



Final Report: Activity: VITAL

Internal Filing Number Periodic Report number

Name of project:	VITAL RURAL AREA
Project acronym:	VITAL
ID journal number	35-2-46-08

1. Beneficiaries

Beneficiary information

Extended deadline for submission of report	
Required submission date	18/05/2015
Final Report is expected to be delivered	31/03/2015

Lead Beneficiary information

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Project number	35-2-46-08	Priority	4 - Promoting Sustainable and Competitive Communities
Project website	www.vitalruralarea.eu	ERDF	3.770.170

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Certification by Lead Beneficiary

Name	Wietse W Hermans
Position	project manager
Signature	
Date	31/03/2015

2. Time period

This Activity report covers the time period from	01/10/2013	To	31/12/2014
Extended implementation period	01/07/2014	To	31/03/2015

3. WP completion

Work Package Completion	
a) State what work package has been completed and its starting and completion date	Project Management
Start Date: 01/01/2009	Completion Date: 31/03/2015
b) Does this completion of a work package correspond with the application form? If no please read the guidance for this question above.	Yes
c) What have been the main outcomes and results of the completed work package? Delivery of the project as a whole, organisation of partner meetings, Policy Forums and events, website and Newsletters, etc.	
a) State what work package has been completed and its starting and completion date	Publicity and Communication
Start Date: 01/01/2009	Completion Date: 31/03/2015
b) Does this completion of a work package correspond with the application form? If no please read the guidance for this question above.	Yes
c) What have been the main outcomes and results of the completed work package? Project identity/Logo, Website, Manual (on Branding), Newsletters, Webinars, Presentations on events, scientific articles.	
a) State what work package has been completed and its starting and completion date	empowerment of SMEs
Start Date: 01/01/2009	Completion Date: 31/12/2014

b) Does this completion of a work package correspond with the application form? If no please read the guidance for this question above.	No
c) What have been the main outcomes and results of the completed work package? Pilots and activities of each of the partners, exchange between partners - see section 4	
a) State what work package has been completed and its starting and completion date	regional branding
Start Date: 01/01/2009	Completion Date: 31/12/2014
b) Does this completion of a work package correspond with the application form? If no please read the guidance for this question above.	No
c) What have been the main outcomes and results of the completed work package? Pilots and activities of each of the partners, exchange between partners - see section 4	
a) State what work package has been completed and its starting and completion date	wellbeing and services
Start Date: 01/01/2015	Completion Date: 31/03/2015
b) Does this completion of a work package correspond with the application form? If no please read the guidance for this question above.	No
c) What have been the main outcomes and results of the completed work package? Pilots and activities of each of the partners, exchange between partners - see section 4	
a) State what work package has been completed and its starting and completion date	scientific monitoring and support
Start Date: 01/01/2009	Completion Date: 31/12/2014
b) Does this completion of a work package correspond with the application form? If no please read the guidance for this question above.	No
c) What have been the main outcomes and results of the completed work package? Delivery of the Rural Power pack, support of individual pilots and the Work Packages as such, 3 scientific articles - see section 4	

4. Achievements

Project Achievements
Overall:
Overall:
All partners have submitted a periodic report, though in some cases this was very limited, due to reduced or no more (pilot) activities and/or only having final – dissemination – events. As in the previous period the dissemination report has been attached to this report.
Some partners, have therefore only submitted a less extensive/summarising payment claim and financial report in this period.
The project started effectively in early 2009 and was (extended to and) finalised on 31 December 2014.
The Vital Rural Area project was a successful project, both in terms of goals and results, within the INTERREG IVB North Sea Region programme, starting effectively in early 2009, and aiming at strengthening of rural areas socio-economically, and executed by a great partnership of 13 partners.
The project was based on the cooperation of rural regions in the North Sea Region Programme, which had common challenges and assignments to tackle the needs of areas in decline.
It consisted of 3 content related work packages: WP 3 on SME and Innovation, WP 4 on Branding, and WP 5 on services. The Work packages on Project management and Communication were more operations related, whereas WP 6 (scientific support) effectively focused on delivering the Rural Power Pack as such. All partners participated in at least one of the content related Work Packages, each delivering several of the more than 45 pilots – almost twice as many as was foreseen initially!
Work package 1: Project management
1.1 Ensure efficient project management during all phases of the project's lifetime
1.2 Project administrative duties
1.3 Technical and organisational coordination of the project
1.4 Establishing and maintaining effective communication between project partners
1.5 Safeguarding the transnational component to prevent it from being eroded in the implementation phase of the project
The early stages of the project after its start in early 2009, included a successful start-up of all content oriented Work Packages and pilots, organising the partner meetings and first 3 Policy Forums, the initiation of the Rural Power Pack with support of the Scientific Group and Team, and the “regular” work on communication, monitoring and reporting of the project.
The new project management, installed in early 2012 has continued these activities with a strong focus on the finalisation of the Rural Power Pack and the dissemination of project-activities and –results. The preparation of a project extension in time until late 2014 and connected financial issues and discussions with the JTS in Viborg, and (preparations of) the last Policy Forum and final partner meeting(s) also were key issues in the last reporting periods.
The Rural Power Pack (RPP) has been finalised late 2013, after presentation and discussion at the Policy Forum, though updating (also of the website) has continued until the end of the project.
Monitoring of the pilots has continued alongside this, both in general (on the newest/latest pilots) and specifically as part of the RPP.
For this matter, all pilots have been now described in a fixed format as “best practices” on the website, following the 7 key themes of the RPP rather than the original 3 Work Packages. The related tools and results are now available for most of the pilots, also for use and review by external partners.
Also, the project management has been in contact with several external projects and partners, such as the INTERREG IVB NWE project Rural Alliances, where a close cooperation has been established since the Launch Event of this project in June 2012.
Other external contacts include the ENRD, LEADER+ representatives and regions, the “RURACT” network and other INTERREG projects such as the INTERREG IVB NW Europe project “Academy of Champions of Energy” (ACE, www.aceforenergy.eu), where for example the Educationer pilot (focusing on solar and geothermal energy E-learning) and local models such as the Innovation house received interest. Overall, useful contacts to external regions in (a.o.) Italy, Albania, Spain, Slovakia, France, UK and Ireland were established, providing good opportunities for these regions to become “associated partners” and resulted in participation to follow-up activities in or after the final dissemination phase of the project, such as the Get Together event, country pages/observatories, or new follow up projects. See also hereafter, especially WP 2, section 13 (Perspectives), and Section 14 of Communication.
The work on (final) pilot and Work Package activities also continued alongside the dissemination activities, see below. The last finalised, additional pilots have generated additional results for the project as a whole and towards (monitoring and) updating the RPP in particular, some of which to be added to the website alongside and after this final report (towards late 2015). They include transnational examples of successful pilots implemented elsewhere, such as the originally

Vejen-based "Innovation house" that now generated follow-ups implemented in Northeast Friesland (NOFA) and Norway (Rogaland/Finnøy), as reported in previous reports.

1.6 Reporting on the results of the project

All reports were delivered within the (sometimes extended) timeframes and all partners reported in most intermediated reports and contributed to the final report.

