

Strategy Paper

**For the Development of Rural Areas
in Rhineland-Palatinate**



In comparison to conurbations, rural areas in Rhineland-Palatinate offer location-specific advantages. People living there strongly identify with their particular region and regard it as their home. Very often, those people are also willing to become actively involved on behalf of their region. Thus, in the year 2007, about 1,300 local players were among the participants at altogether five regional conferences, where the challenges for rural areas were discussed and a wide range of possibilities for their development was identified.

On the basis of this brainstorming, a strategy paper for the development of the rural areas in Rhineland-Palatinate has been formulated. It mainly bases upon the support programmes of the European Union, the Federal Republic of Germany and the federal state of Rhineland-Palatinate. In this paper, the approaches of all European support programmes are summarised. The

strategy paper is meant as a tool for the optimal coordination and goal-oriented realisation of the opportunities provided by these support programmes.

A first draft of this strategy paper was presented at a concluding meeting of the “Forum for Rural Areas” on the third of September 2007, in Stromberg. The overall approaches and courses of action that had been set out met with general approval. Further ideas were introduced and the strategy paper was enhanced with a number of additional schemes. In the course of close coordination among all affected departments, those plans have been completed and consolidated. This phase was crucial since the effective involvement of all political resources is of vital importance when designing strategies for rural areas. Thus, these adjustments were part of an important complementary process.

This strategy paper should mainly serve as a general course of action for all ‘Leader Regions’ as well as the regions of integrated rural development, which together comprise the “impulse regions”. I call upon these regions to actively initiate development using the Strategy Paper for the Development of Rural Areas as a fount of inspiration. Other regions in turn will be able to learn which positive results can be achieved in the impulse regions through individual initiative. If we can stimulate similar developments in all other regions, then a spirit of positive optimism can finally be achieved throughout the rural area.

The Strategy Paper for the Development of Rural Areas in Rhineland-Palatinate should not be seen as something fixed and static. Instead it must be a stimulus for the implementation of an open and sustainable development process within the rural areas. Thus, I would like to invite you to take up important ideas of this strategy paper and to participate actively in the newly introduced development processes in order to promote the future of our rural areas.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hering' twice in a stylized, cursive script.

Hendrik Hering

Minister for Economic Affairs, Transportation, Agriculture and Viniculture

Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Preface | 3 |
| Abstract | 6 |
| I. Introduction and Analysis | 10 |
| 1. Background, Area and Fundamentals | 10 |
| 2. Federal State Development Programme as a Regulatory Framework | 11 |
| 3. Aim of the Strategy Paper..... | 12 |
| 4. The Rural Area Shapes the Diversity of Rhineland-Palatinate | 12 |
| 5. Features – Strengths and Weaknesses..... | 13 |
| 5.1 Strengths | 13 |
| 5.2 Weaknesses | 13 |
| 6. Current and Future Challenges and Potentials..... | 14 |
| II. General Principles, Aims and Fields of Action of a Policy for Rural Areas | 18 |
| 1. General Principles | 18 |
| 2. Aims..... | 18 |
| 3. Fields of Action of the Policy..... | 19 |
| III. Strategies for the Development of Rural Areas | 20 |
| 1. Selected Approaches | 21 |
| 1.1 Agriculture, Forestry and Viniculture | 21 |
| 1.1.1 Improvement of the Competitiveness and the Creation of Value..... | 21 |
| 1.1.2 Forestry as a Contribution to Sustainable Development | 22 |
| 1.2 Conservation of the Cultural Landscapes..... | 23 |
| 1.2.1 Conservation of the two UNESCO World Heritage Sites..... | 23 |
| 1.2.2 Conservation of the Cultural Wine Landscapes..... | 24 |
| 1.2.3 Development of Cultural Landscapes with Special Geological Features | 26 |
| 1.2.4 Keeping Cultural Landscapes Open | 27 |
| 1.3 Promotion of Business Development – Foundation Processes..... | 28 |
| 1.4 Supply with Basic Needs and Tourism | 29 |
| 1.4.1 Basic Supply with Everyday Consumer Goods and Services..... | 29 |
| 1.4.2 Tourism Strategies for the Rural Area..... | 30 |
| 1.4.3 Land Management for Tourism in Rural Areas | 31 |

Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| 1.5 Alternative Energy Supply, Energy-Mix, Local Heating Supply | 32 |
| 1.6 Broadband Supply in Rural Areas..... | 34 |
| 1.7 Mobility through Flexible Systems of Local Public Transport..... | 36 |
| 1.8 Feasibility Studies for Important Projects in the Rural Area..... | 38 |
| 1.9 Health Care Management, Senior-Friendly Living Spheres and a Family-Friendly Environment in Rural Areas | 39 |
| 1.9.1 Health Care Management in Rural Areas | 39 |
| 1.9.2 New Forms of Living Facilities in a Society with Higher Life Expectancy | 39 |
| 1.9.3 Strengthening Healthcare Supply in Rural Areas | 40 |
| 1.9.4 Family Counselling Network, Family-Friendly Environment | 41 |
| 1.10 Communal Development, Circular Management of Land, Flood Protection..... | 42 |
| 1.10.1 Inner Development of Villages through Urban Land-Use Planning and/or Village Consolidation | 42 |
| 1.10.2 Strategic Alliances and Intercommunal Commercial Areas | 43 |
| 1.11 Education..... | 44 |
| 1.11.1 Strengthening of Occupational Orientation at Schools | 44 |
| 1.11.2 All-Day Schools and E-Learning Concepts for the Rural Area | 45 |
| 2. New Planning Approaches and Activities for Rural Areas | 46 |
| 2.1 New Planning Approaches..... | 46 |
| 2.2 Activities in Impulse Regions | 48 |
| 2.3 Currently Asked Questions in Impulse Regions | 50 |
| 3. Promotion and Funding Concepts for the Rural Area | 51 |
| 3.1 Principles | 51 |
| 3.2 Development Programme PAUL..... | 52 |
| 3.3 ERDF | 53 |
| 3.4 ESF..... | 53 |
| 4. Networks and Training Courses | 54 |
| 4.1 Communities of Responsibility: Networks, Cooperation Groups, Platforms | 54 |
| 4.1.1 Networks..... | 54 |
| 4.1.2 Cooperation Groups | 56 |
| 4.1.3 Platforms..... | 58 |
| 4.1.4 Tasks for the Service Centres for the Rural Area..... | 58 |
| 4.2 Training Courses..... | 60 |
| Further Sources of Information in Rhineland-Palatinate | 62 |
| Addresses and Contacts | 63 |
| Imprint | 64 |

Abstract

Abstract of the Strategy Paper

The main aim of this strategy paper is to develop rural areas as independent living spaces, to create employment by strengthening economic power, to ensure and improve local supply structures and to contribute to equal opportunities for all population groups. To reach this aim, a bottom-up policy for the rural areas has to be designed and gradually enhanced on a local level.

During five regional conferences in 2007, current and future challenges and opportunities for the rural areas in Rhineland-Palatinate were defined and discussed at length. In this strategy paper, those concepts that emerged as focal points were turned into concrete courses of action.

Selected courses of action

Agriculture that is both competitive and sustainable is the basis of an intact rural area since upstream as well as downstream sectors strongly contribute to the creation of value in rural regions. The Rhineland-Palatinate development programme PAUL contains the basic conditions for the development of agriculture and viticulture.

The forest and forestry as a whole serve a variety of purposes and contribute to the provision of general public services in rural areas. Therefore, the cluster forest and forest-based industry are two fields that should be enhanced and strengthened.

The cultural landscapes in Rhineland-Palatinate, which are of national significance, are to be maintained and cautiously developed. Any development here must respect the existing variety, the specific characteristics of each landscape, the historically grown settlement structures, the views and the scenery. It must take into consideration existing building fabric that is worthy of conservation as well as cultural heritage. As soft location factors, these aspects appeal to a large number of locals as well as tourists and provide an attractive working environment for industry.

In the wine-growing areas of Rhineland-Palatinate, the conservation of viticulture on steep-slopes is a primary development goal. This goal is to be reached with the help of special steep-slope concepts, for example the concept for the Moselle and the newly established steep-slope centre.

Especially the tributary valleys of major rivers and the valleys in the low mountain range areas are suffering from a decrease in active cultivation. One of the efforts to counteract this development is to develop strategies to keep the landscape open and avoid scrub encroachment.

The economic potential in rural areas is mainly determined by smaller enterprises in the fields of agriculture, skilled trades (electricians, plumbers, etc) and tourism. Therefore, a wider range of innovative financing instruments is planned, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises. The goal is to stimulate a willingness to found new businesses by intensifying and further linking up already existing consulting services.

As a result of the demographic changes and structural changes in the retail trade, the number of municipalities in the rural area in Rhineland-Palatinate that do not have a local supply of everyday consumer goods – especially food – is expected to grow. Nevertheless, municipalities that do have an efficient local supply or multifunctional facilities offer a much higher quality of life and thus possess a decisive locational advantage, especially for young families and tourists. A future-oriented enhancement of already existing approaches is of vital importance, for example shops on wheels or faci-

Abstract

ilities of local supply with a complementary offer of additional services. Modern technology can play an important role here.

When it comes to the creation of location-bound employment in the rural areas, tourism is of special importance. During the regional conferences, the need to concentrate on specific focal points in this sector was expressed, namely: viticulture, hiking, bicycle and health tourism. This means that the different regions are called upon to work together in developing high-quality, supra-regional projects for tourism within these areas.

In order to solve land use conflicts and to enhance the tourism infrastructure – especially cycle paths, hiking trails, etc. – rural land management is used in conjunction with other development goals for the rural area.

By using the potentials of a future-oriented energy supply and power generation, additional income effects can be created in the rural area. At the same time, this contributes to climate protection. Yet municipalities and potential energy farmers still require intensive support in terms of information and coordination in this field. To this end, the advisory centre for renewable raw materials will be expected to coordinate studies and expertise on power generation and energy utilisation (energy mix) and to provide an appropriate internet platform.

The availability of broadband internet in rural areas is of extreme importance for everyone: for farmers, enterprises of all sectors, founders of a new business, indeed for all population groups. In a number of municipalities in Rhineland-Palatinate, the provision of broadband internet solutions will be extremely costly. Funding will be provided in the form of loans or grants.

The more remote an area is, the more difficult it becomes to maintain local public transport that is financially sustainable and at the same time attractive. However, adequate public transport is an important component in the provision of general public services. Thus, municipalities will be supported in the development and testing of flexible forms of local public transport. The Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning has commissioned a handbook on the creation of flexible forms of local public transport, which will be ready in February 2009. The background information contained in this handbook is to be communicated comprehensively to municipalities, technical authorities, research facilities, providers of tourist services and other players via conferences and workshops.

Elderly people wish to lead an independent life for as long as possible, most of them in their own flat. Others prefer to live in a house- or flat-sharing community, where they can provide mutual assistance or, alternatively, together organise help by external staff. The "Information centre for Living and Housing Space" is a local facility that provides information on collaborative, self-determined and cross-generational living. The initiatives generated by this information centre are to be taken up in the impulse regions and used in groups created for the exchange of experience and networking.

In October 2006, the federal state government launched its "Health Care Management" initiative. Its aim is an identification of the chances and potentials of this future market in order to make use of them in rural areas as well. On the basis of this study on "Health Care Management in Rhineland-Palatinate", a commission of experts was asked to develop concrete courses of action that, in turn, will be the foundation for a master plan that is to be established by the federal state government. The result will be presented in regional conferences in the beginning of 2008.

Abstract

In the centres of many smaller villages in the rural area, there is a constantly increasing number of vacant and unused buildings and barns, houses in need of renovation as well as gaps between buildings and vacant lots. In order to stabilise the structure of these village centres, their inner development must have priority over any re-designation of land for other purposes. To reach this aim of inner development, effective land management is of vital importance. In this respect, communal land-use planning plays a major role in responsible and resource-efficient settlement development. The principles of future-oriented, circular land management ensure that the potential of village centres is taken into consideration when requirements for new building areas are determined. Should the need arise for an effective instrument for the mobilisation and reorganisation of land inside villages of the impulse regions, then the instrument of village consolidation can be used as well. All this contributes to a more efficient exploitation of supply and disposal systems as well as to a stabilisation of cost structures. A new designation, on the other hand, is usually associated with a considerable increase in long-term costs, as the new and the already existing infrastructure have to be maintained at the same time.

Through the cooperation of a group of players in rural areas, locational advantages can be optimised and cost-intensive projects better realised. The development of integrated development concepts is to be used as a platform in order to discuss cooperation opportunities among municipalities and other responsible authorities and enterprises. Here, the possibilities for inter-communal cooperation and public-private partnerships should be examined.

In rural areas, dialogue partners from industry have criticised the fact that there are considerable deficits in the knowledge level and competence of trainees in professional training. In order to remedy this, networks and platforms will be established connecting schools, enterprises, chambers, associations and other partners in the impulse regions.

A consistent alignment of the educational system with the demographic changes will make the transformation of current school types to all-day schools necessary. This issue must be discussed in the impulse regions. Furthermore, the opportunities of e-learning are to be tested in rural areas. Regionally adapted and future-oriented approaches have to be propagated as soon as possible.

In the impulse regions, significant, regionally adapted projects for the rural area can be supported by feasibility studies. A feasibility study aims at a sustainable strengthening of the competitiveness of enterprises and service providers and thus guarantees the creation and safeguarding of permanent employment and apprenticeship training positions. The results of these feasibility studies are to be exchanged in the course of meetings and workshops and should also be presented in training projects and on internet platforms.



Abstract

Instruments and Funding Concept

Rural areas in Rhineland-Palatinate that take up present and future challenges become “impulse regions“. The approaches outlined above are to be used primarily within the impulse regions. Regional planning is to be realised according to the following principles:

- Integration of all important courses of action
- Prompt realisation of plans in concrete projects
- Initiative, planning and implementation through local players
- Regional cooperation instead of small-scale, back yard politics

Another aim is the initiation, organisation and monitoring of regional development processes. In the future, lead projects within impulse regions will be given high priority funding according to specified regulations.

The most important funding instruments for a realisation of measures in accordance with this programme are the programme “Agriculture, Environmental Measures, Rural Development” (PAUL) to implement the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), the “Joint Scheme for the Improvement of Agricultural Structure and Coastal Protection” (GAK) as well as the aids for the rural area in the programme “Growth Through Innovation”, serving the implementation of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). In Rhineland-Palatinate these funding instruments are coordinated by the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Transportation, Agriculture and Viniculture. The most important instrument for labour market policy in the European Union is the European Social Fund (ESF).

Networks and Training

The development of the rural area implies a comprehensive exchange of ideas, knowledge and experience as well as the willingness to cooperate among all players. To achieve this, networks are to be established in the rural areas of Rhineland-Palatinate. The service centres for the rural area are hereby called upon to provide overall support for the creation of networks, cooperation groups and internet platforms in the course of the above-mentioned courses of action. Thus firstly, round tables are to be established for the initial phase of networking and the functions of a simple agency set up, or, if necessary, taken over by the round table network. A moderator will have to be appointed for each new network, assuming the management and the chairmanship of this network. The Forum for Rural Areas is hereby charged with the organisation of forums and workshops for the implementation of the courses of action mentioned above. As broad a segment of the local population as possible should be involved in these events..

A very important goal of this strategy paper is to qualify citizens as players of the rural area to serve as multipliers. They are asked to bring their specific experience, competences and inside knowledge into the planning processes. For this purpose, the offer of training programmes at the Communal Academy has been enhanced and supplemented with an additional, new training programme of the service centres for the rural area, called “Academy for Rural Areas“. For 2008, a first training and consulting programme for the Academy of Rural Areas is to be developed. This programme addresses all players of the rural area and should integrate the many courses of action of a “Policy for the Rural Area“.

I. Introduction and Analysis

Strategy Paper

For the Development of Rural Areas in Rhineland-Palatinate

I. Introduction and Analysis

1. Background, Area and Fundamentals

For the EU funding period 2007-2013, the European Union has rearranged its structural policy. Now, funding outside the convergence regions is possible as well. In its fourth cohesion report, the European Commission has established cooperation between the EU-policy for the development of the rural area and the EU structural funds for the support of the economic diversification of the rural area. This especially applies for the priorities established in connection with the sustainability aims of Göteborg and the revived Lisbon strategy for growth and employment. For this reason, it is important to ensure complementarity and synergy between the national strategic plans and the programmes for the development of rural areas on the one hand, and the national strategic framework plans and the structural funding programmes on the other hand. In this way, the deficit of rural areas can be compensated through the creation of employment and the diversification of economic activities..

