

**Rural development – farming, multifunctionality, new activities:
existing resources and sustainable strategies vs. employment and competitiveness**

1. The objectives

1.1. The institutional objective

The immediate objective of the present proposal is to set up a broad network of collaboration, both in Poland, and in the Central-Eastern Europe, as well as in the entire expanding European Union, devoted to the present state, perspectives and strategies of action with respect to rural areas of Poland and Europe.

The proposed network of collaboration is meant to encompass the leading research centres dealing with the questions belonging to the substance matter domain of the Proposal, both in terms of the respective technical disciplines and the broadly understood methodology. At the Europe-wide level the network will be co-ordinated by the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) in Laxenburg by Vienna. It will be associated with the already existing at IIASA comprehensive research project “European Rural Development” (ERD), corresponding with its scope to the one of the research proposed within the network. It is further assumed that the ERD research will be incorporated in the 6th Framework Programme of the EU.

1.2. The substance matter objectives

The proposed collaboration network should allow for the effective integration of the efforts and competencies of various Polish – and, in a broader context: European – research institutions, in the jointly conducted work on the state and the paths of transformation of the rural areas, and in particular farming, especially in the perspective of extension of the EU and its future policies.

Thus, the main objectives of functioning of the Polish network will be:

- (1) establishment of the integrated comprehensive information basis for the analysis of the resource and socio-economic situation of the rural areas in Poland, with preservation of the conditions of comparability and integrability with the analogous bases for other countries and regions of Europe; this work will encompass the definition of the data sources and their contents, determination of conditions for the database collaboration and comparability, along with elaboration of respective indicators and measures, as well as software tools;

- (2) analysis of the current situation and the trends to date in this domain, with special attention being paid to: (i) *the state of the natural, social and infrastructural resources*, (ii) *the diverse existing economic activities, and the associated use of and impact on the resources*, (iii) *the sources of income and their differentiation, as well as evolution*, and (iv) *conditions for the sustainable development, in terms of natural resources and social structures*;
- (3) elaboration of the forecasts and scenarios of the further development, along with the specification of the corresponding economic, legal and political conditions (“strategic indications & recommendations”), accounting for (v) *competitiveness, capacity of generation of income from the existing and new kinds of activities, as well as increase of effective employment in rural areas*, and (vi) *the context of the expanding European Union, its principles and policies*, as well as
- (4) elaboration and implementation of the new, original methods and tools for realisation of points (1)-(3) before, with respect to the aspects (i)-(vi), including, in particular, the appropriate computer tools, compatible with the ones elaborated in the framework of the broader European collaboration.

2. Participants

Polish founding members of the network established, and simultaneously the participants of the work envisaged, are: the Institute for Agricultural and Food Economics, the Institute of Land Reclamation and Grassland Farming, the Institute of Soil Science and Plant Cultivation, the Institute of Geography and Spatial Organization of the Polish Academy of Sciences, the Institute of Rural and Agricultural Development, the Institute for Building, Mechanisation and Electrification of Agriculture, and the Systems Research Institute of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

It is envisaged that the Polish network will take active part in the program on “European Rural Development” (ERD), co-ordinated by IIASA. Collaboration in the framework of the ERD includes already now a number of leading institutions from Western Europe, especially from the EU countries. Thus, the close collaboration network includes, in particular, The Arkleton Centre for Rural Development Research of the University of Aberdeen (Scotland), Pellervo Economic Research Institute from Helsinki, the Norwegian institutes NIBR and NIJOS, the Research Institute of Agricultural Economics in The Hague, and the Rural Development Centre of the St. Stephan University in Gödöllő (Hungary).

The broad Europe-wide collaboration network will encompass, as a distinct sub-network, the group of institutions and scholars from the Central-Eastern European accession countries, with the Polish sub-network being an integral part, in fact, a core, of it. IIASA will co-ordinate the attempt of inclusion of the subject matter of ERD into the 6th FP at an adequately high level of importance. The effect should consist in securing of the adequate additional funding of the work of the entire network, including the Polish and the Central-Eastern parts of it, from the Union sources.