The delivery of this final report was delayed for various reasons, including a project extension (also due to a delay in payment on a programme level, leading to putting the check and payment of several payment claims and reports on hold!), final budget change that encountered some hurdles in finalising, an unexpected second level control (for the second time in the project lifetime and (therefore) stronger monitoring and ad hoc adaptations in the (especially) financial reporting, also on the partner level in some cases).

1.7 Organising international project partner meetings

In the project lifetime a total of 14 partner meetings were organised, with the number of participants ranging from some 20 to more than 45, but mostly around 30-35. Some were "regular" meetings, some pre-meetings connected with the Policy Forums, and (almost) all meetings included separate, parallel workshop sessions for each of the Work Packages, to which often enough members of the Scientific Group or Team, or other external experts were invited. Most partner meetings in Policy Forum lasted 2 days, and were often connected with (optional) field trips or excursions.

Last partner meeting in June 2014 included a "Get Together" event on the third day, hosting 15 external visitors, also from regions outside the Vital partnership.

1.8 Organising International Policy Forums on Regional development

Alongside the "regular" partner meetings, a total of four Policy Forums were staged, bringing together policy makers, entrepreneurs, experts and practitioners from the partner regions, national agencies and the EU. They resulted in a transfer of knowledge and early dissemination within and outside the Vital "family".

The first Policy Forum was in Norwich in September 2009 (102 participants), the second in Billund (Denmark, 108 participants) in October 2010, the third in Rinsumagaast (Netherlands, 156 participants) in May 2011 and the last in Sint Laureins (Belgium) in September 2013 (232 participants).

WP 2: Publicity and communication

2.1 Create house style with tagline, logo, etc.

2.2 External website with regular updates and update alerts

With the launch of the new website in June/July 2013 and the Policy Forum, the dissemination of the RPP and hence the final phase of the project has started in this period.

The website has been updated alongside the online version of the RPP, and will be further extended in the next weeks and months. New in this period is an extended reporting on the last Policy Forum, including programme, "inspiration video's" as shown at the meeting and a large number of pictures.

The improved use of the internal NSR website has still not been taken up, focusing on the own Vital RA website first of all. The use of this NSR-Vital website will however be picked shortly, as part of the still ongoing dissemination activities of the project.

2.3 Ten html Newsletters (10)

In the first 3 years of the project 3 Newsletters have been published, of which 2 focused on a Work Package (WP 3 and 4, formerly 1 and 2). After a longer break due to the change of project management and other changes within the project itself, 2 more followed and featured the new management and the Rural Power Pack, alongside some additional updates from the partnership as such. Alongside the Policy Forum, 2 other Newsletters had been finalised and published shortly after, 2 of which featuring on the remaining WP 5 and updated/newer pilots from the other Work Packages. The invitation to the Policy Forum was also published in Newsletter format, but is not counted as a Newsletter as such.

One Newsletter, Vital update 8, was published in December 2013, focusing on the last Policy Forum in September of that year.

The final Newsletters were published towards the end of the project, focusing on the several dissemination activities as such (Newsletter 9) and presenting a "wrap-up" of the (results of the) project as a whole.

2.4 Twelve presentations at international seminars (12)

The project management has been in contact with several external projects and partners, such as the INTERREG IVB NWE project Rural Alliances, where a close cooperation has been established since the Launch Event of this project in June 2012. As this project focuses on similar objectives and outcomes as Vital RA with its RPP, the cooperation was continued with a combined presentation at the Rural Alliances partner meeting in the Netherlands.

The project manager also once more participated in project meetings of the INTERREG IVB NW Europe project "Academy of Champions of Energy" (ACE, www.aceforenergy.eu), where not only the Educationer pilot (focusing on solar and geothermal energy E-learning) and local models such as the Innovation house were discussed with interested regions, but also the Rural Power Pack was presented to regions in the UK, Ireland and France.

Also the earlier established contact to the ENRD (European Network for Rural Development) was strengthened, gaining interest of several regions (a.o. in Sweden, Slovakia and Poland) to connect as a (possible) external partner, as well as with the LEADER+, EIP-Agri and RURACT network.

Also presentations were given (and/or project result discussed) at Events such as the NSR Annual Conference and the Open Days.

2.5 One documentary web video (1)

The older (draft) web video, resulting in a trailer video, has been introducing the project from the opening page of the project website. Following introduction of the new project website featuring the Rural Power Pack, further additions have been made to this video, including some results of the project and pilots. It now is an introductory eye-catcher on the introductory page of the Vital website.

2.6 One manual (1)

As part of Work Package 4 on Branding (as envisaged at the start of the project), the first pilots starting in the "leading" regions and work in the Work Package expert group (meetings) as such resulted in the publication of a manual for regional branding, that was then implemented in all partner regions participating in this Work Package.

As the other Work Packages and its pilots were much broader, a manual on any of these themes was not developed. However, with publication of the Rural Power Pack and its description of (also) tools on the various topics covered within the RPP, a number of publications on these tools and approaches available can be seen as additional "manuals".

2.7 Twelve local public exhibition / awareness meetings (12)

All 13 partners have organised more than one of these events, throughout the project/pilot phase and/or the dissemination phase. Some were (to become) annual events, such as the Meetjesland day, the Finnøy Tomato Festival, or the Langenhagen Fahrrad Cultour (cycle, food/culinary route organised on a day or weekend).

Adding also specific stakeholder events, such as (open) days for SMEs, the total number of local events was substantially higher than envisaged. See also Section 16 on Indicators.

2.8 Three inter-project workshops (3)

This suggested (minor) item eventually developed as an important part of the dissemination strategy, establishing links to partner or other EU projects, such as "Rural Alliances" (www.rural-alliances.eu, INTERREG IVB NW Europe), Making Places Profitable MP4 (www.mp4-interreg.eu, IVB NSR), ACE for Energy (www.aceforenergy.eu, IVB NWE), the NSR DANS Cluster (www.dans-cluster.eu) and numerous others through the partners, leading eventually to new project partnerships for VB project proposals.

Also, links were established to network organisations such as the European Network for Rural development ENRD (<https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/>), LEADER+, the RURACT and EIP-AGRI Network, etc.

Finally, the project management and partners were involved in visits to some external events, such as Annual Conferences of the North Sea Region, the "Open Days" in Brussels, EC meetings on rural development and innovation (i.e. broadband, health services) and national events on which the project and/or specific pilots were presented.

The total number of inter-project workshops or similar events was therefore substantially higher than envisaged. See also Section 14 on Communication and Section 16 on Indicators.

2.9 Four international Policy Forums (4)

Alongside the "regular" partner meetings, a total of four Policy Forums were staged, bringing together policy makers, entrepreneurs, experts and practitioners from the partner regions, national agencies and the EU. They resulted in a transfer of knowledge and early dissemination within and outside the Vital "family".

The first Policy Forum was in Norwich in September 2009 (102 participants), the second in Billund (Denmark, 108 participants) in October 2010, the third in Rinsumageast (Netherlands, 156 participants) in May 2011 and a very successful last one in Sint Laureins (Belgium) in September 2013, with over 230 participants!

2.10 A general working method / standard on how to set up regional projects on rural development (Rural Power Pack) (1)

The "Rural Power Pack", foreseen and implemented as toolkit for (innovation and development in) rural regions, was scheduled to be delivered in 2011/2012, and was presented at the final Policy Forum in September 2013, after some initial delay in its implementation. The structure developed for this is a (web-based) toolkit for rural areas, consisting of an analysis tool for (rural) regions, best practices of methodologies and pilots provided in VitalRA and other projects, and more generic models or structures developed from Vital RA, to updated and extended from best practices in other EU (INTERREG) projects and LEADER examples.