The second pillar of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) will be financed through the newly established European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). Rhineland-Palatinate implements the second pillar of the CAP through the development programme "Agriculture, Environmental Measures, Rural Development" (PAUL). The binding framework for the development of the strategy of the development programme PAUL includes:

- The strategic principles of the community for the development of rural areas,
- The national strategic plan of the Federal Re-

public of Germany for the development of rural areas 2007-2013

- The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) regulation no. 1290/2005 of June 21st 2005 through the financing of the Common Agricultural Policy, including the associated executive orders.

Within the scope of the development programme PAUL, funding to promote the quality of life, the diversification of the rural economy and the LEADER-approach is generally limited to those administrative districts that do not have a district town of more than 20.000 inhabitants and to the tobacco regions as defined in regulation (EC) no. 1782/2003.

Rhineland-Palatinate uses the EAFRD-instruments to identify the ideas of the players within the rural area and to develop the endogenous potential of the regions through a bottom-up principle. Especially in the Leader regions and the regions of integrated rural development – the so-called impulse regions – multisectoral, innovative concepts should be implemented.



I. Introduction and Analysis

This strategy paper is expected to enhance these processes through additional ideas and impulses. Thus, it is primarily aimed at those regions accessing the support of Leader or integrated rural development (ILE) for the stimulation of regional development processes. Subsequently, on the basis of the experiences made in the course of the implementation of this strategy paper, a comprehensive version for the development of all rural areas in Rhineland-Palatinate is to be elaborated.

Together with the Rhineland-Palatinate programme "Agriculture, Environmental Measures, Rural Development (PAUL), this strategy paper has been based on the Council of Ministers' draft "Designing the Future – Protecting the Future – the Chances of the Demographic Change for Rhineland-Palatinate".

Additional support opportunities for rural areas (for example rural tourism or renewable raw materials) are offered by the Rhineland-Palatinate programme "Growth Through Innovation" (EFRE). Furthermore, with the assistance of the European Social Fund (ESF), there should be a systematic implementation of the strategic aims of "further strengthening the Rhineland-Palatinate as a business location" and "increasing people's chances for development and participation"

2. The Federal State Development Programme as a Regulatory Framework

The federal state development programme provides the coordinating, inter-professional and interdisciplinary regulatory framework for the development of Rhineland-Palatinate. At the same time, it functions as a statutory regulation controlling the development in rural areas as well as in conurbations. It specifies basic conditions for federal state planning and issues statements about the following

- Developing commercial premises and specific locations,
- Ensuring and developing general public services,
- Shaping and utilising open spaces
- Ensuring and further developing the infrastructure
- The spatial impact of cash flows.

The federal state development programme sets guidelines in the form of goals and principles of federal state planning. These guidelines represent the regulatory framework for regional planning and communal land-use planning and also serve as a basis for this strategy paper for the development of rural areas in Rhineland-Palatinate.



I. Introduction and Analysis

3. Aim of the Strategy Paper

The aim of this strategy paper is to develop principles for the strengthening of rural areas and their long-term conservation as working and living spaces. For this reason, the approach of a bottom-up policy was chosen. The "Integrated Rural Development" and Leader regions will become "impulse regions" for an effective policy for rural areas, which should lead to a more efficient use of their potentials and chances. This is vital, as the future of Rhineland-Palatinate will be decided not least in precisely these areas.

This strategy paper is meant to initiate an open development process. The experiences made during the course of this process are to be used for a continuous improvement of the strategies and initiatives. One example of this is the gender-mainstreaming strategy, which takes the differences in basic conditions for men and women into consideration and thus contributes to equal opportunities.

Basing on current approaches and experiences, the following points are to be realised for the development of rural areas:

- More than ever before, members of the local population should be encouraged to bring in their creative ideas.
- Different spheres of activity should be more closely linked to one another.
- Funding instruments should be further enhanced to suit existing needs.
- Networks and training courses should be set up.
- Bottom-up approaches are to be continued.



4. The Rural Area Shapes the Diversity of Rhineland-Palatinate

Rural areas in Rhineland-Palatinate are of great importance in that they provide space for working, living and for nature, and also for industry and for recreation.

Hence, rural areas in Rhineland-Palatinate cannot be seen as homogenous and uniform regions, as they differ in geographic position, transport connection, natural, environmental and infrastructural features, demographic structure, structure of the labour force, economic and corporate structure as well as in regional identity, culture and traditions. The Federal Development Programme (draft LEP IV) differentiates between rural and densified areas. According to this differentiation, in Rhineland-Palatinate about 30 % of the population lives in rural areas on 57 % of the federal state territory.

The middle class (small and medium-sized enterprises), which is quite well distributed within the rural area of Rhineland Palatinate, is characterised by high flexibility and innovative ability. Keeping up with the rapidly changing requirements of the economy, the middle class is able to identify and to use new markets. This fact ensures that the rural area retains its economic power.

I. Introduction and Analysis

5. Features – Strengths and Weaknesses

Rural areas are characterised by strengths and weaknesses that can be seen as risks or chances:

5.1 Strengths

- A diverse settlement structure and attractive cultural landscapes serve as important location factors for a successful and independent "regional development".
- Environmental potentials and the intact cultural landscapes are good preconditions for a successful development of tourism.
- There are inexpensive, generous and socially stabilising housing conditions as well as a family-friendly environment.
- There is a high potential for a wide range of different types of land use, for example viticulture, agriculture and forestry, settlement and business development, leisure time and tourism.
- A well-distributed middle class with high flexibility and innovation ability serves as a motor for the stimulation of the labour market in rural areas.
- There is a high willingness for civic commitment and involvement in a variety of social networks.
- Rural areas have good "soft" location factors for housing and business such as their high recreational and tourist value or their close proximity to nature and environment.
- There is a high potential for innovative services; labour markets in rural areas can be stimulated through new tourist networks, for example between gastronomy, wellness and fitness enterprises.
- There are opportunities to increase the proportion of renewable energies used in order to reduce greenhouse gases (climate protection) and for the creation of employment within the rural area.
- People identify strongly with their region, maintain traditions and feel connected to their roots, all of which adds up to a high level of commitment and involvement in the rural areas.

5.2 Weaknesses

- The decreasing population density complicates the maintenance and creation of adequate infrastructures and also leads to rising costs.
- The availability of modern media is poor; for example broadband cable is not widely available.
- The basic conditions for the development of public transport are unfavourable.
- It is difficult to develop an adequate local infrastructure for schools and healthcare services.
- It is difficult to maintain a good supply of everyday consumer goods.
- The availability of employment is low.
- The number of residents who have to commute to their place of work is high.
- The structure of land plots is highly fragmented due to laws regulating inheritance (the property of a man was divided according to the number of his sons).
- There are long distances to universities and research facilities.



I. Introduction and Analysis

6. Current and Future Challenges and Potentials

Rural areas in particular are facing new challenges. This is a consequence of a wide range of factors. Firstly, there are the increasing rationalisation and concentration processes in industry and, in addition, a further opening and liberalisation of markets due to the enlargement of the European Union and globalisation. Then there have been structural changes in agriculture. Added to this, there is the demographic development. And finally, one must consider the limited financial resources of public budgets.

Agriculture and viticulture are running through a process of permanent change (e.g. structural change and new technologies). The demand for the raw material wood is constantly rising - both for energy purposes as well as for further processing and utilisation. As a result, especially in rural areas, there is a clear upward trend in forestry.

Other sectors and branches are changing as well. One only has to look at the local retail trade, skilled trades (plumbers, electricians, etc) and local enterprises. But there is change in other areas of life in the rural area, such as working, housing, the supply with public and private services, healthcare and cultural offers, religious communities and social life, clubs and societies.

During five regional conferences in 2007, current and future challenges and opportunities for the rural areas in Rhineland-Palatinate were developed and broadly discussed. Players in the rural areas, such as local politicians, farmers, wine-growers, representatives of the local economy or players from various technical and social fields, have formulated the following focal points and thus created a basis for the identification of selected courses of action:

Demographic Change

Due to the natural population development (birth and death rate) the long-term population balance in Rhineland-Palatinate will stay negative. Already for 2015, a decline of about 190,000 in the population is expected.

Additionally, in the whole of Rhineland-Palatinate, the population is tendentially aging. In some rural areas this development is disproportionate-

ly high. Especially attractive regions are currently able to compensate or even to overcompensate for the loss of population (death rate exceeding birth rate) through immigration. However, along with a declining population due to the natural population development, some rural areas may additionally be affected by emigration. The foreseeable demographic change in Rhineland-Palatinate does not occur uniformly as regards age structure and gender. Migration tendencies may also include an exodus of qualified employees from rural areas to other regions. It is thus important to counteract the exodus of young men and women. Here a number of factors have proved important for the creation of an attractive living and working environment. These include the accessibility of a person's main area of economic activity, the reachability of jobs as well as access to facilities providing general public services and thus, most importantly, the possibility to combine family and job.

The demographic change affects different areas of life. Older groups of the population are able to give important impulses for a further development of rural areas as regards senior citizen-friendly living and working, as well as lifelong learning. Many older citizens are very health-conscious, demand new types of services and are looking for a new quality of life. They can spark innovative labour market processes

In rural areas there also exist municipalities with an extraordinarily high proportion of migrants (especially ethnic German immigrants from early and later stages of resettlement); these migration processes can mitigate the negative consequences of the demographic change. In the rural areas of Rhineland-Palatinate as elsewhere, the demographic change should be seen as a chance and a challenge providing new opportunities to activate the potentials in society for its citizens and at the same time develop new sectors of industry.

I. Introduction and Analysis

Shortage of Skilled Workers

Currently many enterprises and facilities in the rural area are suffering from a lack of qualified employees. In many branches this shortage of skilled workers is expected to rise during the coming years. Generally, economic development is only possible with skilled employees. Thus the lack of qualified employees in the rural area must be counteracted through a systematic programme of education and qualification. In close cooperation with industry, political groups and the local population, we must strive for an improvement of the conditions for setting up businesses. The aim is to create an attractive working environment and thus to bind enterprises and qualified employees to the rural area. Already at an early stage, a dialogue between pupils, trainees and enterprises in the rural area should be established. Moreover, the presence of skilled migrant workers in the rural area is of great advantage. However, exploiting this potential necessitates that educational institutions provide well-directed support and integration of those migrants not yet in possession of the required skills.

All-Day Schools and Youth Education

Due to a constant decrease of the number of pupils in the rural area, the school system needs to be stabilised and further developed. For young families, a sufficient availability of places in local kindergartens and schools is of vital importance and thus needs to be ensured. Parents in the rural area expect from a programme for rural areas that an adequate offer of qualified infant care be provided. At the same time, there is an increasing wish for all-day schools in rural areas. Combined with this is the necessity to improve the opportunities for young people in rural areas. Significant goals here are an intensification of youth work, the encouragement of young people to stay in rural areas and the support of project ideas that they have developed.



I. Introduction and Analysis

Equal Living Conditions in Terms of Infrastructural Facilities and Mobility

Increasingly, our society is going to be shaped by its older citizens. The changes in needs and demand for public and private facilities that result from an aging and decreasing population will entail numerous adjustments. Local authorities will have to face new challenges, for example in dealing with the consequences of a less intensive utilisation of kindergartens, schools and vocational schools but also of facilities like libraries, indoor swimming pools and sports halls. On the other hand, the constantly rising number of older citizens results in new types of demand, for example in the areas of medical care and direct care as well as public transport and the local supply with everyday consumer goods. All this means that a development of new strategies is necessary. One of the goals of federal state planning is providing people with living conditions of equal value. This does not mean that supply standards and available services must of necessity be similar in all regions. Taking into account how the diverse types of topography are organised, we must ensure that, in both rural areas and conurbations, the general public services provided are of high quality. These services must be adapted to the respective demand and degree of utilised capacity of each rural area or conurbation and should be reasonably accessible.



In order to maintain the rural area as an attractive region for the population, we must ensure that, within the framework of the planning guidelines, the infrastructure is intact. The promotion of such projects is a prerequisite for any commitment to the rural area. Having efficient means of transport is still one of the most significant preconditions for setting up enterprises and for a positive demographic development, which means attracting people to move to the rural area in order to live and work there. Thus, support for a future-oriented development of rural areas must mean support and promotion of large-scale infrastructure projects. The maintenance of roads leading to the rural area and of village roads is therefore of great importance in enhancing the attractiveness of municipalities in Rhineland-Palatinate. And the maintenance of a well-functioning public transport system remains an important goal with regard to the mobility needs of both younger and older commuters.

In the course of the demographic change, the number of citizens who depend on local public transport will rise (e.g. citizens limited in mobility, but also families with children). As a location factor, availability of adequate local public transport will considerably gain in importance. Ultimately, in view of vehicle exhaust emissions, we must work against any rise in the rate of individual commuter traffic. Moreover, mobility has its price, as the fuel we need for our mobility is a limited commodity. Against this background, beside a well-functioning local public transport system, intelligent approaches for the use of cars are becoming more and more important, for example car sharing agencies and car sharing parking spaces. Since local public transport is mainly financed by the transport of pupils and is thus becoming unprofitable due to the falling number of pupils, new models must be developed or already tested models from other regions applied

I. Introduction and Analysis

Inner Development of Villages

In the centres of many small villages in the rural area, there is a constantly increasing number of vacant and unused buildings and barns, houses in need of renovation, as well as gaps between buildings and vacant lots. The current and growing problem of unused building fabric in the centres of small villages is additionally aggravated by the shrinkage of the population. Enhancing the attractiveness of villages by designating building land on a greenfield site is problematic in view of the long-term effective costs for the development and the maintenance of the necessary infrastructure. The inner development of villages must have absolute priority over the designation of new land-use areas so that the interior of these villages can be stabilised.

One of the key tools for achieving this aim of inner development is effective land management. In this respect, communal land-use planning plays a major role when it comes to responsible and resource-efficient settlement development. For the evaluation of the inner potential of village centres, a communal register showing gaps between buildings and vacancies can provide valuable information and serve as a basis for decisions. Smaller communities in rural areas will be strengthened in the course of this process of stabilisation and enhancement. Land management cannot be pursued on the level of each individual municipality. Instead, it has to be part of a regional concept of settlement development in order to meet the requirements of sustainable development. In the impulse regions, village consolidation can be resorted to if an effective instrument for the mobilisation and reorganisation of land in villages is required.

Modern Communication

In many areas of business, consumers of all ages in the rural area are able to order goods and services on the internet via e-commerce. Thus, appropriate communication platforms and training courses must be established and offered in villages where there is a need.

E-learning comprises techniques of teaching and learning via digital networks. Today, such interactive techniques are being used as a supplement to educational offers. Through the provision of specific educational offers, e-learning could provide additional chances for rural areas by diminishing the problems of distant access routes to schools or universities. Of course, new media cannot substitute classes and school attendance. Nevertheless, e-learning offers a variety of opportunities to complement and enhance classes. In the university sector, Rhineland-Palatinate has already created an internet platform with the virtual campus Rhineland-Palatinate – the Hagen Open University. In addition to this, the Telecollege Rhineland-Palatinate allows for the acquisition of an advanced technical college entrance qualification. This is especially useful for women, who can improve their qualifications and thus their prospects on the labour market. As yet, it remains to be seen how far modern technologies (e-learning) can be used specifically for the rural area. For rural areas, the gathering of information is of special importance since, through the internet, particular deficits of rural areas can be further reduced, for example great distances to libraries.

In order to be able to offer free access to the above-mentioned technologies of online services and online administration, a comprehensive installation of fast internet connections in the rural area is necessary. Additionally, training and qualification in the use of these new media must be widely available to all social groups.

II. General Principle, Aims and Fields of Action of a Policy...

II. General Principle, Aims and Fields of Action of a Policy for Rural Areas

1. General Principles

City and countryside, metropolitan areas and rural areas are mutually dependant and must therefore not be played off against one another.

Policy in Rhineland-Palatinate will strengthen the rural area as an independent living space, contribute to future-oriented development and additionally help to maintain its attractiveness.

In rural areas there is space for industry, nature and environmentally sound living. They are at once economically advantageous and highly liveable. And they can use their specific regional conditions and development potentials to the full.

