

From Plans to Action: RURAL RiSE closes its capacity-building journey in Brussels

The fourth and final Capacity Building Lab of RURAL RiSE brought the project's European journey to a close in Brussels, under the title "Made in Rural Europe: From Plans to Action". Hosted at the Maison des Associations, the event gathered partners, participants and organisations from Italy, Serbia, Spain and Belgium to share the main outcomes achieved across the participating rural territories and to reflect on the role of the Social Economy in strengthening rural communities.

A European space for reflection

The day opened with a networking session that allowed participants to exchange experiences and build new connections, followed by a contribution from Magdalena Kleim (DG GROW) on related European rural projects and the future of the Single Market Programme. Materahub introduced the RURAL RiSE project and the journey undertaken by the consortium, while Diesis Network guided participants through the programme. These opening sessions placed the project's results within a broader European context and underlined the importance of supporting rural areas through skills development, cooperation and locally adapted strategies.

Three territories, three local approaches

A central part of the event was dedicated to the experiences developed in Italy, Serbia and Spain. Miglionico and Materahub presented the Italian experience, focused on designing rural futures through the Social Economy and on connecting local resources, community participation and sustainable development. Young Ambassadors and the Municipality of Palilula shared the outcomes of their Local Action Plan in Serbia, showing how cooperation and capacity building help rural stakeholders define shared priorities.

The Spanish case: Valdefuentes, led by Wazo Coop

Wazo Coop, together with the Municipality of Valdefuentes, presented the Spanish case study and the co-designed strategy developed to address youth and women's unemployment and rural depopulation. The presentation explored how the Local Action Plan can support participation, skills development and new opportunities linked to the Social Economy in Valdefuentes, demonstrating how a small rural municipality in the Sierra de Montánchez can turn community participation into a concrete roadmap for the future.

From local challenges to practical action

The three case studies showed that rural territories face common challenges while requiring responses adapted to their own social, economic and cultural contexts. The Brussels event offered an opportunity to compare approaches, identify shared lessons and strengthen the transfer of knowledge between countries. The closing session brought together conclusions and an open discussion on how the knowledge, partnerships and Local Action Plans developed through RURAL RiSE can continue to support future rural initiatives.

CBL4 completed the series of Capacity Building Labs developed across Italy, Serbia, Spain and Belgium — a process built on peer learning, exchange of practices and cooperation between local authorities and Social Economy organisations.

Read more on the project website: <https://ruralrise.wazo.coop/rural-rise-brussels/>

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