The overall structure is concise and consists of seven themes. The underlying best practices, first of all the pilots from within the Vital RA partnerships that also provide the "key project" examples for each theme, are being presented in a comprehensive, story-telling format that may well be easily applicable for other interested regions. Also, from these pilots overall best practices, methodologies and tools have been derived.

The RPP started with a review of activities and results of the Work Packages and individual pilots, and resulted in an integrated, practice oriented "box" of methods, tools and best practices as core of, and fully embedded within the Vital Rural Area website.

The Cooperative Agreement Approach, already described and developed at the start of the project, was integrated in the Rural Power Pack, both as method and as overall framework for the RPP as such.

The online structure of the Rural Power Pack includes an extensive description of the "Pack" as such, detailed description of all pilots/best practices providing a SWOT analysis (problems/challenges, solutions, barriers, tools), describing their specific features and models/tools used, and supporting documentation. The pilots are grouped into seven themes, that are based on the 3 work packages and specific activities therein. The RPP now is the backbone of the Vital website, that was entirely restyled to focus on this toolbox and the underlying project/pilot results.

2.11 One dissemination / marketing strategy (1)

The original communication strategy has been finalised in previous periods, and revised in the last period, taking in new ideas, following the discussions on partners meetings and as part of finalising the Rural Power Pack. Including both internal meetings and an external tendering procedure, the dissemination strategy has been implemented in the last phase of the project, with the Policy Forum in September (and the finalised RPP and new website) as a starting point.

See section 14 and the (table/overview of) dissemination activities in the last phase of the project.

2.12 Deployment of a mobile implementation team (1)

As already indicated in the previous reporting periods and discussed with the JTS, a change of strategy has been implemented, this change was also formally being approved with the approval of the project extension. The dissemination strategy now includes of a network of (fixed) observatories set up by the project partners and associated partners, rather than using a mobile team. Alongside the 6 country pages, containing the observatories in the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, UK, Belgium and Norway, six additional observatories in new (associated) partner regions/countries, were originally foreseen. Of these, the country pages of Ireland, France, Poland and Romania are fully operational, and 2 more (probably Slovakia and Austria and/or Italy) are due to follow late 2015/early 2016.

From these observatories, own (local) events have been organised and (external) project meetings, workshops, conferences and individual regions in a larger area have been visited together with a small delegation of representatives of the Vital RA project, thus taking on the role originally set out for the mobile teams. Additionally to this, several webinars organised in 2014 have involved both internal and external experts on themes such as broadband and digital services, health and lifestyle or branding.

Finally, a "Get Together" Event was staged in June 2014, alongside the last partner meeting, to which some 15 external experts contributed in person or through Skype, of which 5 represented regions outside the NSR.

All partners have been involved in these observatories and activities and therefore have had a likewise strong or even stronger role in the dissemination strategy than with these mobile teams, participating in external project meetings, webinars or project presentations both within the observatories and beyond.

2.13 One communication system with filing system for documents and videos and information bank (1)

An internal website was already integrated in the previous version of the website www.vitalruralarea.eu, and is still fully operational and in use for (for example sharing reports on the partner meetings, the branding manual, periodic reports etc. The main deliverables of the project however the Rural Power Pack and the (results of) individual pilots, have become the core of the website as such and will remain open, accessible and (more frequently) updated, also after closure of the project.

2.14 Nine international partner meetings (9)

In the project lifetime a total of 14 partner meetings were organised, with the number of participants ranging from some 20 to more than 45, but mostly around 30-35. Some were "regular" meetings, some pre-meetings connected with the Policy Forums, and (almost) all meetings included separate, parallel workshop sessions for each of the Work Packages, to which often enough members of the Scientific Group or Team, or other external experts were invited. Most partner meetings en Policy Forum lasted 2 days, and were often connected with (optional) field trips or excursions.

Last partner meeting in June 2014 included a "Get Together" event on the third day, hosting 15 external visitors, also from regions outside the Vital partnership.

2.15 Twenty-one expert meetings for work packages (21)

Almost all meetings included separate, parallel workshop sessions for each of the Work Packages, to which often enough members of the Scientific Group or Team, or other external experts were invited. Additionally, all Policy Forums included (more than one) workshop sessions with external experts visiting these Forums.

There were also several "virtual" expert meetings, such as webinars and Skype meetings exchanging on RPP themes such as Broadband, Health and Branding. Most partners, but especially those already active in the Core Group or involved in the country pages (Vejen, Leiedal, NOFA, Rogaland/Finnøy, Langenhagen) were represented in at least one of these webinars/meetings, either by providing an external expert or by having an "internal" expert participate.

See also Section 14 on Communication/Publicity, and Newsletter 9/Table (Enclosures).

WP 3: Empowering SMEs

5 project partners have participated in this WP: NOFA, Wirtschaftsakademie SH (not part of perep6), Vejen, Friese Poort. The following observers have been added to this work package at a later stage: Streekplatform+ Meetjesland, Finnøy, Leiedal.

Chair: Norfolk County Council (NCC), UK.

3.1. to activate SMEs to co-operate with educational institutes and governmental organizations (triple helix)

NOFA: Triple helix networks have been built and are operational, or are under further construction (examples: Kenniswerkplaats, Socio economic masterplan, Innovatiehuis).

3.2 to fine-tune the needs and potentials of SMEs

Several pilots that included SME training or advice, such as STEPs in Norfolk or the Educationer e-learning courses, required a survey of the needs of SMEs, both in general or in specific sectors. This was carried out (with support of the scientific group and other experts) in the early stage of the project/workshop programme.

3.3 to encourage SMEs to develop new commercial products and processes

The idea of Innovative Startups has been evaluated and received regional follow up in the Innovation house Lauwersdelta (NOFA) and a similar institution in Rogaland. Both have recently been established following the example of project partner Vejen. Finalised, report available.

See also below for more examples.

3.4. to facilitate SME's to find potential successors especially for lifestyle businesses

See below, 3.2 etc. combined, Work Package 5 on (more) lifestyle related pilots, and: http://www.vitalruralarea.eu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=238&Itemid=85

3.2, 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5 combined:

This Work package contained a number of activities, including the development, testing and implementing of the pilots, which often enough included transferable tools that can also be applied elsewhere.

Some examples:

Friese Poort: Friese Poort designed a first digital e-learning course on solar heating. The learning module (Dutch, English, German) is designed for SMEs that specialize in installation and for people already working in this (engineering) sector, and focuses on lowering the threshold to access knowledge in innovative developments and tools, for (employees in these) SMEs who otherwise would not have the opportunities to innovate. The students learn how this works and how solar water heaters should be designed and installed. They will thus have added value for SMEs, allowing them to increase their jobs opportunities in renewable way. Similar modules were developed for Wind Power and Energy Saving (so far only German, to be tested/implemented later!).

Finnøy: Additional co-funding from Rogaland country council allowed the setting up a regional local-food centre, to support the local food producers/entrepreneurs, and includes an aquaculture park (blue food from the sea producing at land), expertise, advise, courses, education etc.