Rural areas are coequal with other areas, and the principle of equal living conditions applies to the same degree as to other areas. In the overall system of the whole of Rhineland-Palatinate, rural areas assume essential production functions and also complementary, regulatory functions.

The commitment of the people living in rural areas is the basis for all future-oriented development. People in the rural area are willing to get involved in their region, as they associate something positive with the area they live in. They say: "I feel at home here and am willing to get involved in this region because it is my home".

2. Aims

The following aspects are of special importance for a future-oriented policy for the rural areas of Rhineland-Palatinate:

- Maintaining and strengthening economic power as well as creating and safeguarding jobs, especially in small and medium-sized enterprises,

- Maintaining and developing long-term, sustainable local supply structures, also under changed basic conditions,
- Binding highly-skilled manpower and young families to the rural area,
- Enhancing educational institutions,
- Providing all-day child care and family-friendly conditions,
- Maintaining and developing competitive, multifunctional and sustainable agriculture and forestry,
- Ensuring the ecological potential, sustainable use of natural resources (e.g. rural tourism, renewable raw materials, renewable energy types),
- Climate protection,
- Ensuring energy supply and energy production,
- Improving working and living conditions in the rural area (creation of alternative sources of income, preservation and development of dynamic village centres),
- Developing the growth market 'health care management',
- Intercommunal projects and cooperation,
- Strengthening civic commitment.
- The indispensable cooperation between city and countryside for a common achievement of goals.

The basis for the development of the rural areas in Rhineland-Palatinate is a consistently target-oriented coordination of these measures and action plans, some of which will involve more than one department. In addition, a promotion of regions is needed, basing on locally developed and broadly discussed regional development concepts. The aim should be to reach consensus on regional political issues in order to strengthen the endogenous potentials of rural areas capable of development. In order to support these development processes in a sustainable way, networks and training courses have to be established and maintained.

II. General Principle, Aims and Fields of Action of a Policy...

3. Fields of Action of the Policy

Against the background of current and future challenges for rural areas and the political dialogue on the conception of a strategy paper, which was conducted in the course of five regional conferences, we can now present a variety of fields of action for a policy for the rural area in Rhineland-Palatinate:

⇒ Economy, labour, mobility, energy and tourism

- **Small and medium-sized enterprises** – improving basic conditions for the creation of value and jobs.
- **Information highway in the countryside** – as a location factor for the creation of jobs.
- **Mobility** – improving the accessibility of peripheral regions.
- **Energy supply** – enhancing and improving an energy mix, creating and safeguarding qualified jobs, using the potentials of an expanding export market.
- **Tourism** – further developing this field for target-group-specific and quality-oriented tourism.

⇒ Communal infrastructure

- **Local supply of goods and services** – maintaining this life-blood of rural areas.
- **Social and health care** – long-term provision of these services.
- **Education** – strengthening and enhancing school structures.
- **Infrastructure for families** – overcoming demographic problems.

⇒ Village culture and municipal development

- **Civic engagement** – strengthening regional solidarity, promoting and networking voluntary involvement, thus using it for innovative developments.
- **Active village centres** – developing solution models to counteract the decay of village centres.
- **Overcoming small-scale territorial thinking** – joint development and realisation of projects.

⇒ Viniculture, agriculture and forestry

- **Agriculture, forestry and viniculture** – preparing farmers, forest workers, energy farmers and farmers of organic produce for the future.
- **Food** – producing healthy food.
- **Local products** – developing characteristic features for identity and circular thinking.
- **Forest, forestry** – sustainable, economic, ecological and social development.
- **Renewable raw materials** – seizing the opportunities for economy, climate and population.

⇒ Ecology and water management

- **Sustainability** – balancing economic, ecological and social issues.
- **Cultural landscape** – preserving and strengthening the cultural landscape as a basis for the identity of the inhabitants in the rural area and for sustainable tourism.
- **Newly designated outskirts areas** – limiting these areas.
- **Water** – protecting and developing this as drinking water and as an active element of nature.
- **Climate change** – limiting the process of climate change, developing adaptation strategies, realising measures for a considerable reduction of greenhouse gases – especially CO₂.

III. Strategies for the development of rural areas

III. Strategies for the development of rural areas



III. Strategies for the development of rural areas

1. Selected Approaches

The future of Rhineland-Palatinate will be decided not least in the rural areas. We have already seen that rural areas are facing various challenges. In the following, the approaches with which the federal state Rhineland-Palatinate is responding to those challenges are described. These approaches should serve as complementary and effective stimuli for innovative processes. They take up the proposals made by the various players during the regional conferences. All processes should help to master the challenges in rural areas and to effectively support the impulse regions in their regionally developed activities. This will include feasibility studies, which will be commissioned.

1.1 Agriculture, Forestry and Viniculture

1.1.1 Improvement of Competitiveness and the Creation of Value

Agriculture, forestry and viniculture are practiced on more than 80 % of the total area of Rhineland-Palatinate. Competitive and sustainable agriculture is the basis of an intact rural area. Agriculture considerably contributes to the creation of value – including its upstream and downstream sectors, such as the food industry. Meanwhile, the range of areas of activity in agriculture has grown. Besides its main function, supplying the population with high-quality food, new areas of activity have emerged, for example the preservation of the cultural landscape and the production of renewable raw materials.

The Rhineland-Palatinate development programme PAUL sets the basic conditions for the development of agriculture, forestry and viniculture.



One focus in Rhineland-Palatinate is taking the necessary investment measures in agriculture and viniculture in order to ensure that they are future-oriented. This would also include sustainable, resource-efficient and livestock-friendly production.

To create new sources of income for farmers, forest workers and winegrowers, PAUL also contains measures for the diversification of the rural economy, such as the promotion of tourism. In the future, farmers will also be able to work as energy farmers or as manufacturers of high-quality industrial raw materials and other products.

The new agri-environmental programme PAULA, a component of the programme PAUL, combines measures for the assurance and the development of an environmentally friendly agriculture. One important measure of this programme is the support of organic farming. Here there is potential for a regional marketing of eco-products, for the creation of jobs and for the preservation of the cultural landscape.

III. Strategies for the development of rural areas

1.1.2 Forestry as a Contribution to Sustainable Development

In Rhineland-Palatinate, the forestry industry is based on the fundamental idea of sustainability. According to contemporary understanding, this means it is based on the three pillars of sustainability: ecology, social aspects and the economy. These pillars make a vital contribution to the provision of general public services – especially in the rural areas of Rhineland-Palatinate.

The forest as an ecosystem and the cultivation of the forest fulfil various protective functions, for example protection against noise and dust. Additionally, the forest considerably contributes to the conservation of genetic resources, biological diversity and the protection of nature and species. The importance of forests is reflected in their designation as Natura-2000 areas. Furthermore, the function of the forests in CO₂ storage is gaining importance. The use of wood for timber products and construction with wood temporarily binds CO₂ as well. And, of course, wood as a renewable energy is CO₂-neutral.

Society's demands on the forest are increasing and are almost exclusively in areas where the services provided for the benefit of the public are free of cost. There is a growing appreciation of the forest as a recreational space for an urban population, as a natural learning spot for children and adults, as a space for hikers or mountain bikers or as a complex ecosystem with various protective functions.

The forest as a place of employment represents an interface between its social and economic functions. The production of raw wood and its refinement are an essential contribution to the creation and the conservation of jobs in economically underdeveloped rural areas. An analysis of the Rhineland-Palatinate forest, wood and paper sector, by the Rhineland-Palatinate Research Institute for Forest Ecology and Forest Management (cluster study) has shown that in the year 2002 about 50.000 persons were employed in this sector.

From the economic point of view, the production and the use of the renewable raw material wood

are of special importance for the federal state. This is clearly shown by the fact that over 4 million cubic metres of raw wood were produced in the Rhineland-Palatinate forest industry in the year 2006. The mobilisation of further amounts of wood, especially from smaller private forests, is a declared goal of the federal state government. In the federal state, only about 4.500 employees directly live from forestry. Nevertheless, the Rhineland-Palatinate forest, wood and paper sector comprises nearly 8.500 enterprises with a gross production value of almost 6,5 billion Euros. With every cubic metre of raw wood the Rhineland-Palatinate forest, wood and paper sector has a turnover of more than 3.300 Euros through its highly effective creation of value.

In the rural area, construction with wood is of great importance, especially in the restoration of old buildings and the conservation of energy.

For the impulse regions, this strategy paper proposes **the following approach**:

- ▶ The cluster forest and the wood industry should be systematically expanded in the federal state. The main focus lies on the sector of wood construction that is to be enhanced and further developed in order to generate a high creation of value in rural areas.
- ▶ The mobilisation of raw wood from the forest should be promoted to create sources of income for all forest owners and to supply the woodworking industry with raw material.
- ▶ The forest, with its multifaceted impact on people, should be presented to them in such a way that they can experience it more fully through environmental education and pedagogic measures.
- ▶ The high ecological value of forests is to be maintained through their cultivation throughout the federal state.
- ▶ Strategies for an adaptation of the forests to the climate change must be developed.
- ▶ The basic principle of a multifunctional forest management should guarantee that all pillars of sustainability are given adequate consideration.
- ▶ The results of the above-mentioned approaches should be communicated broadly under the lead management of both participating departments.

III. Strategies for the development of rural areas

1.2 Conservation of the Cultural Landscapes

Through the centuries, traditions in the cultivation of land and forest and in building villages and infrastructures in Rhineland-Palatinate have created a variety of cultural landscapes. These are to be cultivated and further developed. Cultural landscapes are part of the fabric of connections between people, nature and culture. The different types of land use shape their appearance and influence production, habitat and regulating functions. It is a target of federal state planning to conserve and cautiously further develop important cultural landscapes with a special view to existing variety and the specific characteristics of each landscape, the historically grown settlement structures, views and scenery. Consideration must also be given to existing building fabric worthy of protection as well as cultural heritage.

Regional plans, worked out in conjunction with the relevant sectoral planning groups, define existing historic cultural landscapes and designate further regionally important cultural landscapes on the basis of a cadastre for cultural landscapes.

This federal state-wide cadastre for cultural landscapes is to be established under the collaboration of regional planning and the departments for the preservation of monuments and historic buildings and for nature conservation.

In the following, this strategy paper demonstrates approaches for four selected types of cultural landscapes:

1.2.1 Conservation of the two UNESCO World Heritage Sites

The two UNESCO world heritage sites "Upper Middle Rhine Valley" and the Rhineland-Palatinate part of the "Upper German-Raetian Limes" are outstanding examples for cultural landscapes in Rhineland-Palatinate. The connection of an enduring protection of the cultural heritage coupled with a cautious and sustainable development of tourism on the one hand, and the exploitation of the economic potentials on the other hand must be seen as a special opportunity for the development of these rural areas.

- ▶ In both areas the current activities of the federal state government of Rhineland-Palatinate are to be extended in the future.
- ▶ To reach this aim, overall regional development concepts must be supported and the establishment of necessary infrastructural facilities promoted in the context of communal planning.



III. Strategies for the development of rural areas

1.2.2 Conservation of the Cultural Wine Landscapes

The conservation of viticulture on steep-slopes is a high priority development goal in the four northern wine-growing areas of Rhineland-Palatinate and is thus an outstanding example for the fundamental and existential links between Rhine-Hesse and Rhineland-Palatinate. Viticulture must not be seen in isolation. Instead, it should be developed together with many other areas of activity in the region. In this context, players in the gastronomic and tourism sectors are indispensable cooperation partners.

Wine-growing areas in Rhineland-Palatinate are characterised by a historically grown cultural landscape and a high level of attractiveness for tourists. Viticulture, culture, tourism and the economy form a symbiosis. Without viticulture on steep-slopes as a unique selling point of the region, this symbiosis would be in danger. In the four northern growing areas different concepts have been promoted, for example the concept for steep-slopes for the cultural wine landscape, Moselle. In the course of this process, all data relevant for production and the market were collected, strengths and weaknesses were evaluated and a package with measures and projects was worked out.

At the same time, the European Institute for Tourism Ltd. has updated its "Tourist Scenario for the New Millennium" dating from 1997 and has now presented a "Tourist Development Concept Rhineland-Palatinate". On the basis of these fundamentals, the following targets have been developed for the Rhineland-Palatinate wine-growing regions:

(a) Conservation and development of the cultural landscape

The conservation of viticulture on steep-slopes has been given highest priority. In those areas where this method of cultivation is no longer profitable, measures to keep the land open or alternative types of land use are to be applied for environmental reasons and for the conservation of the natural scenery (e.g. herbal gardens, red vineyard peach).

(b) Improving marketing

On the basis of market analyses and interviews, winegrowers, caterers and hoteliers have to develop new, attractive and unique products of high quality. More than so far, these new offers should emphasise characteristic regional features in order to strengthen the profile of the region. A further important marketing target is to increase the level of awareness of Rhineland-Palatinate viticulture through a joint presentation in key markets and consumer regions.

The improvement of customer satisfaction through quality management not only means high-quality products; it also includes the availability of appropriate, high-quality service.

(c) Optimising production

One target of the service centres for the rural area is the designation of modern, cost-effective vineyards through land management. A further important factor for the economic success of those vineyards, and one that is central to the work of the service centres for the rural area, is the professional competence of their production managers.

(d) Improving basic conditions

A well-adapted regulatory framework for viticulture and tourism has to ensure individual initiative and that new ideas can lead to the development of new products.

In the future, public financial assistance will mainly focus on the initial financing of pilot projects and on the provision of infrastructure.

(e) Improving communication and initiating overall sectoral measures

In order to make more use of synergies than has hitherto been the case, communication among the bodies responsible for projects and offers should be improved on all levels. Here, the focus should always be on customer preferences. A positive regional development can only be initiated through the effective collaboration of all relevant players. In particular, those measures and projects supporting the creation of networks and those developing from networks must be promoted.

III. Strategies for the development of rural areas

This strategy paper strongly advocates that the main focus be on the following instruments and levels of action:

- ▶ The further development of viticulture on steep-slopes throughout the whole of Rhineland-Palatinate is under the responsibility of the service centre for the rural area Moselle. The increase in productivity and the oenology for the fabrication of regionally specific wines are major concerns. Structural developments as well as the development of individual enterprises are to be coordinated and accelerated.
- ▶ In specific, carefully chosen areas, vineyards are to be reorganised and suitably developed through measures of land management. This can also be realised in the form of cultural landscape projects. These measures should make a cost-efficient and economically sound cultivation of wine on steep-slopes possible. In all these projects, the concerns of village development, tourism and the protection of nature must be of special importance.
- ▶ The newly established **steep-slope centre**, as a subsection of the service centre for the rural area Moselle, is expected to conduct research in viticulture and oenology. Their results should be made accessible throughout Rhineland-Palatinate.
- ▶ The **working group viticulture on steep-slopes**, of the service centre for the rural area Moselle, should be a forum for an active exchange of ideas with the goal to address deficits, to develop concrete solutions and to establish proposals for their implementation.
- ▶ The competence centre for market and marketing (a subsection of the service centre for the rural area Oppenheim) should develop specific proposals for **regional projects for the commercialisation** of viticulture on steep-slopes.
- ▶ Federal state tourist facilities and Rhineland-Palatinate Tourism Ltd. should aim for close cooperation with local wine marketing associations.
- ▶ The regulatory framework is to be modified so that it fosters the **individual responsibility of enterprises** and accelerates the realisation of initiatives.
- ▶ Financial support must be made available where change seems possible and necessary but its funding would overburden the individual winegrower. Priority should be given to the funding of vineyard consolidation, the construction of monorack railways, the establishment of tourist centres and the construction of cycle paths when they promise to have a high regional or structural impact.
- ▶ The service centres for the rural area and the regional tourist agencies should actively support the networking and communication of regional players. An example is the identification and the support of synergy effects when it comes to the joint commercialisation of events and products. The service centres for the rural areas must also organise efficient controlling for all individual projects.
- ▶ The project "red vineyard peach", implemented by the Ministry for Economic Affairs, Transportation, Agriculture and Viticulture, should be further expanded and new marketing strategies developed.
- ▶ Structural elements such as dry walls (supporting walls made out of bedded stones without mortar) on steep slopes and narrow passes between steep rock faces at other locations are to be used in the context of pilot projects in the fields of tourism and environmental education. Here professional environmental guidelines must be kept in mind.
- ▶ Service centres for the rural areas should offer appropriate further education and counselling in support of the measures described in this chapter.
- ▶ Within the impulse regions, cooperation among the players in the fields of viticulture, tourism, gastronomy and the protection of nature is to be organised in the form of working groups, which in turn will need to be strictly moderated. These working groups in ILE or Leader should develop projects strengthening regional **awareness** for the uniqueness of the cultural landscape. They are meant to initiate a **dynamic** of change and integrate local citizens as well as guests in this **process of change**.
- ▶ In a conference in the year 2009, there will be presentations on all successful land readjustment procedures for the conservation of viticulture on steep slopes from all German wine-growing regions, including information on alternative types of land use (e.g. red vineyard peach).

