



Slovakia Region



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Introduction

The Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra (Partner) will lead the pilot and will be supported by the Municipality of Nitra (Partner), Agroinstitut (Partner) and Rural Parliament (Partner).

Slovakia is the only pilot region covering the territory of a whole country thus providing a unique opportunity to use the outcomes of the project for both the regional and national policies.

Slovakia has 5,4 million inhabitants and covers the territory of 49 036 km². Highlands and mountains cover 60% of its territory and lowlands 40%. At the European level, it has a character of mountain and sub montane landscape. According to the territorial-legal division, Slovakia is divided into 4 areas (NUTS 2), 8 regions (NUTS 3), 79 districts (LAU1), 2890 municipalities (LAU2) of which 138 have the status of a city.

Based on a new typology of rural areas developed by the European Commission (Eurostat), Slovakia is 50.3% prevailing in predominantly rural areas, 38.4% in transitional areas and 11.2% in predominantly urban areas. Of the total area of the SR according to individual types of regions, the largest share is 59% also in predominantly rural, 36.8% share is in transition regions and the lowest share 4.2% is predominantly in urban regions. Total rural regions thus account for 95.8% of the territory of the country.

Slovakia was a traditionally rural and agricultural country with a 38% share of the rural population (more than 2 million people) in the total population (the EU average is 19%). However, the situation in the Slovak agriculture is not good in the long term, with a tendency to deteriorate year-on-year. Over the last two decades the country was changed into an industrial one, mainly due to the massive introduction of automobile industry, often taking high quality arable land close to highways.

Access to land is the main obstacle hindering the rural development in the country, especially in relation to young, small and family farmers, as well as potential new entrants. In 2016, the acreage of utilized agricultural land accounted for 1,918,878 h. Of the total acreage of utilized agricultural land, approximately 90% of agricultural land was leased depending on the district.

The prevailing part of agricultural entities had a fixed rent independent of the official price of land. Another part of farmers had higher rent set from 1.5% to 2.5% of the official price of land. The lowest rent for 1 ha of agricultural land was in Žilina County (€18.15/ha) and Prešov County (€22.18/ha). The highest rent was in Trnava County (€80.93/ha). In 2016, the number of workers in agriculture accounted for 50,100 people, which, on a year-over-year basis, was lower by 4.2 %, i.e. by 2,200 working people.

The pilot will implement business-oriented measures focusing not only on farming but also on entrepreneurship in fields like production of traditional goods, innovation in agro-sector and in historical, cultural or natural places of interest with touristic potential.

To design a new longer-term policy at the regional level to support existing farmers and to encourage new entrants into farming, with a focus on women, smallholders, family farmers and youth and with the active participation of all relevant stakeholders throughout the whole process of preparation, elaboration, approval and implementation. Special attention will be paid to land access as the main problem for new entrants.

(Vision statement)

To increase the attractiveness of the region, well-being of the existing rural population and attract newcomers, while not affecting the symbiosis between city and rural areas, by introducing policies reflecting the needs of local entrepreneurs and demand of local population, safeguarding the environment and biodiversity at the same time.

Introducing a new way of deciding upon and implementing public policies in cooperation and consultation with all relevant stakeholders during all stages.

Expected outputs:

- Sufficient, categorized and sex-disaggregated data on local production for objective and evidence based decision making;
- New Regional Rural Development Strategy;
- Manual of Standards (Regional Culinary Heritage);
- Basis of establishment of single national advisory system for farmers;
- Establishment of start-up Food Incubator;
- Informal virtual platform comprising database of local producers, manuals of support, manuals of standard, manuals for school and producers and catalogue of producers and seasonal and traditional products;

- Map or web application of producers;
- Support of creative tourism and agrotourism.

Expected impact (qualitative):

- Establishment of cooperation among relevant stakeholders in the region with a special focus on women, youth and potential/or newcomers;
- Safeguard continuation of cooperation among stakeholders after the end of project;
- Empowerment of the stakeholders in the region on rural attractiveness issues;
- Elaboration of the Regional Rural Development Strategy;
- Strengthen the agricultural importance of the region in the regional and national economy;
- Increase attractiveness of rural areas and rural professions;
- Establishment of Innovation Center/Hub for the region;
- Using advanced tool of text mining for policymaking;
- Decision making at the regional level done on the basis of evidence and not political interests;
- Increased effectiveness of new or enhanced regional policies.