Norfolk: Activities on "STEPS" (building a skilled and competent workforce) and "Shaping Norfolk's Future" have had a good response of entrepreneurs participating in the (curriculum building) seminars, and other promotional activities, leading to new business innovations, cooperations and spin-offs. The implementing of an additional final project/pilot – Developing Norfolk's Future Workforce – needed to be put on hold due to a lack of progress that could not guarantee finalisation of the pilot within the remaining Vital Rural Area project lifetime

NOFA:

The NOFA-municipalities, in cooperation with regional stakeholders and the province of Fryslân, have developed a socio-economic "Masterplan" that defines the regional strategy for decades to come. This Masterplan is an instrument for realising goals of the Vital project.

This strategy has been worked out in a more concrete and sophisticated agenda for the coming years: Agenda Netwerk NoordOost (ANNO) for five years ahead. In this agenda the projects have been defined, partners have agreed upon finances and a structure has been built for carrying out projects (project manager, support structures as well as administrative as managerial.)

The Masterplan is a part of the Rural Power Pack, as are other pilots such as the Kenniswerkplaats (with it's pilot "steenmeel" (rock flower). A story telling format for the masterplan has been written and is available on the website (Challenges, proven solutions, barriers and tools).

The ANNO network, De Kenniswerkplaats and the project management of Vital have cooperated to disseminate the results of Vital Rural Area and Europe, and to start master classes on future European cooperation. A report of the kick-off of these master classes in March 2013 is available.

Additional Pilots include Innovation House Lauwersdelta, which was a "copy" of the Innovationshus in Vejen, and the "Golden Triangle" matching the needs and requirements of SMEs (skills and competences of future employees) with the curriculum of (vocational) schools and higher education.

Leiedal/West-Flanders:

West-Flanders had on own pilot on SME innovation, "business, it's us", working with ambassadors. Leiedal as part of West-Flanders disseminated the various pilots (also from other partners and work packages) realised as part of the RPP on SME empowerment were disseminated to local economy officers of Kortrijk region and the Leiedal board of directors.

Wirtschaftsakademie Schleswig-Holstein:

WAK-SH, after several internal changes, has almost finalised the pilot course on Geothermal Energy, which will be presented to Friese Poort early April 2014 and uploaded to educationer.eu shortly after. Also, work has started on an additional pilot course on Energy Saving, which was finalised before the end of the project. Both are not yet tested and translated, however.

The Friese Poort pilot on solar heating was translated into German and tested also for the German situation.

3.6 to draft a transferable working method on how to stimulate and empower SMEs to innovate

On project level the activities The Rural Power Pack has been delivered and is available on the website. All pilots from this (and other) WP were described in the new RPP format and (apart from a few remaining for an update late 2015/early 2016) added to the website.

The RPP is a living pack and will be evolved during the dissemination period and after. The RPP is also the base for future regional cooperation in European context, see – for example – the master classes that are being organised by NOFA.

WP4: Branding of the region

8 project partners in this WP: NOFA, Norfolk County, Langenhagen, Sluis, Finnøy, Leiedal, West-Flanders.
Observers: Fryslân, Rogaland, Vejen.

WP Chair Meetjesland has already delivered a final report on regional branding in a previous period.

Apart from developing a branding manual, also this Work package contained a number of activities, focusing on the development, testing and implementing of pilots, that often enough included transferable tools that can also be applied elsewhere.

4.1 to fine-tune the character / identity, key qualities and potentials in a region

4.2. to develop a brand (story+marketing strategy) on the basis of a combined research (in 2a)

Previous to writing the branding manual and working on individual pilots, a survey was staged in all partner regions participating in this WP, leading to some (first) recommendations,

Some examples from the partnership (see also 4.3 and 4.4):

Finnøy:

The result of the work in WP 4 during the project-period has led a strategic plan for profiling Finnøy and a long term plan of Finnøy (2013-2021). During the last period additional funds from the department of municipalities in Norway for starting a new project for the different islands in Finnøy, using the volunteers for developing the local societies. Rural Power Pack will be an important tools to bring into the new project. The new project will be following with interest from the department, who has been given us the money.

Also a new web-site for branding and profiling Finnøy as "the light and lively islands" was set up. Activities during the Vital Rural Area- period (also WP 4 and 5) will be included on the new website.

Also some dissemination activities have been carried out, extending outside the project period, including a big conference at Finnøy during the 2014 Tomato Festival (on food and branding, organised by the project Vital Rural Area together with Ryfylke Næringshage and the tomato-festival.

Meetjesland:

Strategy for Network Organization (The Cooperative Agreement Approach):

Re-organisation of the regional cooperation into a new model.

The process on developing a new regional organisation model continues. The focus lies on the integration of ca. 7 regional organizations into 1 central structure for regional development and intermunicipal cooperation. Avoiding fragmentation in different strategies, action plans, communication initiatives, political decisions, etc. is the main goal.

The local governments (13 municipalities and the province) will be the founding members, they will form a Board and will determine the yearly activities.

In June 11 Municipality Councils approved the installation of a so called Official 'Consultative Organ' (see Flemish decree on Intermunicipality Cooperation). The frequent meetings started in September. Political viewpoints were translated step by step into a practical plan. This plan was ready in December 2013. In January it was approved by 11 City Councils. In the months after that, the 7 organisations prepared the practical implementation. Starting date is scheduled on September 1st 2014 or January 1st 2015.

4.3. to communicate the brand to inhabitants, companies and organizations

and 4.4 to promote the region outside the region using the brand and marketing strategy

NOFA: Dwaande website with information about routes and campaign with social media and various other branding activities involving tourism & entrepreneurship, a network of ambassadors as used in Meetjesland has also been implemented.

After launching Dwaande in 2011/12, Northeast Fryslân has continuously invested in. In addition, the ambassador network expanded and the tourist business network invested in the promotion of cooperation and knowledge. Also, a digital platform for the region has been set up and expanded. Research has been conducted under entrepreneurs, the results being good: The campaign is known and valued by most of the entrepreneurs and a great part of the entrepreneurs is willing to contribute in the campaign.

Sluis, Zeeland Flanders: their activities focuses on regional branding with the term borderless or boundary free Zeeland Flanders, "Onbegrensd Zeeuws-Vlaanderen". This includes (education oriented) activities with youth ambassadors, multimedia communication and (launching) a promotion platform for the region, providing a solution to embed the platform in to the communities. Learned from all of the partners.

Used best practices and implemented the regional branding model we developed together; brand has been fully implemented and is used on products and services (local delicacies, but also holiday/tourist package deals).

Meetjesland:

The regional branding is a very big success, this is due mainly to the VRA-project. Since the start of the project the brand 'Meetjesland' has grown stronger and is used by the 14 municipalities, 20 organizations and more than 60 companies, and includes a growing network of "ambassadors".

Internal Branding: Implementation of the Meetjesland Brand, some highlights being:

- Meetjesland Newyears Reception: the biggest yearly network event in the region, that nobody wants to miss. 400 policy makers and society representatives attended. The Vital Rural Power Pack was presented. The Meetjesland Brand is a 'binding element'.

- 'Annual Meetjesland Day': Around Summer Solstice in June is 'National Meetjesland Day': many initiatives around the region and its brand. Call to local governments, societies, organisations, ... to do something special: a picnic, a small present to all workers in a company, a drink, a happy hour, in the third event (2014 it also included a Meetjesland Midsummer Event on June 21st: yearly internal network event, for all people who are involved in regional development (personal invitation of about 800 people of our network).