III. Strategies for the development of rural areas

1.2.3 Development of Cultural Landscapes with Special Geological Features

The low mountain ranges in Rhineland-Palatinate comprise various types of landscapes. Some of them are characterised by special geological features in combination with great diversity of flora and fauna.

Cultural landscapes with outstanding geological features, for example landscapes shaped by volcanoes, are most often characterised by marginal agricultural revenues and are thus increasingly being left out of the areas that are cultivated. Nature conservation that has been contractually agreed on represents a potential alternative source of income for farmers. Tourists as well appreciate such cultural landscapes (e.g. the volcanic Eifel). They expect the maintenance of the already existing hiking infrastructure and its expansion through attractive long distance trails. In this respect, natural parks play a major role.

Our aims here must be dual: on the one hand, we need to accentuate the particularities of such cultural landscapes and create ideal conditions for an environmentally sound agricultural use. At the same time, we must promote the development of the tourism trade.

For other cultural landscapes with special geological features, the following measures should prove especially helpful:

- Regenerating the cultural landscape by securing or reintroducing agricultural use supported by rural land readjustment.
- Accentuating special geologic features scenically through land management and the installation of tourist lookout points for especially scenic views .
- Supporting the Campaign Blue and promoting the realisation of the EU Water Framework Directive.
- Solving land use conflicts.
- Conserving old orchard meadows and planting new ones as characteristic elements of the cultural landscape and their sustained care and commercialisation.
- Maintaining the cultural landscape through a variety of measures in the context of contract-based nature conservation.

In this context, the strategy paper makes the following recommendations:

- ▶ The pilot project “Land Readjustment for the Conservation of the Cultural Landscape with Special Geological Heritage” is to be implemented in the two municipalities Schalkenmehren und Udler through a joint cooperation of the service centre for the rural area Eifel and the local working group of the leader-region.
- ▶ New concepts of contract-based nature conservation (e.g. “partnership between farms and of these area nature conservation” and “large pasture systems”) are to be developed and tested.
- ▶ The first results expected for the year 2010 are to be implemented in the course of further projects with equal or similar objectives in the whole of Rhineland-Palatinate. These are to be presented together with other cultural landscape projects at a federal state conference in 2010.



III. Strategies for the development of rural areas

1.2.4 Keeping Cultural Landscapes Open

Locations in Rhineland-Palatinate that achieve only marginal agricultural revenues are increasingly faced with a decline in active cultivation. This especially applies for the side valleys of major rivers and for the valleys in the areas of the low mountain ranges. Steep-slopes formerly used for viticulture are no longer being cultivated. The abandonment of cultivation leads to a modification of the natural scenery, marked by scrub encroachment and afforestation. These changes have far-reaching consequences. A significant change of the microclimate, for example, results in a loss of valuable species or in roofs in the area being increasingly covered in moss.

Besides, the decline in traditional cultivation, for example the cultivation on steep slopes, has negative effects on the overall aesthetic scenery of the landscape. This in turn also affects regional quality of life and tourism.

In selected areas that especially shape the natural scenery, where agricultural use is not profitable or impracticable for other reasons, the landscape is to be kept open and developed through cultural landscape projects. The aim is to develop a diversified cultural landscape and increase its tourism value. Keeping the landscape open also aims at the conservation and the creation of diverse habitats and will thus increase biodiversity.

Against this background, the Ministry for the Environment, Forestry and Consumer Protection has initiated a test and development project in the Middle Rhine Valley called “Sustainable Development of Exothermic Hillsides Using the Example of the Middle Rhine Valley”. The goal of this project is the testing of diverse cultivation and maintenance measures as well as of accompanying measures for a sustainable development of cultural landscapes. In the course of this project, initial maintenance measures for wasteland in different stages of scrub encroachment have been tested in practice (e.g. scrub clearance using tank tracks or burning).

One focus is continuing maintenance measures. In the Kersteter forest, pasturing with semiwild goats has proved quite successful.

For the future, this strategy paper recommends the following courses of action:

- ▶ In coordination with the Ministry for the Environment, Forestry and Consumer Protection, the results of this test and development project are to be applied, preferably to all cultural landscapes in Rhineland-Palatinate. Special attention should be paid to steep slopes.
- ▶ If necessary, measures for keeping the cultural landscape open are to be realised with the help of land readjustment procedures integrating projects of contract-based nature conservation.
- ▶ A first exemplary project of this type is to be realised, using the example of the natural setting of the project Bacharach, Oberheimbach, Niederheimbach and other locations.
- ▶ In significant cultural landscapes, where an extensive agricultural use is not possible, the service centres for the rural area should support measures for keeping the landscapes open within the framework of land readjustment procedures.
- ▶ At a conference in the year 2011, the results of these strategies for keeping the landscape open are to be broadly communicated.
- ▶ The current strategies for keeping the landscape open developed by the Ministry for Economic Affairs, Transportation, Agriculture and Viticulture on the one hand, and those developed by the Ministry for the Environment, Forestry and Consumer Protection on the other hand, are to be checked, enhanced and harmonised with each other.
- ▶ Alternative land use types, for example the recultivation of old strains of local fruits or the planting of herbal gardens, are to be tested in the Middle Rhine Valley and the Haardtrand.

III. Strategies for the development of rural areas

1.3 Promotion of Business Development – Foundation Processes

Interestingly, in Rhineland-Palatinate, which is mainly shaped by its rural areas, it is the medium-sized enterprises from the fields of agriculture, industry, skilled trades (plumbers, electricians etc) and the wide range of services that considerably contribute to securing economic power and quality of life in the countryside. They create and preserve employment. For this reason, the federal state government supports medium-sized enterprises by the development of infrastructure as well as through the promotion of individual enterprises.

Promoting the competitiveness of enterprises in rural areas is one of the main targets. For this purpose, a variety of instruments is available to entrepreneurs. In economically underdeveloped regions, the investments of small and medium-sized enterprises can be subsidised with non-repayable grants. These grants make an essential contribution to securing their competitiveness.

In addition, other programmes are available, for example for the provision of low interest loans, of holdings or loan guarantees. There are also programmes for the improvement of access to international markets. The qualifications of employees also serve the improvement of competitiveness.



Target-oriented support programmes of the European Social Fund – target 2 (qualification of employees) – can purposefully support the promotion of professional training and lifelong learning as well as the promotion of innovation.

Another essential task is the support of the innovative ability of enterprises as well as the support of the foundation of new and innovative enterprises. This task is realised through target-oriented support programmes, such as the promotion of technology and innovation, the promotion of consulting services for innovation measures or the promotion of foundations of technology-oriented companies. Additionally, the transfer of knowledge and technology is actively supported through transfer facilities. Small companies in particular most often lack research and development capacities. This lack can be compensated through cooperation with application-oriented research facilities.

With the competition “Municipalities with a Friendly Environment for Medium-Sized Enterprises”, the federal state government is aiming to motivate municipalities to actively support the development of enterprises in the rural area by implementing service- and enterprise-friendly policies.

Ensuring company succession and the foundation of new enterprises are both important preconditions for maintaining economic power within the rural area. With the aid of a pilot project involving a scientific study and the foundation programme “Business Start-Ups in the Rural Area”, the federal state government has analysed the foundation potential in the rural area and tested ways to strengthen the willingness to found new enterprises.

- ▶ This is to be used as a foundation for the further development of instruments to support and promote small and medium-sized enterprises
- ▶ The networking of existing consulting offers should be intensified and improved in order to stimulate the willingness to found new enterprises.

III. Strategies for the development of rural areas

1.4 Supply with Basic Needs and Tourism

1.4.1 Supply with Everyday Consumer Goods and Services

In the course of the demographic change and structural change in the retail trade, a rise is expected in the number of municipalities in Rhineland-Palatinate that have no shops providing local supply – especially food. Small municipalities in rural areas are particularly affected. Especially groceries with a small sales area and groceries in municipalities with only a few hundred inhabitants are likely to close. When a municipality loses its facilities of local supply, it loses in attractiveness as a place of residence. This can increase people’s incentive to migrate within Germany. Besides, the loss of shops providing everyday consumer goods also implicates a decrease in possible sources of income and in the availability of employment.

Hence, the question arises how we can further develop sustainable and enduring location-specific solutions for at least an intermittent local supply of goods. In addition, we must ask how we can link up areas of daily life that have until now remained separate. On the one hand, mobile solutions are possible. In some parts of Rhineland-Palatinate a mobile supply of food and other everyday consumer goods and services to the villages already exists. These are entrepreneurial supply solutions.

In addition, there are other approaches of enterprises or groups of persons, combining functions of retail trade and other service functions in one shop. The aim is to decrease average fixed costs and to increase customer frequency. By doing so, various service functions that could not be maintained permanently when offered individually, can now be sustained in the village.

These approaches should be enhanced in a future-oriented way, integrating modern technologies, and also adapting them to the ongoing demographic changes.

- ▶ Depending on municipality and location, individual and sustainable solutions for the revitalisation and enhancement of the basic supply with everyday consumer goods and services should be analysed. This analysis can integrate social and communal services as well as combinations of electronic communication and mobile delivery services. Publicly promoted competition with existing shops and facilities must be avoided.
- ▶ Pilot approaches are to be developed in cooperation with the regional activities of the impulse regions. They will be supported financially, for example via the development programme PAUL or the support programme for retail trade.
- ▶ Feasibility studies can render assistance, analysing important factors such as legal form, efficiency, range of products, supply, marketing and staffing of multifunctional facilities. In this connection, models of for training courses should also be developed.
- ▶ The most suitable ideas are to be discussed in the course of conferences and workshops. These in turn will serve as help for other municipalities. The results should be communicated via internet or other communication platforms.

III. Strategies for the development of rural areas

1.4.2 Tourism Strategies for the Rural Area

With its variety of landscapes, Rhineland-Palatinate has excellent chances in the field of tourism. During all regional conferences, the discussion about the further development of tourism was a special focus. The following topics were mainly discussed:

- Wine tourism,
- Hiking tourism,
- Health/wellness tourism
- Cycle tourism

It is in these fields of the tourism sector in Rhineland-Palatinate that the greatest potentials can be found.

Repeatedly, participants have called for a programme of quality assurance that would comprise infrastructure and accessibility in the field of tourism as well as service and entertainment and hotels.

The special importance of the scenery in villages and landscapes in Rhineland-Palatinate has been defined as an essential basis for tourism.

Thus, the maintenance and further development of the villages and cultural landscapes simultaneously will result in a strengthening of tourism.



This strategy paper proposes the following courses of action for the impulse regions:

- ▶ The basic conditions set forth here are to apply to all regions, which should adapt their goals in the field of tourism accordingly and develop tourist projects that especially concentrate on the above-mentioned focal points and are supra-regional in their scope.
- ▶ When it comes to the conception of tourist strategies, special attention should be paid to the needs of the main target groups. Above all, the wishes of international tourists are to be considered.
- ▶ The demand expressed at the regional conferences for an uncompromising focus on quality is to be taken into account in all tourist regions. If possible, tourist projects should strive for accessibility. An observation tower that is to be built in the course of the project described in chapter 1.2.3 should be one of ten pilot projects on the subject of barrier-free building.
- ▶ At a large-scale conference in 2009, participants can compare notes and tourist projects related to the above-mentioned focal points can be presented.

III. Strategies for the development of rural areas

1.4.3 Land Management for Tourism in Rural Areas

Tourism is of vital importance when it comes to the creation of additional employment and the prevention of an exodus from the rural area. In rural areas, tourism requires intact cultural landscapes. In this respect, different interests can easily be linked with each other. In the future as well, farmers and forest workers will be the most important conservationists through their active cultivation of the cultural landscape. Tourism benefits from the cultural landscape and nature conservation since it is only intact landscapes with a high biological diversity that attract people to go for a walk, to hike or to make a bicycle tour.

In order to designate cycle paths and hiking trails, to create extensive sports facilities and to enable the development of tourism, an intelligent use of land management is necessary.



For this reason, rural land readjustment is applied to support the development of the tourist infrastructure and to foster individual measures for tourism and tourism marketing in combination with further development goals of the rural area.

The realisation of the following measures of rural land readjustment should be given high priority:

- ▶ Extending and improving the development of quality tourism for sports tourists, leisure and activity tourists (continuous connections for bikers, hikers and nordic walking).
- ▶ Keeping flood plains open and also securing and restoring natural scenery in all its variety: The aims here are to offer tranquillity and recreation to people from urban agglomerations and to intensify the experience of nature for visitors.
- ▶ Supporting diversification measures in the course of integrated rural development: This is to be connected with rural land readjustment in order to develop new sources of income for farmers, forest workers and winegrowers in the fields of tourism.
- ▶ Allocating land for tourist facilities.
- ▶ Further developing historic sites (e.g. Limes or Westwall) with the help of rural land readjustment to make them accessible for tourism.
- ▶ Counselling and training regional players in the course of integrated rural development (e.g. training field guides).
- ▶ Conferences and workshops presenting the best projects.

III. Strategies for the development of rural areas

1.5 Alternative Energy Supply, Energy Mix, Local Heating Plant

Future-oriented energy management in the rural areas of Rhineland-Palatinate can generate additional income and contribute to climate protection. This new energy vision strives for an intensive use of renewable sources of energy, such as raw materials that can be replanted, solar energy, wind energy, hydro energy and geothermal energy, including the utilisation of lost heat. The aim here is to develop an ideal energy mix and to establish regional energy concepts.

The advantage of **hydro energy** is the avoidance of emissions usually generated by thermal power plants. Likewise, problems occurring through the disposal of rinsers or combustion residues do not exist. Depending on river basin and season, hydropower generates a more or less constant base load. Thus, it contributes to the coverage of energy supply. In Rhineland-Palatinate so far, first possibilities have been identified for upgrading small and medium-sized power plants of about 40 MW (4 MW for plants < 100 KW, 36 MW for plants > 100 KW) and 199 MW for the Moselle and Saar power plants.

Wind energy has come to be the most efficient of renewable energy supply technologies. In its low mountain ranges, Rhineland-Palatinate has good wind locations. They are at high altitudes and normally far from any settlement; however they are forested.

The possible ratio of wind energy to other forms of energy in Rhineland-Palatinate will be determined by:

- Wind conditions
- Hub height
- Rotor diameter

For the utilisation of wind energy, only those locations come into consideration where any disturbance of people or nature or the surrounding area can be excluded. To determine appropriate locations, land use planning and regional planning are used - first of all, to designate preference areas.

Apart from new locations, the potential there is in expanding the use of wind energy especially lies in 'repowering', which means replacing old installations with new and more efficient ones.

In a federal state like Rhineland-Palatinate, which is mainly shaped by agriculture and forestry, the use of **biomass** is of special importance.

Energy supply benefits from the production of bio energy as one of the core competences of farmers. In addition, farmers generate income and thus contribute to the regional creation of value. The contribution to climate protection achieved by the production of bio energy is likewise important.



III. Strategies for the development of rural areas

In the future, farmers and forest workers, planning authorities and municipalities should jointly exploit all potentials serving the generation of electricity and heat. This includes fermenting biomass, fuel production as well as the traditional use of wood as a combustible. The special geological situation of Rhineland-Palatinate allows for the generation of energy from terrestrial heat and for the generation of wind energy on exposed locations. Favourable subsoil conditions at the Upper Rhine mean that there is great potential in the use of deep geothermal energy for the generation of heat and energy. The development of geothermal energy is an important element in the system of renewable energies. Ultimately, a significant aim remains the combination of all the above-mentioned forms of energy with solar energy for the creation of the basis for a future-oriented energy mix.

