



ENRD Seminar on 'Revitalising Rural Areas through Business Innovation' 30th of March 2017, Brussels

Summary compiled by Kristiina Tammets

The Seminar explored how rural businesses – both farm and non-farm – can innovate in ways that “create the conditions for future prosperity and vitality” as articulated in the Cork 2.0 Declaration. Specifically, the event:

- examined a range of EU policies and tools for business innovation, including digitisation, smart specialisation, and social innovation;
- showcased inspiring examples of rural business innovation and explored how such initiatives can be supported and extended through the Rural Development Programmes.

The event was part of the broader ENRD thematic work on 'Smart and Competitive Rural Businesses'.

There were very interesting workshops in the frame of the seminar:

- Rural digital hubs;
- Business Accelerators and other tools for supporting change in rural businesses;
- Social innovation in rural areas;
- Extending business innovation through LEADER (M19);
- Extending business innovation through Cooperation (M16);
- Using RDPs to implement smart business packages.

Presentations of the event and workshops are available here http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/enrd-seminar-smart-and-competitive-rural-businesses_en

Main reflections:

- DG Agri and Regio notified that **bottom-up approach was identified as key element** renewing the framework of ESI Funds for 2020+ period. Top-down political framework needs to be changed into bottom-up political framework;
- In the future Commission sees that local actors (businesses, communities, municipalities, etc) play bigger role for achieving the goals of Europe Growth Strategy and Common Agricultural Strategy. **Cooperation across sectors in rural development has seen crucial for future;**
- All DGs (DG Agri, Regio, Connect, Grow) in the panel referred to the **great potential of LEADER/CLLD as method** that has approved itself and certainly carries a lot of potential for future rural development;
- Local action groups (LAGs) and operational groups have big potential to involve local stakeholders and through animation activities emerge bottom-up innovation and cooperation across sectors and borders. LAGs have to animate and project applicants have to innovate.



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