- Social Media: we took initiative to share social media initiatives, together with other organisations (Tourism and Culture Meetjesland), including Facebook 'Meetjesland' daily feeding the regional facebook page with about 2.000 'friends', and the Meetjesland Twitter account with 358 followers.

Exchanging for both Leiedal and Meetjesland was also set up with the NOFA partners.

Langenhagen: the Pferdestärken Langenhagen Campaign was a success and led to a "food and bicycle tour" and several other activities and spin-offs. After finalising (within the Vital Rural Area framework) to work on events and activities connected to the "story of Langenhagen", following the tradition of the city as a city of horse breeding, - selling and –related sports. As this idea has not been that successful (in terms of being applied by entrepreneurs and organisations), additionally to the activities in the context of horses an outstanding event was launched in the previous period, the so-called KriminaLa – a festival around a crime story, where people wherever they live could take part – was also further pursued. The organizers used a similar network as before but enlarged it majorly. The KriminaLa brought attention to Langenhagen from radio and TV stations.

Apart from the KriminaLa event and website several follow-up events connected with regional food and rural landscape and an exhibition/event for SMEs were planned for the final period of the project and later on in 2014. The exhibition "Langenhagen in the midst of Europe" will take place on May 16-17Th, combined with an international forum on the results of Vital rural area. A brochure on people from European countries living in Langenhagen, firms with international range and talented youths with migration background will be launched in May, too. All events that were created due to the pilot of Langenhagen go on in 2014 and the second KriminaLa gains more interest of the radio stations that are willing to take over a role as hint giver in July 2014.

The responsibility for the pilot was changed – all events are taken over by the office of economic development of the municipality of Langenhagen whereas the exhibition and the KriminaLa stayed with the former project manager.

Leiedal:

As part of West-Flanders Leiedal mainly focused on presenting (WP4 related) results from other project partners in this WP, for example to local governments, and own results from other WPs were presented alongside.

Also, feasibility studies to test communication and branding approaches developed by Vital Rural Area partners in domains of housing and mobility in rural areas were set up.

Vejen:

In Vejen, all pilot activities have been completed in previous period(s).

A lot of 'follow-up' activities based on the pilots are now running, but these activities are mainly financed by Vejen Kommune.

West-Vlaanderen:

West-Flanders successfully set up the campaign "Iedereen West-Vlaams"(everyone West-Flemish) which included a language/proverbs app that become popular all over Belgium in 2013. In the same year a regional marketing congress 2013 with the same name was set up: during this regional marketing congress, that was attended by 130 stakeholders, we looked back and evaluated our efforts, during the last 10 years, to launch a new brand and 3 spearheads for the region of West Flanders and a new profile for our provincial organisation.

Also in 2013 a monitoring of the brand was set up and presented during the Regional marketing congress. This was a combination of online monitoring and interviews by telephone (600 respondents). Some results (see also enclosure/press release): 79% agrees with the baseline of West Flanders : 'de gedreven provincie' ('the driven province'). 85% thinks that West Flanders is attractive for tourism and recreation, 82% confirms that West Flanders is an enterprising region and 85% thinks West Flanders is a region with high quality of life. The provincial logo can be described by 20%.

Tour of West Flanders: the provincial government wants to profile itself as a knowledge partner for the 64 West Flemish municipalities. Therefore the Deputation visits all these municipalities between June 2013 and June 2014. The visits are divided per region and started in June 2013 in the 10 coastal municipalities. The last months the visits continued in the North of West Flanders and Central West Flanders. During these visits the Deputation in the first place wanted to listen to the questions and needs of the local mayor and aldermen. These visits are accompanied by a communication campaign in the most important regional newspaper , 'De Krant van West-Vlaanderen'.

4.5 to monitor the activities, results and impact of the branding and marketing approach (image evolution) and 4.6 to draft a transferable working method on how to brand a region in a structured and professional way

Following the example of Meetjesland as chair of this WP, most partners have actively monitored the impact of branding, by contacting the entrepreneurs or residents.

Deliverables of all pilots have been evaluated and studied in previous periods by the scientific team, as regard to content and practical use and their relevance for compiling the RPP. Best cases, tools and "do's and don'ts" have been selected as part of the RPP.

See also examples under 4.2 to 4.4.

WP5: Optimizing services

5 project partners in this WP: NOFA, Vejen, Rogaland, Finnøy, Leiedal.

The Province of Fryslân is as a project-partner involved in WP5 and is also the Chair of this work package.

The WP focuses on promoting new or improved ways of wellbeing using innovative technologies; To experiment with a number of (innovative) health care concepts, e.g. in extramural e-health and e-care; To monitor the activities, results and impact.

As in the other Work packages, this WP also contained a number of activities, including the development, testing and implementing of pilots, that often enough included transferable tools that can also be applied elsewhere.

Within the framework of the activities 5.1 and 5.2. the Province of Fryslân has been executing different activities in this reporting period related to its pilot-project 'Smart Rural Network Society' (Dorpshuis Nieuwe Stijl) in the village of Burum (Municipality of Kollumerland). The project consists of different components, see also under 5.2.

5.1 to fine-tune the needs and preferences of the local population with regards to services and facilities in the field of wellbeing and health care

Similar to the WPs 3 and 4, the pilots in this WP required a survey of the needs of SMEs, both in general or in specific sectors such as health care/lifestyle. This was carried out (with support of the scientific group and other experts) in the early stage of the project/workshop programme.

5.2 to promote new or improved ways of wellbeing using innovative technologies

The pilots in this WP include:

Fryslân:

Within the framework of the WP phases the Province of Fryslân has been executing different activities in this reporting period related to its pilot-project 'Smart Rural Network Society' (Dorpshuis Nieuwe Stijl) in the village of Burum (Municipality of Kollumerland).

These activities were the following (in addition also relevant communication- and dissemination-activities that created exposure for the project will be mentioned):

Project management: The project group, which is in charge of the overall project management and is composed of the project managers of the different components of the project.

Digital platform and digital applications: The different functions already developed and integrated in the Digital Platform, <http://burum.openportaal.nl/>, including an agenda, information on all local activities, a newsarchive, photos, a local digital social community (a kind of local Facebook), three existing external healthcare-applications (mijngezondheid.net, wijhelpen.nl and a digital consulting facility between a regional home care organisation and the inhabitants of Burum) and tweets about Burum. These have been optimised, technically as well as regarding the content. Furthermore the new application Web RTC (a digital application enabling face to face contact from different (mobile) devices for different services and purposes) has been developed further, and the first tests have been executed.

Late 2013 the formal kick-off has taken place of the development of a new digital application for local exchange of private books, and to bring the centralized library closer to the habitants of small villages. These new applications have been delivered and integrated in the digital platform.

Rogaland/Finnøy:

The lifestyle training course has now been implemented with over 150 participants and a "translation" into different strategy plans and budgets, both regional and local: for example the long term budget for the municipality has confirmed how the pilot can continue after the end of the project period. Also, the pilot has been "exported" to at least 7 other municipalities in different parts of the country.

