



**vol. 8** Rural areas  
and development



European  
Rural  
Development  
Network

# Rural Development: Quo Vadis?

Editor:  
Zbigniew Floriańczyk

EUROPEAN RURAL DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD ECONOMICS - NRI

## Rural areas and development – vol. 8

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WARSAW 2011

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PUBLISHED by the Institute of Agricultural and Food Economics - National Research Institute

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Prepared for print by  
Krzysztof Kossakowski (IAFE-NRI)

ISBN 978-83-7658-195-8

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## Introduction to the volume

The eight volume within the series published by European Rural Development Network (ERDN) combines articles discussed during the ERDN Conference held in Institute of Agriculture and Food Economics – NRI in Warsaw in October 2010. During the two days meeting papers concerned with strategies, employment opportunities, local food systems and agricultural production possibilities, rural municipalities activity as well as specific measures of national and EU development programmes for rural areas were presented.

Presented articles prove that building strategy for EU rural areas development on recent days became more difficult due to new budget constrains, economic slow down observed on global and regional level and growing concern of recently used policies capability to overcome these new challenges. The problem of unemployment or inefficient use of rural labour forces appears to be critical for rural areas sustainability. Intensive development of infrastructure provides environment for rural business development but mostly connected with high knowledge or “green” economy. Simultaneously outflow of population to urban centres intensifies problem of low development capacity of remote rural areas. Related losses for local economy can be valued in terms of lower commune incomes.

Agriculture even if it is declining sector of economy should be recognised as a major players of rural economy. Namely local food systems role are under valued by public statistics. Different functions of agriculture are partly valued by food production what jeopardy its continuance regardless growing demand for local food. Farms aiming at high value production may be only in slightly better position than conventional ones. However the conventional production is more exposed to international competition. This is a problem of transition economies unable to support development processes. Despite their natural potential strong external competition prevents full utilization of agriculture capacity. EU rural development programmes on the other hand may effectively defend the domestic agriculture. This however requires precise definition, measures and administrative rules.

In the process of defining rural areas amplification of different characteristics results in volatility of its territorial borders. Therefore measures designed to support rural development are likely to spread beyond the intended target. In this respect measures that are designed to support certain agricultural pro-

duction are more effective. The difficulty is to make the support aiming at development neutral to market forces and insure that the local community will be final beneficiary of it. Institutions arrangements appears to be critical in this process and play decisive role in measures application. Presented research outcomes point out that decentralization of administration is a right direction to facilitate implementation of rural development programmes. On the other hand utilization of modern communication technologies by administrative bodies is still insufficient.

Special thanks has to be given to the Authors and Conference Organizing Committee for all the effort that resulted in interesting conference and presented volume.

*The editor*