As municipalities and potential energy farmers require an adequate knowledge base as well as coordination assistance, the federal state government has initiated the establishment of an "Expertise Network for Renewable Raw Materials". At the service centre for the rural area Eifel, an "Advisory Centre for Renewable Raw Materials" has been installed. It is the aim of the expertise network to prepare an overall concept regarding biogas and to supervise the development of bio fuels. Further goals are the investigation of the potentials of fast-growing lumbars as well as the initiation of concepts for the energy mix in municipalities.

On this basis, the Advisory Centre for Renewable Raw Materials should take **the following ac-**

tion steps, supervising them in its advisory capacity:

- ▶ Developing basic principles, studies and guidelines for the generation and utilisation of energy (energy mix) and establishing an appropriate platform.
- ▶ Counselling and supporting farmers and forest workers regarding investment in renewable raw materials, for example biogas plants.
- ▶ Further developing an economic network (cluster), integrating the agricultural professions, employees from the fields of raw materials and energy as well as scientific facilities.
- ▶ Developing guidelines for municipalities: These are to provide a basis to support and advise municipalities in their land-use plans, their planning regarding the utilisation of heat, their landscape planning for growing renewable raw materials as well as their concepts for tourism.
- ▶ Supporting the generation of renewable energies, also within the scope of the development programme PAUL and the programme "Growth Through Innovation".
- ▶ Holding conferences and workshops, presenting the best projects and discussing the chances and risks of the energy mix in rural areas.



III. Strategies for the development of rural areas

1.6 Broadband Supply in Rural Areas

Supplying broadband internet is of vital importance for the future of the rural areas in Rhineland-Palatinate. Through a fast internet connection, rural areas can compensate the disadvantages caused by large distances. Increasingly, farmers will need broadband internet to support operational procedures, to claim future subsidies or to make use of services such as the weather report. In the rural area, a fast internet connection is an indispensable location factor. This applies for enterprises of all sectors, but especially in the service sector and, of course, for the foundation of all types of new businesses. Modern, internet-based possibilities are currently booming, for example e-commerce and e-learning. Administrative services on the internet and also e-commerce are increasing every year. Senior citizens are increasingly opening up to the different forms of internet communication. In the future, all these technologies will considerably improve the quality of life in rural areas. The precondition is an extensive supply with broadband access.

However, many municipalities in rural Rhineland-Palatinate lack a fast internet connection and due to unfavourable profitability prospects, modern DSL-technique, the current standard technology, will probably not be installed in the majority of the municipalities in the rural area. Other broadband technologies, for example wireless solutions, satellite technologies or television cable could close this gap.

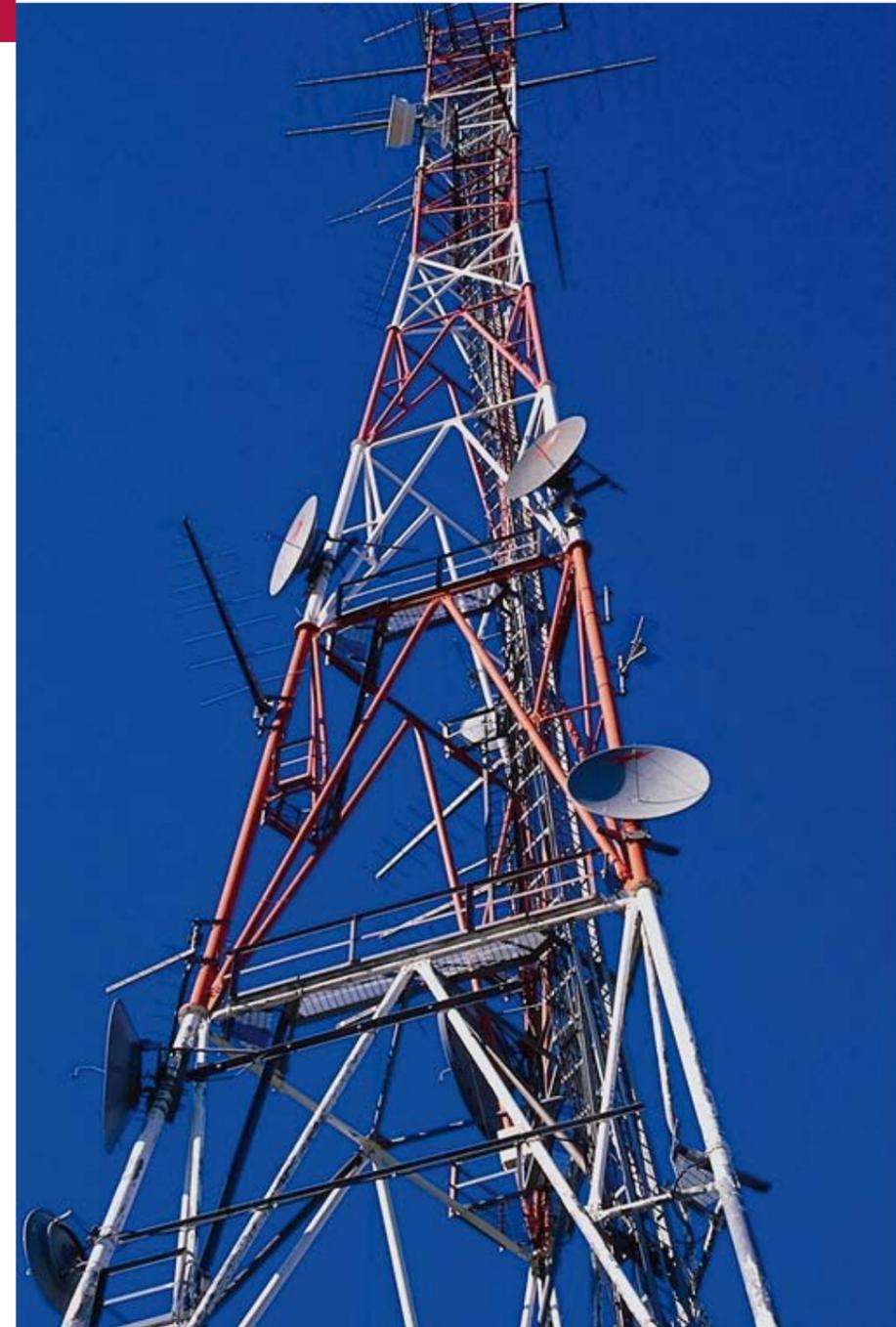
For the future we must take into consideration that the rapid spread of the media and information society has reached all areas of life. Fast and cheap internet access is an important precondition for participation in this knowledge society. For example, the availability of a fast internet access is essential, if not crucial, in finding a good industrial location or place of residence.

For these reasons, in 2007, the broadband initiative Rhineland-Palatinate commissioned the formulation of a broadband concept 2007-2011. The current series of broadband workshops will be systematically continued.

For the creation of equal living conditions and the supply with fast internet connections in rural areas, a support programme containing the following measures is being initiated:

- ▶ Rhineland-Palatinate approached the Federal Government of Germany to provide financial support for the supply with broadband internet – also within the framework of the joint scheme: Improvement of Agricultural Structure and Coastal Protection”. In this way, the financial support of broadband initiatives, even outside industrial parks, can be made possible. The Federal Government responded accordingly and increased the funding available for the joint task.
- ▶ Leader action groups in the development programme PAUL can initiate corresponding action steps though on a more limited scale. griffen werden.
- ▶ Pilot projects, conferences and workshops for a presentation of the best broadband initiatives should be organised. This will contribute to a fast and future-oriented development of communication solutions within rural areas.
- ▶ Special training should be developed and offered to senior citizens in order to reduce deficits that still exist and to improve their chances to take a more active part in society both socially and politically.
- ▶ Within the scope of the EFRE-programme “Growth through Innovation”, funding for specific projects is provided in the form of grants and loans. This should serve to improve the competitiveness of enterprises in rural areas.

III. Strategies for the development of rural areas



III. Strategies for the development of rural areas

1.7 Mobility through Flexible Systems of Local Public Transport

The more remote an area is, the more difficult it becomes to sustain a local transport system that is cost-effective and at the same time attractive. The result is that there is insufficient public transport, necessitating the use of cars.

Serious deficits are to be found at times of low capacity utilisation and in the range of short hauls. Most affected by these deficits are the least mobile members of the population, such as handicapped persons, senior citizens and children. Yet there is public consensus on the fact that a minimum availability of publicly provided mobility is part of the provision with general public services. And the constantly increasing centralisation in our society requires high standards of accessibility. This especially applies to economically underdeveloped, rural regions.

In Rhineland-Palatinate, local districts and independent cities are responsible for an adequate supply of local public transport. Within this framework, they are legally obligated to provide a basic supply of transport services of maximum flexibility, even at times of light traffic and in regions with only little traffic.

The most common systems are hailed shared taxis, citizen buses or call taxis. Basically, these systems operate certain lines at fixed rates. However, they only operate when they have been ordered by telephone.

Since 1992, the federal state funding guidelines on local public transport regulate a co-financing of alternative transport offers in terms of uncovered operational costs. Two preconditions for federal state funding are that the area in question is an area with little traffic and that suitable transport services be established in the framework of local public transport plans.

Another precondition is the existence of enough transport offers to guarantee a basic supply with transport services and also that the corresponding public transport operation by bus or railway would be uneconomical.

As a matter of principle, additional drives on already existing lines, where taxis instead of buses are used in order to decrease costs, are to be financed within the scope of the respective line operation.

Federal state financial support is realised within the scope of share financing. This means that up to 50 % during the first and second operating year, up to 40 % during the third operating year and thereafter up to 30 % of the annual cost underabsorption is being compensated.

The funding programme is not subject to any time limit. Thus, in the future as well – depending on the available budget resources – new projects can be subsidised by the federal state government of Rhineland-Palatinate.



III. Strategies for the development of rural areas

In some local districts of Rhineland-Palatinate, flexible, professional local public transport services already exist. To a certain extent, small-scale local solutions have been found as well.

For less mobile population groups without a car, for example children, teenagers, senior citizens or persons in need of care, additional transport services or day buses can be organised.

Another possibility is to have mobile facilities (shops on wheels) as a visiting service or with fixed standing times in the individual villages of the region.

One of the most important tasks is to support the development and testing of flexible local public transport services in the communities. The aim here is to improve the attractiveness and profitability of local public transport in the whole of Rhineland-Palatinate and ensure that it is future-oriented.

The Federal Office for Building and Regional

Planning and the Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Development commissioned the Wuppertal Institute and the planning agency Transport and Traffic, located in Karlsruhe, to develop a compendium for the planning of flexible transport services, which is expected to be available in February 2008. On the basis of a systematic collection and evaluation of data on already existing flexible transport offers in Germany, this compendium is expected to provide communal and regional players of traffic and regional planning with the necessary background information and planning aids for a rough conceptual design of flexible offers of local public transport.

- In the framework of discussion platforms, conferences and workshops, the background information and planning aids detailed in this compendium are to be communicated to municipalities, technical authorities, research facilities, providers of tourist services and other departments.



III. Strategies for the development of rural areas

1.8 Feasibility Studies for Important Projects in the Rural Area

The support of important projects aims at a sustainable strengthening of the competitiveness of enterprises and service providers in order to guarantee the creation and securing of permanent employment and apprenticeship training positions. As a matter of principle, no industrial sector will be given preferential treatment. The following example “services” has simply been chosen to demonstrate how new and innovative thinking processes can be initiated.

Today, the service sector has become a motor for growth and employment in the rural area. And through an increasingly intensive use of modern information and communication technology, services will gain in importance. Jobs are being cut in other industrial sectors, but here, especially the leisure and tourism sector is expanding. It is therefore important to make use of the changes in travel behaviour, particularly with regard to the ongoing demographic change (the aging of society) and an increase in health awareness. And all these aspects should be linked with other innovative development processes. (see also Initiative Health Care Management under III.1.9.1)

This whole sphere of activity will lead to a strengthening of economic power and create additional sources of income and employment. For example in the course of the development of high-quality farming tourism, a large number of partners could be integrated. Agricultural enterprises convert rural houses and barns into tourist accommodation. Further possible partners for high-quality tourism can be: tourist associations, suppliers of high-quality local food, members of nursing and healthcare professions, providers of leisure time activities, freight forwarding companies and bus companies as well as restaurants, restaurants for day trippers, banks and consultants.

- ▶ In impulse regions, significant projects that have been regionally adapted for the rural area can be supported by feasibility studies.
- ▶ Using the possibilities offered by diverse support programmes, alternative sources of income in the agriculture sector and also projects in the tourism sector could be systematically upgraded.
- ▶ In the impulse regions, the instruments of integrated rural development are also to be used for a systematic evaluation of the development potential of all significant tourism projects in rural areas. All potential players should be involved here. In addition to advisory support, investment funding will be made available in accordance with the support guidelines, both on an inter-company level as well as for individual companies.
- ▶ The results of these feasibility studies will be communicated in workshops and at conferences on both a federal state and national level. They will also be presented on internet platforms and in training courses.



III. Strategies for the development of rural areas

1.9 Health Care Management, Senior-Citizen-Friendly Living Spheres and a Family-Friendly Environment in Rural Areas

1.9.1 Health Care Management in Rural Areas

In October 2006, the federal state government launched the initiative “Health Care Management”, also involving rural areas. The objective is to identify the chances and potentials of this future market, which carries such high potential for Rhineland-Palatinate in terms of innovation, growth and employment. These potentials will be presented to the respective regions and pursued further. Today, fourteen per cent of the employees in Rhineland-Palatinate work in the health sector, where they generate about 8,2 billion Euros annually. This corresponds to 9,5 % of the Rhineland-Palatinate gross value added.

At a conference of experts in Kaiserslautern in January 2007, the first results of a study on health care management in Rhineland-Palatinate were presented by the Minister of Health, Malu Dreyer, and by the Minister for Economic Affairs, Hendrik Hering. This study was compiled by the Institute of Economics for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (inmit) of the University of Trier on behalf of the two Ministries.

At the same time, a commission of experts was established consisting of representatives from the field of health care management and from the field of economics.

- ▶ This commission of experts has been requested to develop concrete policy recommendations for the federal state government based on this study; their recommendations should then serve as the foundation for a master plan.
- ▶ The result will be presented at regional conferences in order to establish and realise concrete measures together with all parties involved.
- ▶ After this, first projects will enter the implementation phase.

1.9.2 New Forms of Living Facilities in a Society with Higher Life Expectancy

Elderly people wish to lead an independent life for as long as possible, most of them in their own flat. Others prefer to live in a house- or flat-sharing community, where they provide mutual assistance or alternatively organise help from external staff.

Within the scope of a first project, the German Red Cross, section Mainz-Bingen, has established the local “Information Centre for Living and Housing Space” providing information on collaborative, self-determined and cross-generational living.

The task of this local facility is the counselling and support of collaborative and cross-generational housing projects.

- ▶ This initiative is to be applied in the impulse regions.



III. Strategies for the development of rural areas

1.9.3 Strengthening Health Care Supply in Rural Areas

Securing a comprehensive health care supply is a vital concern to the federal state government. In both the stationary and the ambulant sectors, Rhineland-Palatinate has at its disposal a health care supply system that is good, and even, in parts, very good. Nevertheless, in some rural regions of Rhineland-Palatinate it has proved difficult to expeditiously fill vacancies in medical positions. The reasons are complex, however one of the main causes is surely the increasing variety of interesting occupational fields in the whole sector of health care management with which young physicians are confronted. As a consequence, a job in the ambulant care sector competes with alternative career opportunities.

At present there is no general lack of physicians. But due to their increasing average age and the changing age structure in society, in the coming years more and more SHI-accredited physicians (statutory health insurance accredited physicians) will retire. Thus, in order to prevent a shortage, it is of vital importance to take measures now to attract young doctors to work as SHI-accredited physicians. In the long run, especially in the case of general practitioners, the discrepancy between the number of age-related retirements in this specific sector and the arrival of new general practitioners threatens to become problematical. And it is the general practitioners who play an important role when it comes to providing the rural population with local health care services.

In view of the fact that an ageing society will lead to changes in the demand for health care services both in terms of quantity and quality, the federal state government has repeatedly promoted improvement of basic conditions in order to attract SHI accredited general practitioners. Some of the proposals have been incorporated into the law to strengthen competition (the so called GKV-Wettbewerbsstärkungsgesetz) and into the amendment to the law governing the professional activities of SHI-accredited physicians (the so called Vertragsrechtsänderungsgesetz). Here, important preconditions for an improvement of the basic conditions of SHI-accredited practitioners have already been achieved. It has now be-

come easier to remedy gaps in the provision of health care services by establishing branch surgeries or by hiring additional physicians. Nevertheless, further intensive efforts of all parties involved are necessary to permanently secure the provision of health care through general practitioners.