NOFA:

Examples of successful pilots in this WP are "Klasseglas" bringing fibre to the classroom and connecting "regular" lessons with the outside world and schools elsewhere, "Virtuual service desk" and (participation in the Fryslân pilot "Smart Rural Network Society").

A specific pilot on "Regional coverage of Services" resulted in finding new ways to deal with demographic change and the loss of facilities has been finalised.

Facilities such as schools and sports facilities are important to the vitality of the region. In what way can we maintain the necessary services affordable and accessible to the residents of the region? The population trends and the unfavorable economic situation affect instance such as sports clubs and schools. These are increasingly difficult to maintain. This was the reason to start the ambitious project "Regional coordination facilities" within the Agenda Network Northeast.

The goal of the project is :

- maintain or achieve (necessary) features that are exploitable and thus " future-proof " , either :
- a range of high quality services appropriate to the expected composition and size of the population of the Northeast region of Friesland
- prevent individual consideration and decision of individual municipalities leads to a reduction in the level of facilities in the region
- getting support among the population for the choices.

In the period 2012 - 2013, research has been done by the University of Groningen, in close collaboration with a working group composed of six municipalities that are members of the Northeast Agenda Network (ANNO) and the province are represented. The consequences of population trends for facilities in the region have been considered. The result is contained in the report "Towards a regional distribution model facilities in North Friesland 2020-2030".

The report provides insight into the required number of facilities. This is based on two survey years: 2020 and 2030. Municipalities face complex choices: Where is it and what is not invested? How can facilities structure be maintained with sufficient guarantees for the quality of life, with regards to accessibility, diversification, opportunities to actively participate and meeting needs in the areas of education, welfare, culture, and sports. The report provides information which can be used in making such choices.

Another specific pilot was "Think don't drink", which was set up by a youth group and focused on preventing abuse by youth and consisted of a campaign featuring four films and a final film, that has been made to reflect the impact assessment. This film is available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RJYvgKZVRXg>.

Leiedal:

A number of digital pilots and services on lean government services and e-inclusion were set up, for example "Ugly Spots, co-creation of a public Space", based on an interactive web portal with GIS and Social Media links, where citizens could discuss and report "ugly spots". Results for improvements were then presented by students and professional designers, and also discussed on the platform, after which a selection of the plans and recommendations was implemented by the local governments.

Vejen:

A number of pilots around digital (broadband) networks and services was setup within Vital, including a "Digital e-commerce toolkit" and portal for advice to SMEs, a "network of digital ambassadors" providing an introduction (through peers/ambassadors) of digital self-service , and "improving elderly care by video-conferencing". This made Vejen to become one of the digital rural capitals in Europe, featuring the European Commission Digital Agenda, a Whitebook on broadband and digital services, and its rural best practices.

5.3 to experiment with a number of health care concepts

5.4 and 5.5 to monitor the activities

Monitoring the result of pilot activities is part of the pilots (see examples under 5.2 and 5.3). Deliverables of all pilots have been evaluated and studied, also by the scientific team as regard to content and practical use and their relevance for compiling the Rural Power Pack. The RPP is a "living" pack (or toolbox) and will be evolved during the dissemination period and after.

WP6 Scientific monitoring and support

6.1 Monitoring of project activities, presentation of proposals for improvement, design of a general working method/standard.

The Scientific Group as Where in previous pereps the focus of the project management in this WP was on bundling the results of the work done so far in the Work Packages and translating the (results of) individual pilots into the Rural Power Pack, the work on the RPP has now been finalised in the beginning of this period, after presentation and discussion at the Policy Forum, though updating (also of the website) will continue until the end of the project. Monitoring of the pilots is still ongoing, both in general and specifically as part of the RPP.

The dissemination of project-activities and –results was another main focus of the project management in this period, as was the preparation of a project extension (and connected financial issues and discussions with the JTS in Viborg).

For additional information on the project dissemination: see WP2, especially 2.10-2.12, and Section 14 on Communications (and Publicity).

6.2 Publication of 4 scientific articles in refereed magazines

The Scientific Team has finalised its work on three scientific articles already in 2012/2013, and submitted them for publication. Three scientific articles are submitted to peer-reviewed journals by members of the scientific team:

- Rural service provision in the digital age: concepts and evidence from Vital Rural Area, submitted to Journal of Rural Studies;
- Re-inventing policy measures from SME empowerment: lessons from Vital Rural Area, submitted to Journal of Rural Studies;
- Branding rural areas: motives, measures and management, submitted to Sociologia Ruralis.

Until formal publication they are however still awaiting (scientific) screening and approval, this is (still) expected to only take place well after closure and reporting of the project.

The late finalisation of the RPP and start of the dissemination phase, and a better insight on the material available, led to the conclusion that the three articles covered all aspects of the project and that an additional scientific article (or more) would provide no added value.

The (draft) articles are available on the project website.

6.3 End-of-project evaluation

The end-of –project evaluation was already foreseen as part of the final reporting on the Vital Rural Area project. Elements for this are the fifth and last Indicator Analysis, which had some additional questions on the project lifetime as a whole, this report (and the underlying partner reports as such), and the final Newsletter which is an executive/popular summary of this reporting round.

As described below and above, all projects objectives and indicators have been more than achieved, with a tested and working (Rural Power Pack) toolbox integrated in the website, 45 pilots as part of this (some of which transferred to other partners!), and various other measurable and tangible results of the project.

Aims and objectives overview

Aim/Objective	Rating	Comment
Project Aim	Fully achieved	A web-based toolbox with best practices was delivered and disseminated both and outside the partnership, alongside more than 45 individual pilots, roughly doubling the number of th ones originally planned.
project objectives	Fully achieved	See above
1) to stimulate the establishment of new SMEs in rural areas and to empower existing SMEs	Fully achieved	See above
2) to build a positive image of a region as an attractive place to live, work, invest and relax	Fully achieved	See above, also a manual for regional branding was delivered and implemented in various regions
3) to optimize the level and quality of social services and facilities in peripheral areas	Fully achieved	See above

5. Results and Impacts

Tangible results and impacts

#	Main Results Category	Description of results	Result it used by	Impact of result
1	Training and staff exchange programmes (target: 8)	A total of 23 courses (IT based courses, energy and renewable energy courses, exchange programmes for teaching staff, employees and/or students) were delivered.	SMEs from several sectors, educational institutes, individual students, teachers and employees	safeguarding and creating jobs in various sectors, (more) skilled employees, innovations within various SMEs/sectors, new products or services for individual SMEs, spin-offs
2	Transnational demonstration project and pilot schemes, demo cases/working methods within the 3 WP's on SMEs, Branding, and welfare/well-being	A total of 43 demo cases and were delivered within the 3 Work Packages	SMEs and sectors, education/health institutes, Regional authorities, tourist/marketing offices and development agencies, health providers, network organisations, individual employees, students, teachers, local residents	New and improved tools and strategies for (rural) regions in decline, more qualified workforce, more innovation within SMEs and sectors. new (types of services) and methods applied
3	Rural Power Pack developed and disseminated to Europe 27	A web-based toolkit of pilots and methods/tools	regional actors and stakeholders, professional working in rural/regional development, SMEs, authorities etc. within the partner areas and beyond (Europe 28)	Strengthening rural regions in decline

