

**Issue 53**  
1 March, 2007



**Leader+ Observatory  
Contact Point**

81, Rue du Marteau  
B-1000 Brussels  
BELGIUM

Tel: +32 (0)2 235 20 20

Fax: +32 (0)2 280 04 38

[contact.point@leaderplus.org](mailto:contact.point@leaderplus.org)

# Flash News

## Leader+ Observatory

### focus



#### Bulgaria and Romania

In Bulgaria and Romania, rural areas cover a significant part of their territory (99% using OECD definition) and are home to a major share of their population. According to a recent EC statistical report on rural development, employment in Bulgaria's rural areas represents some 80% of the total employment, compared to 51% in the rest of the EU. In both countries the agricultural sector accounts for a much larger percentage of their GDP and employment than the EU-25 average e.g. 25% of employment in Bulgaria and 35.7% for Romania, as was the case for the 10 countries that joined the Union in 2004.

Together, Bulgaria and Romania account for a significant part of the total number of farms in the EU. In these countries, farm structures are highly polarised with a very small percentage of big farms and a large percentage of small farms. Both countries are carrying out reforms to their agricultural sectors to ensure the sector's competitiveness. This includes encouraging the emergence of economically viable mid-sized farms and a shift from subsistence/semi- subsistence to commercial farm activities.

Bulgaria and Romania also have an exceptional natural biodiversity which the implementation of the 'Natura 2000' plan and the maintenance and development of environmentally friendly agricultural production techniques can help preserve.

A precondition for developing rural areas in Bulgaria and Romania is to expand and modernise rural infrastructures such as education, transport and health services in order to stimulate the creation of SMEs that would allow a diversification of rural economies.

The Leader approach is a valuable tool to achieve these goals as it facilitates the socio-economic changes by encouraging the creation of a qualified local workforce and promoting economic diversification. It can help build local development capacity in rural areas; improve local governance and develop networks – all areas for which there are significant needs in both countries.

#### Leader+ magazine 6 is online

The latest edition of the Leader+ magazine in English is now online and is currently being translated. Apart from the usual articles on Leader+ projects in the different Member States, you can also read about; the history of Leader, from Leader I to Leader+ and beyond; implementing a Leader+ type measure in Estonia; and a report on last year's Leader+ Observatory's seminar in Austria!

#### Leader+ seminar: "The Legacy of Leader+ at local level: Building the future of rural areas"

As announced in the last issue of Flash News, the European Observatory of rural areas is organising a seminar from 24 – 26 April 2007 in Cap Corse, Corsica. Invitations have been sent out by e-mail. If you have any questions, please contact [Michaela Galvankova](mailto:Michaela.Galvankova@ec.europa.eu) either by e-mail or by phone: +32 2 235 20 26.

#### Turkish- Dutch- Austrian twinning project

The twinning project to develop Turkey's institutional capacity for alignment with the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has been completed. It was conducted by the Turkish Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs and a Dutch-Austrian consortium within the framework of the EU adjustment process.

The project which continued for a year, aimed at strengthening the institutional, legal and technical infrastructure to enable Turkey to benefit from the Implementation and Paying Agency for Agriculture and Rural Development (IPARD) funds. Consequently a rural development donation fund of nearly EUR 300 million can now be used within the 2007-2010 period.

### FLASH NEWS links

[Leader+ website](#)

[Leader+ Magazine](#)

[New Rural Development  
Regulation 2007-2013](#)

*For more information please  
click on the headlines*



For more information please click on the headlines



### Bringing added value to potato products

8 – 9 March, 2007  
Sauwald, Austria

This seminar will focus on how to increase the added value of potato-based products, and how to set up a common managing system for the potato as a commercial product. The first day features debates and workshops, followed by a social event. The second day includes a field trip to local businesses, discussion groups and a final plenary session. The event offers an opportunity to meet potential partners and to reflect upon the possibilities of cooperation between stakeholders or regions. For more information, please contact Mr [Thomas Müller](#).



### Vincenz Priessnitz days: EU and Rural Areas

22 – 23 March, 2007  
Jeseník, Czech Republic

This international conference, organised by Jeseník's Local Action Group, will address balneology, tourism and European support for rural development and the use of alternative energy sources. It will take place in the Priessnitz Therapeutic Spa in Jeseník. The conference will include lectures on development strategies using the Jeseník area as an example, as well as a wide range of cultural and social activities. The conference takes place under the auspices of the mayor of Jeseník, Mr Petr Procházka. Speakers will include experts from the Czech Republic and from several other countries. For further information, please contact the [organisers of the conference](#).



### ELREN event: "Terrafutura 2007"

18 – 20 May, 2007  
Florence, Italy

The event will be organised as a part of the international conference on sustainable development "Terrafutura 2007". The programme will include: a detailed report on the ELREN website and database; a report about project activities in participating countries; a project meeting; and an excursion to the Renewable Energy sites in the region. The detailed programme will be published in the next ELREN newsletter (end of March). For more information, please contact the project coordinator, [Jadranka Cace](#).

### Mobility, vulnerability and sustainability: new questions and challenges for rural Europe

20 – 24 August, 2007

Wageningen, the Netherlands

This event, organised by the European Society for Rural Sociology, aims to examine how rural areas in an enlarged and increasingly borderless Europe are affected by mobility, vulnerability and sustainability. The rapid changes in rural areas pose new challenges in order to make sure that the local population can take advantage of development. There are many potential pitfalls to avoid and many different interests to reconcile. A major question to be addressed is how rural areas and communities can meet the challenges of increasing mobility in ways which reduce vulnerability but enhance sustainability. The congress will also examine changes in EU and global policy, including the revision of the CAP; regional development funding; and global responsibilities addressed

through WTO negotiations. For more information, please contact [Linda Belien](#).

### Euracademy's summer academy

17 – 26 August, 2007

Chania, Greece

The European academy for sustainable rural development, Euracademy Association, is organising its annual event. This year the theme will be "culture and sustainable rural development". Participants from all over Europe who work in the field of rural development and culture are welcome. Please note that the deadline for registrations is the 30 April 2007. For more information, please contact [Vassilis Tsipidis](#).

### COOPERATION CORNER

#### Partner search tool

Finding partners for cooperation on Leader+ projects concerns many LAGs. If you have specific information about a cooperation event or project, you can send us details. Remember also to use the partner search tool, which you can find on both European and national Leader+ sites.

A LAG in Spain is looking for partners for a project on vocational training for residents in rural areas in order to create new jobs, and a Portuguese LAG is looking for partners on a project to improve marketing efforts for local quality food products.

These projects are looking for partners. You could be one of them! Learn more about these proposals by consulting the partner search tool via the above-mentioned link.



### "Flash News" contributions

Don't forget "Flash News" is your news too! Help us to keep you informed by telling us about what you are doing in rural development in your area. Please send to [flashnews@leaderplus.org](mailto:flashnews@leaderplus.org).

### "Flash News" subscriptions

You can subscribe/unsubscribe yourself or somebody you know by sending an e-mail to: [subscribe\\_flashnews@leaderplus.org](mailto:subscribe_flashnews@leaderplus.org) or [unsubscribe\\_flashnews@leaderplus.org](mailto:unsubscribe_flashnews@leaderplus.org).



European Commission

Published by:  
Joern-Uwe LERBS, Head of Unit, EC Directorate-General  
for Agriculture and Rural Development.  
This publication does not necessarily express the official  
views of the Commission.

For further information:  
European Commission  
Office: L/130 06/197  
Tel. (32-2) 2952355 or (32-2) 2951294  
Fax (32-2) 2988808  
Internet: [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/index_en.htm)