Thus, the Ministry for Employment, Social Affairs, Health Care, Family and Women and its partners will particularly focus on ambulant health care services within the rural area. And, in order to **counteract** possible **regional deficits** at an early stage, a concept for the **strengthening of ambulant health care services** in Rhineland-Palatinate has been developed, initiating further measures.

One element of the concept is a rearrangement of the collaboration among the various health-care professions in order to relieve the strain on physicians in rural areas. Especially in underserved regions, physicians can be disburdened when certain medical tasks are delegated to non-physician personnel.

- ▶ This also comprises a further improvement of health care services through new concepts, for example the collaboration with highly qualified special services or other professions in the medical field. The growing number of elderly, multimorbid patients who live alone speaks for the introduction of "care assistants", who would visit immobilised patients under the supervision of the family general practitioner. The objective is to relieve family physicians from some of the tasks that so far have fallen to them in the course of home visits. These tasks can be accomplished by members of other, highly-qualified medical professions.
- ▶ The concept also includes the promotion of the profession "care assistant" in rural areas. Here, the federal state Ministry and the municipalities would work hand in hand.

1.9.4 Family Counselling Network, Family-Friendly Environment

In the project "Family Counselling Network", family counselling facilities act as a motor and moderator for family education with the objective of integrating all family-relevant occupation groups and facilities into a network. These regional networks provide new opportunities to establish consulting and educational offers at locations and facilities already frequented by families. A special focus lies on collaboration with the Youth Welfare Office, the responsible body for public child and youth services as well as youth service planning.

This reorientation process will first be implemented in the course of three pilot projects in three family counselling facilities in Landau, Koblenz and Montabaur. Scientific support of the project will be provided by The Institute for Social Pedagogical Research in Mainz. A further sixteen family counselling facilities will subsequently be integrated into this process.



Family friendliness is measured according to the following four focal areas:

- Compatibility of family and employment
- Education and vocational training: This includes criteria such as the accessibility of schools, school programmes, pupil-teacher relations, average class size in primary and secondary schools, availability of training positions (eg apprenticeship).
- Availability of leisure activities for children and youths in terms of location, cost and structure.
- Housing situation and housing environment: This includes criteria such as the affordability of property, distance to middle order centres (travelling time by car and local public transport), open spaces, availability of paediatricians, crime rate.



- ▶ After a successful initiation and testing of regional networks for family counselling in the three above-mentioned family counselling facilities, this work is to be carried on and new networks are to be established at other locations in Rhineland-Palatinate from 2007 onwards.
- ▶ This networking is to be supported in the context of standard promotion by the federal state government as well as by municipalities and other bodies responsible for family counselling.

III. Strategies for the development of rural areas

III. Strategies for the development of rural areas

1.10 Communal Development, Circular Management of Land, Flood Protection

1.10.1 Inner Development of Villages through Urban Land-Use Planning and/or Village Consolidation

In many centres of smaller villages within the rural area, there is a constantly increasing number of vacant and unused buildings and barns, houses in need of renovation as well as gaps between buildings and vacant lots. In order to stabilise the interior of these villages, their inner development must have priority over the designation of new land-use areas.

It is also in the interest of local citizens that the availability of affordable housing space is taken into account, as new the designation of land can result in enormous long-term costs for the development and maintenance of new infrastructural facilities.

All this requires the introduction of joint regional and communal land management aiming at the allocation of land necessary for the development of the respective municipality. This is to be realised through regional circular management of land. This circular management of land is to be seen as a management approach for the whole region. Primary objectives of this approach are the systematic tapping of already existing potentials as well as the valorisation of waste land. Nevertheless, subject to specific requirements, this approach still allows for a new designation of certain areas of land. This process is to be supervised by the planning authorities on a regional level.

- ▶ As an important basis for planning this process, a comprehensive communal cadastre, showing gaps between buildings and vacancies will be established as soon as possible.



Due to the urgent demand for a fast and easily manageable planning instrument, § 13a of the Federal State Building Act was revised. If a modification or an amendment of an urban land-use plan do not affect the basic intention underlying the plan, or if the outlining parameters of a land-use plan, resulting from the existing characteristics of the surrounding area, do not essentially affect the permissible scale, or if the land-use plan solely contains regulations according to § 9, passage 2a of the Federal Building Act, then a municipality can apply the simplified procedure. This allows for an activation and subsequent use of wasteland. Furthermore, village consolidation is a possible instrument for the mobilisation of interior plots of land if these cannot be accessed otherwise. In all cases it is essential to involve and consult the local population at an early stage.

Village consolidation can also provide decisive support for the local skilled trades sector (electricians, plumbers, etc) and for agricultural enterprises. In impulse regions, village consolidation is only implemented if the respective municipality and its citizens are entirely convinced of the comprehensive effects of the measures involved. Their strong personal commitment is of vital importance.

From the point of view of tourism, village consolidation plays a major role when it comes to the conservation of the overall characteristic appearance of villages. Therefore, village consolidation procedures are primarily to be applied in villages with a high tourism potential.

III. Strategies for the development of rural areas

Village consolidation particularly aims to achieve the following:

- ▶ The activation of village centres for the realisation of future-oriented tasks and for a reuse of buildings.
- ▶ Demolition of unused building fabric and reuse as open spaces, including the creation of private and public green space within built-up areas as well as in adjacent meadows.
- ▶ Land exchange and the rearrangement of plot boundaries and property lines for an improved constructional use or a conversion for residential or commercial purposes.
- ▶ Access to paths or roads, rearward access routes, especially for agricultural enterprises.
- ▶ The allocation of land for communal purposes such as streets, roads, squares, new boundaries of villages, the planting of vegetation strips, the renaturation of creeks, the reinforcement of riparian zones, flood protection measures, measures to undo sealing, ponds, damp biotopes, dry grassland.
- ▶ Particularly good examples of the important effects of a combination of village renewal and village consolidation on the inner development of villages are to be presented and discussed in the course of conferences and workshops as well as on appropriate platforms.

1.10.2 Strategic Alliances and Intercommunal Commercial Areas

Due to the required amount of space, finding a suitable location for industrial facilities and businesses most often necessitates intercommunal strategies. Regional networks not only facilitate the cooperation between single municipalities. They also enable collaboration with enterprises so that finally all partners can benefit.

When all players in rural areas proceed jointly, locational advantages can be more easily optimised and innovative potentials better developed. The goal both on a communal and on an economic level is to strengthen and expand al-

ready existing enterprises and support the foundation of new enterprises in order to create employment.

Nowadays, the need for competitive economic management increasingly forces municipalities and enterprises from all sectors to make costly financial investments in infrastructure (development), the environment of the location, premises, production and manufacturing facilities. To a certain extent, cooperation among municipalities on this basis has already been established. However, until now, industry has seldom been involved in this process. The **following measures seek to remedy this:**

- ▶ In impulse regions, the establishment of development concepts is to be used as a platform to bring together municipalities, other planning agencies and enterprises. On this platform, the possibilities for strengthening economic power are to be discussed. In doing so, specific areas should be defined where a successful cooperation among the municipalities and industry seems possible, meaningful or even necessary.
- ▶ Within the framework of regional management, working groups are to be established to pursue approaches and ideas and to assess the extent to which industry is prepared to cooperate, from the planning stages up to realisation.
- ▶ In regionally adapted feasibility studies, methods to assist in the design of intercommunal commercial areas can be worked out. These, for example, can include support regarding location and dimensions, compensation measures, the choice of legal form, the distribution of costs (including revenues from business taxes and rates) and a wide variety of other support options.
- ▶ Rural land readjustment should support the allocation of land for intercommunal commercial areas.
- ▶ An ongoing discussion and exchange of ideas among municipalities and enterprises should take place in the framework of workshops and regional conferences.

III. Strategies for the development of rural areas

1.11 Education

1.11.1 Strengthening Occupational Orientation in Schools

Professional training in the rural areas of Rhineland-Palatinate is troubled by considerable deficits and difficulties. One problem is that pupils increasingly focus on professions in the service sector ("clean professions"), which leads to a shortage of apprentices in many professions involving manual work and work in production. For their part, representatives from the business world have expressed criticism of pupils' scholastic achievements, especially that of pupils from the 'Hauptschulen' (the secondary school model with the lowest scholastic level). Business representatives have reported a lack of knowledge and skills on the part of school leavers, and feel that, above all, their command of key skills would have to be enhanced.

The education that pupils receive is a very significant factor in determining whether or not they migrate to other regions. Thus it is of vital importance for the rural area that collaborative solutions are searched for among all players interested in an improvement in professional training. These would include schools, companies, chambers for commercial matters, employment agencies, professional associations and politicians. In fact, entrepreneurs and skilled trades-people have proved willing to become involved in the development of solutions and to make use of the existing educational options in a more goal-oriented way.

In all impulse regions, networks between schools, companies, chambers for commercial matters, employment agencies and other partners are to be established or strengthened. These networks should be responsible for the following tasks:

- ▶ Basing on existing approaches, links between enterprises and schools in the rural area are to be enhanced. Many enterprises feel under obligation to provide pupils with updated information – for example new job descriptions. This can be realised through roadshows or in job exchanges.
- ▶ In the sixth form of grammar schools, preparation for the choice of employment is to be further intensified. Firstly, pupils of the 11th and 12th grades should have much better opportunities for work experience placements. In addition, assignments adapted to a pupil's area of specialisation at school could be initiated and completed in cooperation with a company or business.
- ▶ As it becomes increasingly difficult for companies and businesses to recruit trainees for certain professions, they will be constrained to increase their efforts to attract young people with better training programmes. To realise this, existing internet platforms need to be improved. Projects offering one week or one day of work experience should be expanded. Another option is to initiate and participate in projects such as "School and Working Environment". The main purpose of this project is that representatives from companies and businesses are afforded the opportunity to teach pupils, giving them practical guidance about the professional working world. Teaching units organised by business representatives are to be firmly integrated into class schedules. These teaching units ought to take place in schools as well as in companies or businesses.
- ▶ In order to maintain the quality of life in the rural area, it is of vital importance to provide appropriate employment offers for pupils doing an apprenticeship there or returning after graduation. Local enterprises have repeatedly stated a preference for local people to fill executive positions and other jobs requiring higher qualification. In order to facilitate the return of people to their region, networks should be established whose platform will be formulated and proved in the course of pilot projects. It is conceivable that electronic mailing be used and regularly updated information on the internet sites of companies. The aim is to attract potential employees who left their homes to pursue academic studies and have graduated, to return to their respective regions.
- ▶ In broadly based conferences and workshops in which schools and industry collaborate, the best ideas and new projects for an improvement of professional training in the rural area are to be discussed.

III. Strategies for the development of rural areas

1.11.2 All-Day Schools and E-Learning Concepts for the Rural Area

One aim which our education system consistently pursues is that every child – regardless of origin – be fostered and assisted according to his or her abilities and talents. Thus, in rural areas as well, there must be future-oriented investment in education and qualification.

Regional players in the rural area call for the long-term establishment of a stable school network, which would ensure that, throughout Rhineland-Palatinate, there are a sufficient number of all school types to meet the demand for easily accessible schooling. All schools would meet set requirements in traditional school subjects and commercial subjects. In addition, at regional conferences, there was an urgent call to maintain schools in the rural area and also to transform the present school types into all-day schools. This would provide needed support for parents and families and serve to purposefully improve the quality of available schooling in rural areas.

Through a further expansion of all-day schools, pupils will be encouraged to learn, experience and prove key skills. The schools should foster their ability to achieve and to take personal initiative, their capacity for teamwork and their communication skills more intensely. The fact that children and youths are able to actively shape the rural area through their own personal initiative provides them with an additional sense of responsibility and with decision-making skills, and gives them a very special quality.

Consequently, a **support programme for educational policy** including the following measures will be offered in the impulse regions of the rural area:

- ▶ In impulse regions, the transition of current school types to all-day schools is to be systematically discussed in working groups. As regards secondary schools (grammar schools), a new model with all-day schools and a reduction of school time to 8 years will be taken into consideration.
- ▶ The increasingly important possibilities of e-learning in the rural area are to be tested in the course of pilot projects and offered in combination with social learning. Players such as country women's associations, youth associations, children, adult education centres, churches and other responsible bodies of the rural area will be integrated into these projects.
- ▶ As soon as possible, a discussion on regionally adapted and future-oriented approaches is to be initiated in the course of conferences and workshops for the presentation of the best education projects.



III. Strategies for the development of rural areas

2. New Planning Approaches and Activities for Rural Areas

2.1 New Planning Approaches

There is no standard solution providing an optimal framework for the development of all rural areas in Rhineland-Palatinate. The diversity of the approaches already presented leads us to the proposal that, in all impulse regions, integrated strategies be supported. An essential task of these integrated strategies is to achieve a change in the planning culture, so that all ideas arising in any given region are taken up and connected. The new approach to planning comprises the following aspects:

- **Monitoring instead of stocktaking:** Regional change can be so rapid and there is such a wide variety of new developments that they can only be documented through continuous monitoring. Statistical stocktaking does not provide a reliable planning basis. Besides, in the context of the planning process, monitoring can accomplish important early warning and controlling functions.
- **Scenarios instead of prognoses:** Due to the varied external influences on rural development, an evaluation of future development trends is only possible in terms of scenarios involving assumptions of certain parameters instead of prognoses with fixed output variables. Globalisation, the demographic change and Europeanisation are three factors that are increasingly influencing the region's manoeuvring space. And rural areas are also influenced by the regional distribution of production flows and integrated into international chains of economic added value. As a consequence, they are also exposed to international competition.
- **Demand-oriented planning:** The rapid change of general conditions necessitates carefully targeted planning that is strictly oriented towards feasibility. Due to the negative demographic change, some development strategies will have to focus on securing and improving existing supply facilities.

- **Prompt realisation in small steps:** In times of shrinkage, planning and strategies have to be designed for a prompt realisation in small steps. In this way, adjustments and modifications are possible at any time. As a basis for this process, a long-term concept for the implementation of individual measures is indispensable.
- **Intercommunal cooperation instead of small-scale territorial thinking:** An appropriate use of local resources in rural areas implies intercommunal cooperation and competition. Depending on the issue in focus, the contours of different function-oriented tasks will emerge, dictating either an efficient collaboration or competition among the participating municipalities. Furthermore, very successful regional development partnerships can be established between cities and rural municipalities, which serve as a foundation for regional networks.
- **Gender planning:** Improving the attractiveness of rural areas as a living and working space for all population groups requires gender-oriented planning and consideration of so called soft location factors, such as the compatibility of employment and family for mothers and fathers.
- **Labour market monitoring:** The successful approach to labour market monitoring in target 2 – areas of the ESF is to be used for target-group-specific project designs.

The current understanding of planning is characterised by the overall concept of an activating state. This principle assumes that the people themselves take the initiative to design and to realise regional processes of change. Nevertheless, such an allocation of responsibility can only be realised on the basis of consensual solutions and cooperative strategies. In the future as well, the activating state will set necessary basic conditions.

III. Strategies for the development of rural areas



These new approaches to planning, which are based on conclusions reached by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), are to be used for the implementation of this strategy paper. These proposals aim to link all the policies that have thus far been sectoral, so that together they can be oriented towards a comprehensive development of the rural area.

It is thus of vital importance to overcome sectoral thinking and to consider the following basic principles when designing strategies for the rural area:

- Integration (of all important fields of action).
- Incorporating super-ordinate concepts (e.g. a concept for tourism in Rhineland-Palatinate or feasibility studies for a local supply of everyday consumer goods for municipalities).

- The players themselves determine the level at which plans operate (e.g. several local districts or a local district, an association of municipalities or a municipality).
- Determining the suitable procedure (in the framework of a competition and through regional processes).
- Proposing appropriate implementation strategies in the context of the instruments applied; integration of further partners from all fields of action if necessary (e.g. education, health care, foundation processes).

III. Strategies for the development of rural areas

2.3 Currently Asked Questions in Impulse Regions

The key points of the regional conferences expressed in question form have proved useful as a starting point for a broadly based dialogue in the impulse regions.