6. Material Investments

Benefits of investments

Material Investment	Benefit of investment

7. Transnationality

Transnational and cross-sectoral co-operation

Work Package	Method	Comments
Project Management	Joint activities only	
Publicity and Communication	Mix of local and joint activities	
empowerment of SMEs	Mix of local and joint activities	
regional branding	Mix of local and joint activities	Apart from individual pilot activities a manual for regional branding was developed and several pilots were transferred to other regions
wellbeing and services	Mix of local and joint activities	Apart from individual pilot activities some joint tools/approaches were developed and several pilots were transferred to other regions

scientific monitoring and support	Joint activities only	Development of the Rural Power Pack
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Intensity of co-operation between the lead beneficiary and the beneficiaries
9

Intensity of co-operation between the beneficiaries
9

Added value of working transnationally
<p>The application and the work packages have been developed based on common problems and common challenges. In each of the work packages, the pilots and their results and ideas contributed to each other's pilot development and to the fortification of rural areas. In all three content related Work Packages joint strategies, training/courses and or manuals, tools or methods were developed that enabled the delivery of the pilots. On the internal website partners share documents and exchange experiences.</p> <p>Individual partner cooperation has led to several cross-fertilising (new) pilots, as the (example of the "Innovation house" in Vejen shows, that now has followers being developed in Northeast Friesland and Rogaland. Similarly, the branding strategy of Meetjesland and the use of ambassadors has received followers such as NOFA and Langenhagen, and attracted "regional" partners such as Sluis (Zeeuws-Vlaanderen/Zeealand-Flanders branding).</p> <p>At all project meetings it has been discussed/decided upon how interaction and co-operation between pilot activities of different partner-regions can take place, how already present or newly obtained knowledge can be shared, which monitoring tools and report formats will be used and so on.</p> <p>The project has been advised by a scientific committee and project-activities are monitored by this committee. Sharing all relevant project information with the outer-project world is done through the project's external website, from which the Rural Power Pack now is the core.</p> <p>With the delivery of the Rural Power Pack the project management has now more or less finalised its contacts with the Scientific Group and Team.</p> <p>Best practices of the WP's have been selected to contribute to the RPP on project level, they will continue to be extended with examples from outside the partnership.</p>

Transnational project management tools								
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Transnational working tools				
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Difficulties encountered
<p>Not really a difficulty as such, but in the process of developing a more web-based Rural Power Pack, it was discovered that the initially foreseen "mobile teams" would involve a lot of (travel) time and probably therefore be less efficient and effective. Instead a combination of a small dissemination team, webinars, stakeholder events/masterclasses etc. within the partner regions, visits to and presentations for sister projects and intermediate organisations (EFRD, other), Annual Events, Open Days and national events was chosen, using the website (additional country pages) and the final partner meeting with "Get Together Event" as final culmination of the dissemination phase. On the Get Together, some 15 external participants, including some 5 participants (in person and/or through Skype, video message) from a region outside the NSR, extended the Vital partnership and brought the results into other regions and future projects.</p>

Horizontal and Vertical Integration

Sectors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public - Private - Research/Education - NGO's/Foundations

Levels of authorities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local - Regional - National - European

What was the benefit of working with different sectors and levels?

For the project as a whole, all activities within the work packages have been prepared in co-operation with relevant regional stakeholders, and the project is advised and monitored by a scientific team and group. This ensures that the project undertakes activities that are relevant to the involved regions, and are in line with already known and evolving scientific insights on the addressed problems and topics.

All pilots and Work Package results have now been added to the structure, themes and best practices within the Rural Power Pack. There have been several inter-project contacts with related IV-B projects, such as the NWE project rural Alliance, the North Sea cluster-project DANS and other (INTERREG and non-INTERREG) EU-projects and/or rural regions outside the partnership, providing additional knowledge exchange and supporting both the project and pilot outcomes.

8. Equal opportunities

How has the project contributed towards equal opportunities in practice (inclusion of minority groups and/or gender)?

Internally: in the participation to partner meetings, there was a more or less equal "spread" in terms of both genders contributing, also in terms of for example only female project leaders being involved by some partners!

Externally: special focus was given to youth, also in creating new jobs and designated courses in their region, elderly (in the health/services pilots for example), and in including especially smaller entrepreneurs/SMEs (covering all groups in society) in the pilots. Also, the youth oriented pilots and activities showed a relatively high number of female participants, for example the discussion at last Policy Forum, or the contributors to the "Net Nix" youth video pilot for example. Similarly, the health and lifestyle course in Norway shows a relatively large number of female participants.

9. Lisbon/Gothenburg

The EU Sustainable Development Strategy (EU SDS) and the Lisbon Strategy

Almost all pilots contribute to the Lisbon strategy in being innovative and focusing on SMEs. See also some example under "Innovation".

All pilots are at least "neutral" in terms of sustainability/environment (Gothenburg, EU SDS), with some being specifically positive, such as the pilot on "Rock flour"(innovative and sustainable fertilizer), E-course on Solar, Wind Power and Energy Saving, the sustainable food and cycling/sustainable tourism activities in Norway, Sluis, Langenhagen and other regions, etc.

10. Innovation

Innovative Approach

Overall partnership: The Rural Power Pack and the (underlying) Cooperative Agreement Approach represent innovative approaches as such, resulting in the web-based RPP as a toolkit and best practices database for rural regions. Also, the (manual for) regional branding strategy and

Examples on a partner level include –

NOFA/Fryslân:

Combining forces in the region and transnational; cooperation is a way of making a real difference in rural areas. This accounts for the "Kenniswerkplaats" pilot and its related pilots (such as rock flower / "steenmeel") that is seen as an example both nationally and internationally and the region's socio-economic Masterplan, that is developed as a shared instrument of all governments and regional stakeholders, leading to new projects and pilots. It defines a common agenda for the developments of years to come and combines knowledge, funding and labour of all participants to realise this common agenda. This Masterplan therefore is also regarded as a "best practice" on the national level.

Norfolk:

The pilots "STEPS" (building a skilled and competent workforce) and "Shaping Norfolk's Future" provide innovative examples of activities that have led to a good response of entrepreneurs participating in the (curriculum building) seminars, and other promotional activities, leading to new business innovations, cooperations and spin-offs.

Friese Poort:

Awareness of the need that sustainable houses and installation is the new future. The existing installation firms have to invest in education and training of their staff. The test of the course with the SME's, including practical games to build solar water systems, and the preparing of practical jobs in a digital way through the website www.educationer.eu provides an innovative way of training to both students and professionals. It also creates an international network for knowledge exchange and experiences, for both SME and education centres.

Wirtschaftsakademie Schleswig-Holstein:

The dissemination concerning the WPs has not started yet so there is not much promotion activity. There is activity on-going to make a homepage for renewable energy together with Friese Poort.

Fryslan:

The digital platform Burum, the pilot on "Smart Rural Network Society", is an innovative example of a digital local platform/portal now presented elsewhere in the province and beyond

Vejen:

By disseminating experience from Vital Rural Area and the Rural Power Pack we want to inspire and contribute to innovation in other regions. Cross border communication and networking activities bring us together with new persons from other rural districts, and we are very often inspired from each other to go on with new development activities. The Innovation House was exported to both the NOFA region and Rogaland.

