rural living lab concept and identification of existing rural business models throughout Europe.

In the second phase, LIVERUR developed a benchmark classification to list existing business concepts and models in terms of starting conditions, obstacles faced, enabling factors, financial mechanisms, generation of added value, jobs and other environmental and social benefits in order to leverage existing procedures.

After all the analysis, comparisons and studies phase 3 worked on the creation and conceptualization of a totally new business model concept - The Regional Circular Living Lab business model concept (RAIN).

Phase 4, consisted of the creation of a Living Lab Territorial Community to gather all the users and stakeholders necessary for the piloting implementation, through an ICT enabled service ecosystem (RAIN Platform) while in the last phase of the project consisted of the validation of Rural Living Labs, which included testing and validating the operability of the Living Lab approach in rural areas using an open innovation approach in selected Pilot Regions supported by co-creation workshops with entrepreneurs and elaboration of an ICT enabled platform.

The implementation of the Circular Rural Living Labs showed that the platform can benefit the entrepreneurs by covering the need for ensuring the long-term viability and sustainability by enriching the core business activities in rural areas with the RAIN principles.

A successful implementation of the LIVERUR pilots included:

- Well-founded training of regional facilitators to communicate the RAIN concept
- Open ecosystem network, identify and engage the most relevant stakeholders
- Innovative digital tools and common platform for all regional initiatives
- Personal contact and trust building measures, personification of services
- Make use of regional resources, close value chain gaps
- Keep the rural context, create a common identity

LIVERUR has furthermore proven that creating strong networks of stakeholders can increase the benefits of Living Labs as regards rural innovation, ensuring the necessary critical mass for its sustainability while considering jointly the impacts of a globalizing economy and local daily life needs and demands

Progress beyond the state of the art, expected results until the end of the project and potential impacts (including the socio-economic impact and the wider societal implications of the project so far)

LIVERUR achieved its goals by having noticeable effects at different levels of action. While at the beginning LIVERUR mainly developing strategies and methodologies at the analytical, business model and knowledge share/communitarian level, in later stages the analytical level encompassed the conceptualization of existing rural business models in EU and regional areas and the development of relevant benchmarking criteria and innovative comparison strategies. In the innovation phase, during the pilot implementation, the business level included the study of the living lab technique and the feasibility assessment on the integration process in the consortium territories, plus the development of a regional circular living lab business model.

At operational level, LIVERUR contributed that the Regional Circular Living Lab model could be made operative through the fully implemented pilots in 12 selected territories in order to prove the feasibility and operability of the concept. Territorial guidelines were implemented and a Toolbox integrated in order to facilitate the testing of the new business model.

At capitalization level, the outcomes of LIVERUR were disseminated outside the consortium areas, especially in joint cooperation with other H2020 projects working in rural development in order to ensure their transferability even after the end of the development period. Every piloting area is ready to include another nearby and similar area in order to start a process of share of best practices even after the project ended. In addition, a tutoring activity will be performed in order to help the other territorial communities to develop their own strategic plans.

In the long term, the results helped increasing the potential for rural economic diversification, added value and job creation in a variety of rural areas thanks to the dissemination of promising business cases. The involved SMAEs will become even more multifunctional, offering the following items: new services, related to green infrastructure services; new products and services related to the agriculture-environment-tourism as well as environment-culture-tourism value chains; co-operation with the educational system; cooperation with the regional rural development authorities. The SMAEs will reduce the water, energy and CO2 footprints of their products/services and they will improve its environmental management system.

Last but not least, LIVERUR provided new and innovative ways in the delivery of ecosystem services resulting from innovative forms of valorization. The LIVERUR consortium will continue creating a

long-standing co-operation and knowledge platform between the Rural Living Labs, using the ICT tool and the lesson learned implementing the circular economy principle.

LIVERUR though its implemented Living Labs and the RAIN Business models paid special attention to the potential barriers that could link successfully the socio economic level with gender equality and it involving migrants, elderly and disabled people in their activities

Address (URL) of the project's public website

<https://liverur.eu/>