Of course, because of the diversity of the different rural areas of Rhineland-Palatinate, different regions assign varying importance to these questions. Added to this, it seems certain that in the future new questions will arise, revolving around completely new challenges and opportunities. At this point in time, the following questions should be discussed in the impulse regions:

- How can the preconditions for a sustainable provision of general public services be ensured and how can intercommunal cooperation contribute to this?
- How can target-oriented quality management improve creation of value through tourism in rural areas?
- How can the impulse regions contribute to the conservation of the cultural landscape?
- How can women be motivated to participate actively in planning as well as in decision-making processes?
- How could contributions to family friendliness be concretised and implemented within the respective region?
- How can the potentials of young and old be used in order to maintain rural areas as regions with a high quality of living?
- How can integrated processes in impulse regions contribute to the preservation and creation of employment in rural areas??
- How can regional models for local public transport be developed in impulse regions?
- Is it possible to replace traffic-based supply through other mobile supply models and information technologies? (such as e-learning)
- How can a sustainable settlement development be managed effectively?
- How can village consolidation contribute to revitalizing village centres? (village renewal, further use of already developed areas instead of "village waste land")
- How can offers of further education beyond school education be transferred to rural areas? (advanced training of the rural population)
- How can integrated processes in impulse regions activate entrepreneurs' willingness to start a new business in the rural area?
- How can the rural area contribute to the future energy supply?
- How can the rural area, and agriculture in particular, benefit from renewable raw materials? How can already existing conflicts be solved by the use of renewable raw materials?

III. Strategies for the development of rural areas

3. Promotion and Funding Concepts for the Rural Area

3.1 Principles

According to the Basic Constitutional Law, rural development continues to be a core competence of the federal states. The realisation of this task is supported by the Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection (BMELV), via the joint scheme "Improvement of Agricultural Structure and Coastal Protection" (GAK) as well as by the national policy for the implementation of the European statutory order for the promotion of the development of the rural area (EAFRD).

This so-called second pillar of the Common Agricultural Policy of the EU aims to improve the competitiveness of agriculture and forestry, the environment and landscape, the quality of life in the rural area and the diversification of the rural economy. In Germany, the GAK is the most important promotion instrument for the implementation of all the above. The offers of the GAK are being defined in a master plan. In Rhineland-Palatinate the GAK especially applies in the case of investment support for individual agricultural enterprises, rural land readjustment and the improvement of market structures.

During the regional conferences it became apparent that rural areas in Rhineland-Palatinate require and expect a promotion and funding policy that is both cross-sectoral and integrated. Thus, the federal state of Rhineland-Palatinate requested that the Minister of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection expand the joint scheme Improvement of Agricultural Structure and Coastal Protection to include a range of measures that are in the spirit of the statutory order EAFRD and reach even further. Furthermore, Rhineland-Palatinate requested additional federal funding.

The following addenda have been proposed:

- ▶ Promotion and funding for facilities to provide basic services to the rural population, for example the improvement of broadband supply in the rural area or alternative sources of energy.

- ▶ Promotion and funding for micro enterprises, for example in connection with rural tourism or innovative branches.
- ▶ Realisation and funding of feasibility studies in order to analyse the realisation chances for important projects in the rural area.

The Federal Minister of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection has welcomed this proposal. Currently, the main focal points for an improvement of the joint scheme for the Improvement of Agricultural Structure and Coastal Protection are being discussed among the federal government and the federal states. Accordingly, the promotion principle "Promotion of Integrated Rural Development", of the GAK master plan, is to be extended by the two following points:

- ▶ Promotion and funding of the broadband supply in rural areas.
- ▶ Promotion and funding of local heating plants in rural areas.

As regards the support of micro enterprises, there is still a need of further discussion among the federal government and the federal states. The realisation and funding of feasibility studies will be made possible, especially in the context of the promotion of integrated rural development and the promotion of diversification measures (workability studies). Rhineland-Palatinate will synchronise development funds with already existing instruments. Any funding from the development programmes "Paul" and "Growth Through Innovation" originates from promotion concepts from the Ministry for Economic Affairs, Transport, Agriculture and Viniculture.

All federal state programmes suitable to support the implementation of courses of action are also available to the rural area. Examples are the consulting programme for the retail trade, the innovation support programme and the programme for the support of medium-sized businesses. Furthermore, the regional federal state support programme can be resorted to, especially for economically underdeveloped regions, which mainly comprise rural areas. Listed below are the programmes supported by the federal government and the EU.

III. Strategies for the development of rural areas

3.2 Development Programme PAUL

With the establishment of the European Agricultural Fund for the development of rural areas (EAFRD) all measures of the second pillar of the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union have been bundled in one fund. The federal state Rhineland-Palatinate will implement the EAFRD-regulation in terms of the development programme "Agriculture, Environmental Measures and Development" (PAUL). Within the period 2007 to 2013, a provision of 245,252 million Euros of EAFRD-funds, about 300 million Euros of GAK-funds (60 % federal government, 40 % federal state) and about 205 million Euros of additional federal state funds is planned for the promotion of the development of the rural area.

The three targets of the EAFRD are:

- ▶ Enhancing the competitiveness of agriculture and forestry through the promotion of restructuring, development and innovation.
- ▶ Improving environment and landscape through the promotion of the cultivation of land.
- ▶ Increasing the quality of life in the rural area and promoting the diversification of the economy.

The implementation of these targets will involve four areas of focus:

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| Focus Area 1: Enhancing the competitiveness of agriculture and forestry | Focus Area 2: Improving the environment and landscape through the promotion of the cultivation of land | Focus Area 3: Increasing the quality of life in the rural area and promoting the diversification of the economy |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measures for the promotion of skills and for a strengthening of human capital • Measures for a restructuring and further development of real capital and for the promotion of innovation, for example for the improvement and expansion of the infrastructure in connection with the development and adaptation of agriculture and forestry • Measures for an improvement of the quality of agricultural production and products | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measures for the promotion of a sustainable cultivation of agricultural land, for example grants for agri-environmental measures • Measures for a sustainable cultivation of forested areas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measures for the diversification of the rural economy • Measures for an improvement of the quality of life in the rural area, for example conservation and improvement of rural heritage • Measures of professional training and information • Measures for developing competence and raising sensitivity with a view to elaborating and implementing a local development strategy |
| Focus Area 4: Leader approach | | |

Generally, the recipients of grants, for example farmers, municipalities and private investors from all rural areas in Rhineland-Palatinate, may apply for funding in accordance with the programme PAUL. However, projects initiated and worked out by the people of the impulse regions themselves are being favoured. This also includes the provision of financial means in order to activate

civic commitment and to rapidly initiate small activities in an unbureaucratic manner. This strategy is based on the awareness that projects designed and implemented by the players on the spot are those that are most often particularly successful. As a consequence, the promotion of local players' competence is gaining in importance and is thus being supported accordingly.

III. Strategies for the development of rural areas

3.3 ERDF

The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) is a structural fund of the European Union and aims at the removal of regional disparities.

Main targets of this structural fund are the improvement of regional competitiveness and the creation of employment. The programme "Growth Through Innovation" specifies the utilisation of the ERDF-subsidies in Rhineland-Palatinate. During the support period of 2007 to 2013, 217,6 million Euros of EU-subsidies are available to Rhineland-Palatinate.

Generally, the programme's broadly designed target system is to be applied to the whole of Rhineland-Palatinate and is consequently suitable for urban as well as rural regions. The target-oriented support of the development of rural areas through this programme is realised, among other things, through the following specific aims:

- ▶ Promotion of rural development potentials – especially as regards tourism.
- ▶ Demand-oriented improvement of the economic infrastructure, for example information and communication infrastructure.
- ▶ Reduction of land consumption.
- ▶ Diminishing local disadvantages of the rural areas.
- ▶ Improvement of the environmentally compatible use of renewable raw materials.

In the future, as well, the coordination of the subsidy policy of the federal state government will be carried out in close coordination with the development programme PAUL. This is to make use of synergies and to guarantee the widest possible range of support measures for the rural area.

3.4 ESF

The European Social Fund is one of the three European structural funds and the most important instrument of European labour market policy. During the new support period, the intermeshing between the federal state labour market policy and the ESF-priority axes is to be intensified. The strategic aims "Further Strengthening Rhineland-Palatinate as a Business Location" and "Increasing People's Chances for Development and Participation" are to be systematically pursued in the rural area as elsewhere.

Here, the following aspects are in the foreground:

- ▶ Extra-occupational qualifications.
- ▶ Increasing the competitiveness of enterprises through qualification and counselling of entrepreneurs.
- ▶ The promotion of the entrepreneurial spirit and of the foundation of new businesses.
- ▶ The promotion of the professional training.
- ▶ The promotion of lifelong learning and advanced training.
- ▶ The promotion of innovation.
- ▶ The facilitation of the access to the labour market.
- ▶ The social integration of disadvantaged persons through an increase in their employability.

Among the target groups in rural areas and elsewhere are youths, permanently unemployed persons, older people, migrants, women and handicapped persons. For the implementation of the aims of the ESF about 114 million Euros are available. These funds are being distributed linearly across the support period.

III. Strategies for the development of rural areas

4. Networks and Training

Changes and developments affecting the whole of society often manifest themselves most clearly in the smallest of social units. All parts of our country, but rural areas in particular, are affected by the demographic change and globalisation. To face these challenges all citizens of the rural area will have to consciously work out their chances and thus also create new structures. In this respect, the further development of a communication and action culture within rural areas is a main target. In order to stimulate and mobilise all existing powers

- ▶ Communities of responsibility are to be established (networks, cooperation groups, platforms).
- ▶ Training and forums for exchange of experiences are to be offered.

4.1 Communities of Responsibility: Networks, Cooperation Groups, Platforms

The following major tasks have been identified:

- Creating linkages between all partners in the rural area.
- Supporting cooperation groups, for example among local authorities and business partners.

4.1.1 Networks

The development of the rural area implies a comprehensive exchange of ideas, knowledge and experience among all players in the rural area.

Chambers, authorities, municipalities and private bodies can generally establish networks for such counselling and offers of information in the impulse regions. The bundling of ideas of the various players via a network makes an active exchange of ideas possible and thus leads to noticeably better results than could have been achieved by one single player.

First, the following question has to be posed: Which players in the rural area are to be connected to a network? Generally, all players and bodies within the rural area that carry responsibility and see themselves as partners are to be integrated in these networks. These are for example:

- Municipalities (planning communities, local districts, associations of municipalities, municipalities, equal opportunity commissioner).
- People who live and work in the rural area.
- Non-governmental organisations (e.g. associations of country women, farmers' and wine-growers' associations, nature conservation organisations, local agenda groups).
- Authorities (e.g. service centres for the rural area, employment agencies, forestry commission offices, the Federal State Office for Mobility).
- Semi-governmental institutions (e.g. the federal state project development association (PER), the development agency Rhineland-Palatinate (EA), and others).
- Social and economic players (e.g. regional counselling centres "Women and Work").

The use and further development of already existing networks and the establishment of new networks can be enhanced in all impulse regions.

How can networks be established easily?

During an **initial phase**, round tables are established and workshops conducted together with appropriate partners.

III. Strategies for the development of rural areas

Already in this phase, it is very important to install a simple agency and to identify a moderator among the network partners. To ensure the success of this initial phase, specific projects need to be defined during an **enrichment phase**. These projects will serve the permanent exchange of information. Networks can be especially successful when they have been established to achieve an aim that can be realised rapidly.

Networks require regularly changing platforms.

It is important for the networks in the impulse regions to have corresponding networks among departments in ministries and the higher authorities involved. In the future, experiences made on the lower level will serve the regular evaluation of political decisions and thus serve to adapt these to the requirements of the rural area. Significant problems are to be communicated directly via the linkages of these networks. This will lead to a rapid solution, preferably one finding general consensus.

How can the formation of clusters be supported through networks?

A cluster is defined as the networking of a critical mass, mostly composed of regional players of a single value chain, such as enterprises, science and administration. Clusters contribute to the improvement of competitiveness as they bring together enterprises, research and resources and thus accelerate the flow of knowledge into the market. Successful clusters promote intense competition as well as cooperation. They improve productivity, attract investment, support research, strengthen the industrial basis and develop specific products and services. Furthermore, competitive clusters attract qualified employees and research personnel, forming the basis for innovation.

For this reason, the "cluster approach" is of vital importance in Rhineland-Palatinate as regards technology and innovation policy.

The acquisition of technological knowledge, which is indispensable for the production of competitive goods and services, is becoming increasingly cost-intensive. And high costs for research and development are an enormous burden for the medium-sized companies that largely shape the economic structure of Rhineland-Palatinate. Another problem is that, unlike large enterprises, medium-sized businesses are very often not able to afford or fully utilize the generally expensive equipment that is necessary for research work. Furthermore, they often lack the required specialist knowledge. If knowledge is not bound to one single enterprise but instead is available for a whole network, where it is also being further developed, then, all members of the network can benefit. Synergy effects and a new flexibility can thus be achieved, improving competitiveness, and compensating for the disadvantages experienced by medium-sized companies compared to large enterprises, which tend to profit much more from globalisation. This especially enables small and medium-sized companies to give a regional answer to globalisation.

In the rural areas of Rhineland-Palatinate rudiments of clusters have been identified in the following regional growth industries:

- ▶ Rhineland-Palatinate is the federal state with the largest proportion of forest, and the forest and wood sector considerably contributes to the assurance of income and employment in rural areas.
- ▶ The tourism industry is mainly concentrated in eight tourist regions. Every twelfth job directly or indirectly depends on tourism.

These examples show how clusters are quite diverse and characteristically shaped by local conditions. Due to the progress in information and communication technology, the dimensions of clusters can change rapidly. And globalisation leads to a more intensive integration in the global economy.

III. Strategies for the development of rural areas

It has, however, been found that establishing a cluster from the outside, before first network structures exist, is not as fruitful. It is thus a political task to identify starting points for clusters to ensure the appropriate framework conditions, and the basis for an innovation-friendly climate and for networking between enterprises and universities. The regional ILE- and Leader-processes are especially suitable for the realisation of these tasks.

Therefore, this strategy paper proposes the following **course of action** for the impulse regions:

- ▶ The strengths-weaknesses-chances-risks analysis, which is an obligatory part of every development concept, should carefully analyse the regional economic structure in order to identify starting points for clusters and branches with a potential for growth. Here the fields of activity of commercial enterprises, the quality of supply chains and the potential of the population are of as much interest as the natural and economic-geographic locational advantages of the region.
- ▶ In the context of an integrated process where development takes place from the bottom up, conferences and workshops of a working group on "Economy" are to be organised, to which commercial enterprises, chambers and other partners of the branches that have been identified should be invited. If necessary, the different players should be invited to preliminary talks. One of the tasks of regional management is to provide target-oriented moderation for these events.
- ▶ At an early stage, the establishment of networks (business roundtable) between commercial enterprises, educational facilities and public institutions is to be activated. This can occur in the impulse regions. However, when issues of relevance for the entire federal state are involved, this can also be realised on the level of a planning region or on the level of the federal state Rhineland-Palatinate, in accordance with the proposals of this strategy paper.

4.1.2 Cooperation Groups

In contrast to networks, cooperation groups are characterised by a target-oriented collaboration of only a few partners with a concrete project. Possible cooperation partners are public institutions, for example municipalities, administrations and chambers but also private players, such as commercial enterprises, associations or individual citizens. The networks illustrated in chapter III.4.1.1 are especially suitable as a starting basis for cooperation groups, since partners with the same interests or from the same branch meet each other and, hopefully, build up mutual confidence.

In economic and social life, cooperation groups emerge whenever tasks cannot be realised by individual players due to their size, cost or complexity. When two partners get to know each other, the most important step in the establishment of a cooperation group has already been taken. In the context of Leader- or ILE-processes, a large number of different players meet. Thus, these instruments are very suitable for the initiation and promotion of cooperation groups.

That is why the moderators in the impulse regions have to identify tasks that can be realised through cooperation groups. The potential partners should be brought together in the course of workshops. And the appropriate legal instruments must be provided.

In the course of the regional conferences, it became apparent that specific forms of cooperation groups are especially suitable for the realisation of tasks in rural areas:

- ▶ Intercommunal cooperation group
- ▶ Public-private partnership

III. Strategies for the development of rural areas

Intercommunal cooperation especially applies when municipalities themselves are not able to implement tasks due to their size and complexity. Most often such tasks are easier to realise jointly. Another factor is that public infrastructural facilities are becoming less profitable due to a shrinking population. Especially in economically underdeveloped regions, it is advisable to regularly coordinate the use of land management, because concentrating the designations of land on strategically attractive locations will bundle resources and will thus be more promising for all participating municipalities. Progressive municipalities have already recognised this opportunity and collaborate in the fields of the designation of industrial land, infrastructure (waste water, building yard), flood protection or location marketing. In the impulse regions, communal representatives are to be linked with each other and sensitised accordingly in order to initiate the realisation of public tasks through intercommunal cooperation. Below, an example:

- ▶ Mobilisation of existing building land potentials inside of villages (gaps between buildings, waste land, vacant or little-used buildings).
- ▶ Determining joint fields of action for intercommunal cooperation.
- ▶ Development of a joint principle for a sustainable settlement policy in the course of workshops.
- ▶ Intercommunal development of industrial land (a pool for industrial land, an exchange for commercial property).
- ▶ Establishment of an intercommunal eco-account.
- ▶ Individual proposals for participating municipalities.
- ▶ Contract design for a fair cost-benefit distribution.

Public-private partnerships are novel approaches for the accomplishment of public tasks with the participation of the private economy. Municipalities and private enterprises mainly collaborate in the areas of financing and the execution of projects. This enables municipalities to realise public tasks even in times of scarce financial means. At the same time, the private economy benefits from long-term revenues. Public-private partnerships can be quite diverse, for example indoor swimming pools, schools, energy-saving construction measures, the construction of village community centres, public parking spaces in the city centre or the transport infrastructure.

The goal is to make more and more investments in rural areas possible through public-private partnerships. To this end, models (contracting models) should be tested in the impulse regions among municipalities, regional players, skilled trades people, local banks and other possible partners, with the aim of implementing projects for the provision of general public services via public-private partnerships.



III. Strategies for the development of rural areas

4.1.3 Platforms

Generally, platforms are brainstorming forums for an exchange of ideas where knowledge and experience should be offered and an exchange of experiences can take place. Many new issues that rural areas will have to deal with in the future should be communicated via conferences and workshops. The presentation of the best examples and new ideas can enable a transfer of knowledge among the citizens, multipliers and local and regional decision makers in order to activate individual civic engagement. Individually adapted forms of communication can lead to a comprehensive exchange of opinions and to an active integration of all parts of the population in a workshop atmosphere, thus enabling a more active co-determination of the social and economic environment in rural areas.

If required, these conferences and workshops can be complemented with special days of activities, competitions and exhibitions in and for the rural area. Depending on the respective state of information of the citizens, these events can serve either the information flow or the exchange of ideas.

In contrast, internet platforms as virtual installations mainly serve as a knowledge base. Here, for example, the opportunities and potentials of integrated rural development or Leader or various examples of their implementation can be read or downloaded.

A new internet base, www.impulsregionen.rlp.de, serving as a virtual platform, will be established in order to multiply ideas. On this platform, appropriate information, publications and counselling offers are to be provided for citizens, authorities, municipalities, associations and other institutions. Similar platforms in the rural area are to be linked with this base. Furthermore, players of the rural area should be provided with transparent information (illustrated through examples) on the promotion measures for rural development.

Through this platform, players can also access the national and European network for the development of the rural area, which will be established for the implementation of the EAFRD-regulation.

As internet options are developed, new platforms like chat rooms, podcasts, weblogs and wikis (online-encyclopaedia) will emerge, enabling a variety of types of communication and interaction. For this reason, the players of the networks have to examine jointly whether a professional internet platform can be established directly at the agency (e.g. service centre for the rural area) or whether outside assistance is necessary.

4.1.4 Tasks for the Service Centres for the Rural Area

To create new networks where all local forces of the rural area meet and actively participate in the development processes, the service centres for the rural area are asked to support the approaches illustrated in chapter III.1 through the creation of forums, workshops, networks, cooperation groups and internet platforms. As regards the implementation of this strategy paper for the rural area, the following focal points are to be considered:

Realisation of Conferences, Workshops of the Rural Area Forum

The Rural Area Forum is an exchange for ideas, serving players in the rural areas as a platform for the presentation of the best projects, the optimisation of processes and the overall exchange of experiences. The Rural Area Forum is hereby instructed to give priority to organising the following forums and workshops and to involve as broad a segment of the public as possible in these events.

III. Strategies for the development of rural areas

Work orders regarding the establishment of networks, cooperation groups and internet platforms

During the five regional conferences, the players of the rural area have repeatedly demanded that they be provided with internet platforms, assessments of guidelines and the results of feasibility studies. Municipalities and players of the rural area do not expect standardised solutions. Instead they look for a combination of already proved models, studies and practice-oriented guidelines. The service centres for the rural area are hereby instructed to establish round tables for the initial phase of networks. Furthermore they are asked to establish or to take over simple agencies. A moderator is to be appointed for every new network, assuming the management and the chairmanship of the network. The following networks should be especially considered:

- ▶ A cross-federal state exchange of ideas in the course of conferences and workshops in order to find permanent and sustainable solutions as regards the revitalisation and improvement of the basic supply with every day consumer goods and services.
- ▶ Conferences and workshops presenting the best projects regarding land management in the tourism sector.
- ▶ Issue-related conferences and workshops in collaboration with the future initiative Rhineland-Palatinate (ZIRP) regarding future processes in rural areas.
- ▶ Conferences and workshops presenting the best examples of energy projects.
- ▶ Conferences and workshops demonstrating the best examples regarding the supply with broadband internet access.
- ▶ Conferences and workshops showing the best examples of flexible local public transport (nationwide).
- ▶ Conferences and workshops presenting successful examples of the inner development of villages (in combination with village consolidation and village development).
- ▶ Workshops and regional conferences for an exchange of ideas among municipalities and industry through strategic alliances.
- ▶ Issue-related conferences for an improved living quality in rural areas, for example leisure time in clubs, provision of child and youth care, senior citizens work, village design, leisure time facilities in collaboration with the future initiative Rhineland-Palatinate (ZIRP).
- ▶ Conferences and workshops presenting the best projects on education in rural areas.
- ▶ Exchange of the results of feasibility studies (cross-federal state).

- ▶ Platforms for feasibility studies regarding new and significant projects.
- ▶ Discussion of market-related questions regarding mobile provision of supplies, development of business ideas, promotion of the foundation of new businesses.
- ▶ An internet platform providing basic information, studies and guidelines regarding the energy mix.
- ▶ Knowledge platforms on the subject of the supply with broadband internet access.
- ▶ Discussion platforms in collaboration with municipalities and technical authorities aiming at a future-oriented enhancement of already proved models of flexible, local public transport.
- ▶ Integrated development concepts serving as a platform for the collaboration of municipalities and industry.
- ▶ Networks in rural areas to attract apprentices and students to return to the rural area after finishing their education. Starting pilot projects with the aim of establishing platforms.

III. Strategies for the development of rural areas

4.2 Training Courses

One important aim of this strategy paper is the education and qualification of citizens to act as multipliers within the rural area. They should bring their specific experiences, their knowledge, their competences as well as their insider information into the planning processes in the rural area. Their expectations and experiences will be taken seriously and they will be acknowledged as the most important experts on the spot.

A first step for the education of citizens was taken in collaboration with the communal academy in 2006. Then, the Rural Area Forum was introduced to link up the newly integrated rural processes. These training opportunities, offered by the communal academy, are being continued.

This offer is mainly addressed to all players in the rural area who are going to manage future integrated rural development concepts or regional management working groups and to those who are willing to initiate projects. Target groups of these offers are:

- ▶ Mayors and local councils
- ▶ Employees of federal and local administrations
- ▶ Town and country planners and village development planners
- ▶ Executives and employees of tourism facilities

The training courses offered at the communal academy strive for the following seminar goals: Initiating and accompanying ILE- and Leader-processes; organising public relations in the impulse regions; successful recruitment of players; application of the gender-mainstream-strategy; preparation, management and moderation of working groups; initiating successful projects with the help of regional management; learning about the instruments for a sustainable development of the rural area; providing an overview of support programmes



One result of the five regional conferences was the need for an enlargement of the above-mentioned offer of training courses through the service centres for the rural area. They annually provide a comprehensive and broad counselling offer mainly addressing farmers, winegrowers and associations of country women.



III. Strategies for the development of rural areas

This training programme is supplemented through a roving “**Rural Area Academy**”, organised by the service centres for the rural area. This counselling and advanced training offer should address all players in the rural area and integrate a wide range of fields of action for a “policy for the rural area”.

Additionally, excursions are to be offered, visiting successful models and offering training courses in the respective villages. The service centre for the rural area Rheinhausen-Nahe-Hunsrück is hereby delegated with the coordination of this Rural Area Academy.

In order to implement this strategy paper, this academy should mainly offer the following **training courses and guidelines**:

- ▶ Training models and guidelines on permanent and sustainable solutions for the revitalisation and improvement of the basic supply with everyday consumer goods and services.
- ▶ Counselling and training of regional players in the use of land management for tourism.
- ▶ Counselling of agricultural and silvicultural enterprises on investment in the field of renewable raw materials .
- ▶ Presentation of feasibility studies.
- ▶ Preparation of guidelines for municipalities on land-use planning, heat utilisation plants, landscape planning for renewable raw materials (“NaWaRo”) and tourism concepts.
- ▶ Guidelines and counselling through the service centres for the rural area for the supply with broadband internet access
- ▶ Guidelines for municipalities with best models for flexible local public transport.
- ▶ Guidelines for municipalities in economically underdeveloped regions for joint cooperation groups and financing projects with industry.



Of course, not all topics can be dealt with in the context of one target-oriented training course. Planners will analyse which issues are of greater importance and thus merit training courses. This will be realised in “planners workshops” involving integrated rural development concepts, Leader and regional management.

A first training programme will be established for the year 2008. The service centres for the rural area will carry out realisation of the training courses.

Training courses on each specific topic should not exceed the duration of one day in order to minimise effort and travel costs for the participants.



Further Sources of Information in Rhineland-Palatinate

| | |
|--|--|
| Landesregierung Rheinland-Pfalz / Staatskanzlei | www.rlp.de |
| Zukunftsinitiative Rheinland-Pfalz | www.zirp.de |
| Ministerium für Wirtschaft, Verkehr, Landwirtschaft und Weinbau | www.mwvlw.rlp.de |
| Landentwicklung und Ländliche Bodenordnung | www.landentwicklung.rlp.de |
| Forum Ländlicher Raum | www.landschafft.rlp.de |
| Aufsichts- und Dienstleistungsdirektion | www.add.rlp.de |
| Dienstleistungszentren Ländlicher Raum | www.dlr.rlp.de |
| Landwirtschaftskammer | www.lwk-rlp.de |
| Bauern- und Winzerverband Rheinland-Pfalz – Süd e.V. | www.bwv-rlp.de |
| Landjugend RheinhessenPfalz | www.lj-rheinhessenpfalz.de |
| Bauern- und Winzerverband Rheinland-Nassau e.V. | www.bwv-net.de |
| Landjugend Rheinland-Nassau | www.landjugend-rln.de |
| Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Landfrauenverbände Rheinland-Pfalz | www.landfrau-rlp.de |
| Starterzentren (Anlaufstellen für Existenzgründer) | www.starterzentrum-rlp.de |
| Investitions- und Strukturbank Rheinland-Pfalz (ISB) GmbH | www.isb.rlp.de |
| Rheinland-Pfalz Tourismus GmbH | www.rlp-info.de |
| Naturlaub auf Winzer- und Bauernhöfen e.V. | www.naturlaub-rlp.de |
| Landesbetrieb Mobilität | www.lbm.rlp.de |
| Rheinland-Pfalz Takt | www.rheinland-pfalz-takt.de |
| Ministerium für Arbeit, Soziales, Gesundheit, Frauen und Familie | www.masgff.rlp.de |
| Landeszentrale für Gesundheitsförderung in Rheinland-Pfalz e.V. | www.lzg-rlp.de |
| Viva Familia (Familieninitiative des Familienministeriums) | www.vivafamilia.de |
| Kassenärztliche Vereinigung | www.kv-rlp.de |
| Ministerium des Inneren und für Sport | www.ism.rlp.de |
| Gemeinde- und Städtebund | www.gstbrp.de |
| Landkreistag | www.landkreistag.rlp.de |
| Struktur- und Genehmigungsdirektion Nord | www.sgd nord.rlp.de |
| Struktur- und Genehmigungsdirektion Süd | www.sgdsued.rlp.de |
| Entwicklungsagentur Rheinland-Pfalz e.V. | www.ea.rlp.de |
| PER Projektentwicklungsgesellschaft Rheinland-Pfalz mbH | www.per-rlp.de |
| Dialog Baukultur (Initiative des Finanzministeriums) | www.baukultur.rlp.de |
| Ministerium für Umwelt, Forsten und Verbraucherschutz | www.mufv.rlp.de |
| Unser Ener (Kampagne des MUFV) | www.unser-ener.de |
| Forstverwaltung Rheinland-Pfalz | www.wald-rlp.de |
| Landeszentrale für Umweltaufklärung | www.umdanken.de |
| Effizienzoffensive der Landesregierung | www.effnet.de |
| Ministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft, Jugend und Kultur | www.mbwjk.rlp.de |
| Ganztagsschule in Rheinland-Pfalz | www.ganztagsschule.rlp.de |
| Bildungsserver Rheinland-Pfalz | www.bildung-rp.de |
| Landesvereinigung für ländliche Erwachsenenbildung in RLP e.V. | www.leb-rlp.de |
| Verband der Volkshochschulen von Rheinland-Pfalz e.V. | www.vhs-rlp.de |
| Kommunalakademie e.V. | www.komrp.de |
| Kulturbüro Rheinland-Pfalz | www.kulturbuero-rlp.de |
| ArgeLandentwicklung | www.landentwicklung.de |
| Deutsche Landeskulturgesellschaft - DLKG | www.dlkg.org |

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| Westpfalz 67655 Kaiserslautern Dienstsitze: 67728 Münchweiler/A. (Agrarwirtschaft) | dlr-westpfalz@dlr.rlp.de Fischerstr. 12 0631-3674-0 Neumühle 8 06302-9216-0 |

| Leader-Region | Region der Integrierten Ländlichen Entwicklung |
|--|--|
| Bitburg-Prüm www.bitburg-pruem.de | Bad Bergzabern Wissembourg www.ile.region.wissembourg.bad-bergzabern.de |
| Donnersberger und Lautrer Land www.donnersberger-lautrerland.de | Eifel-Ahr www.region-eifel-ahr.de |
| Erbeskopf www.lag-erbeskopf.de | Kaiserslautern www.ilek-westrich.de |
| Hunsrück www.lag-hunsrueck.de | Lahn-Taunus www.ilek-lahn-taunus.de |
| Mosel http://www.bernkastel-wittlich.de/lag-mosel.html | Landau www.ile-region-landau.de |
| Moselfranken www.lag-moselfranken.de | Maifeld-Pellenz www.ilek-maifeld-pellenz.de |
| Pfälzer Bergland www.landkreis-kusel.de | Nordpfalz www.region-nordpfalz.de |
| Pfälzerwald www.leaderplus-pfaelzerwald.de/ | Nordpfälzer Bergland www.nordpfaelzerbergland.de |
| Rheinhessen-Zellertal www.rheinhessen-zellertal.de | Raiffeisenregion www.raiffeisen-region.de |
| Vulkaneifel http://www.bernkastel-wittlich.de/lag-vulkaneifel.html | Soonwald-Nahe www.bischoff-u-partner.de/24701/index.html |
| Welterbe Oberes Mittelrheintal www.lag-mittelrhein.de | Südpfalz www.ile-suedpfalz.de |
| Westerwald www.westerwald.rlp.de | Südwestpfalz www.ilek-suedwestpfalz.de |

Impressum

Herausgeber:

Das Ministerium für Wirtschaft, Verkehr, Landwirtschaft und Weinbau des Landes Rheinland-Pfalz
Stiftsstraße 9, 55116 Mainz

Fachliche Zuständigkeit:

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Cover picture:

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Bildnachweis:

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www.dlr.rlp.de

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Auszugsweiser Abdruck ist mit Quellenangabe unter Überlassung eines Belegexemplars gestattet.

Mainz (2008)



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