Langenhagen:

The idea of "horsemanship" as a tradition didn't work as well as envisaged, as local entrepreneurs didn't want to engage in this "brand" without money and especially associations wanted to draw EU-money without taking part in further activities. Therefore additional ideas of outstanding new events to attract people to Langenhagen was created food and cultural cycle tour, "crime scene" event involving local actors/celebrities and the general public, which has worked well so far.

Leiedal:

The proposed scenarios on the Colloquium, and mainly the Three tracks strategy, is a completely innovative way of regional development. It is a methodology to be implemented by governments as well as by civil society, private actors, etc.

The launch of the Microsoft Innovation Centre has partly been triggered by the attention in the Kortrijk region on services related to prevention/health/care.

The ugly spots approach is unique in the sense that the co-design will lead to real change in the public space. The model has been copied in the province of Antwerp and is currently rolled out in 50 municipalities.

The LEAN approach offers way of addressing 'fat' in organisations, and as part of Vital was proven to be a valid approach also for rural areas and rural located local authorities.

Rogaland:

The use of ICT as our main tool has led to different aspects of innovation. ICT has thereby become a natural part of our infrastructure. Our aim is that ICT will optimize the level of services within the municipality of Finnøy and that the different, planned pilot activities will be more accessible and user friendly thanks to the new ICT tools. We sincerely believe that the effect of the new ICT tools will be of significant use for the individual inhabitant and visitor (mainly tourists). Further, that this will act as a good example and will inspire other municipalities – nationally and internationally, to start similar programs.

West-Flanders:

The "Iedereen Westvlaams" (everyone West-Flemish) app is a good example of combining an innovative branding strategy with new media.

Meetjesland:

The use of ambassadors to present the logo and transfer it broader among (especially) SMEs and other private and public organisations, is one of the innovative examples

Sluis:

The strong brand developed within the project was used in a innovative way, both in local products and tourist packages, as well as in presenting the region nationally and internationally on events such as the Dutch "Immigration (!) Fair" during several years, later together with Meetjesland.

11. Territorial Cohesion

Territorial Cohesion

The project was initiated from the background that several rural areas are facing particular challenges as regards growth, jobs and sustainability. The regions from The Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Denmark, Norway and the United Kingdom working together in the project VRA, are all confronted with a number of common and comparable hurdles for economic growth. In the preparation phase of this project, the partners agreed to focus on three topics: empowerment of SMEs (WP3), regional branding (WP4), and wellbeing and services (WP5). As transnational project partners they also took the decision to join forces and to work together in a concerted way (a) to find common solutions for these shared problems, (b) to set up a transferable method of working how to solve similar issues in a later phase or another region, (c) to disseminate the (policy) results to local, regional, national and European policymakers, and (d) to actively present a transferable method (with guidelines), the "Rural Power Pack" to other rural areas in Europe²⁷.

The RPP has been built by translating the project and project pilots in a sustainable method of regional development, tailored to regional situations in a four layer approach: problem analysis, proposed solution, barriers and tools. The leitmotif in this approach has been the Cooperative Agreement Approach (CAA), a way of cooperation based on: Common vision and goals, Bundled forces and resources and Shared solutions within a region and within the partnership. The CAA as key element of the Rural Power Pack, has directly contributed to the territorial cohesion within the partnership as a whole.

Some key achievements with direct or indirect implications towards territorial cohesion, include the creation and strengthening of networks, such as regional and transnational quadruple/quintuple helix networks, Innovation houses (as an example of a good practice in one region implemented in 2 other partner regions), and the establishment of regional platforms especially for branding, innovation/knowledge transfer, broadband and digital agenda (several pilots examples and tools) and specific sectors such as health care.

12. Knowledge transfer

Knowledge Transfer: Interreg

Type	Name	Description – including outcomes
Interreg IVB project	ACE for Energy	Some exchange with this project on renewable energy in NWEurope was established, focusing especially on vital (sustainable) communities (smart network society pilot, others) and the energy e-learning courses in Vital, leading eventually to a country page for France featuring the French partner in ACE and cooperation/ participation in follow up projects.
Interreg IVB project	Rural Alliances	Focusing on the same issues in the NWE programma, a frequent exchange with the Rural alliances project was established, especially focusing on the Rural Power Pack and follow-up activities and/or future projects.
Interreg IVB project	MP 4 (Making Places Profitable)	Together with this project an extension was built focusing on an additional pilots/Work Package featuring the "Kenniswerkplaats" approach - this was not accepted due to overlap. However close cooperation and exchange continued, also with the DC NOISE project. A cluster however was not feasible.
Interreg IIIIB project	NS Rural, BESST, URBAL	The Vital Project was partly built on the outcomes of these projects

Knowledge Transfer: Other

Type	Name	Description – including outcomes
	Networks such as ENRD, LEADER, EIP-Agri, RURACT	Both in searching additional partners for (future) observatories and follow-up projects, contact to these networks was established. Also others were contacted on events (such as the Open Days, Annual Conference) where the project was presented, such as the "Summer School for sustainable Tourism 2013" where especially the branding pilots presented.

Has the project contributed to current/future policies/practices/initiatives? At what levels?

Name of initiative	Level of initiative
Project initiative SELF, featuring on participation models in urban and (especially) rural settings (INTERREG VB NSR, follow-up in other EU and national programmes intended).	European

13. Perspectives

Long Term Perspectives

Will co-operation between project partners continue after the closure of the project?
Yes, this has already been effectuated in new proposals or ideas.
Please describe how you are going to take forward the follow up activities as were identified in section 12 of your project application
<p>Dissemination was an important component of the project and all partners have been involved in the dissemination phase. In this phase the aims and results of European cooperation, The North Sea Region programme and The Vital Rural Area Project have been presented on several occasions, as a first step to discuss new possibilities for new projects.</p> <p>Following the last Policy Forum in September 2013, local activities such as the "Master Classes" in Northeast Fryslân, and the final partner meeting (with a "Get Together Event" on the third day), first steps towards future projects were undertaken in the second half of 2014. In 2015 most partners are being or have been involved in new project application for INTERREG VB NSR, cross-border or other EU Programmes. The website will be updated based on the final activities (and reports), and will continue to be updated in the coming years, adding links to "follow-up" projects and new partners and countries linked to the Vital project or follow-ups, with best (occasional) practices to be added to the Rural Power Pack and underlying pilots.</p> <p>The legacy of the project is (to be) a dynamic one – not just some reports and website(s) remaining, but also an active participation of the partners and future projects, giving a new boost or even update to some of the pilots and continuing the implementation of (lessons learned in) the Rural Power Pack and the Cooperative Agreement Approach in other projects and regions.</p> <p>First examples are the INTERREG VB project proposal "SELF" (www.interregself.eu) on local participation and sustainable communities in which several Vital partners participate, and the project idea "Smart Brands", which was developed (by partners in and) based on the results of WP 4 on "Branding".</p>

14. Communications

Communications and Publicity

Organisational set-up in communications and publicity
<p>Following the application form and communication strategy developed and implemented, the following elements can be distinguished:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create house style with tagline, logo, etc. 2. External website with regular updates and update alerts: important also in featuring the Rural Power Pack (major update!), distribution of all pilot results, display of all major events such as the Policy Forums, distribution channel for Newsletter and (the announcement of) webinars and local events in the dissemination phase etc. 3. Ten HTML Newsletters, describing the project, the RPP and individual pilots from the Work Packages, events such as the policy forums etc. 4. Twelve presentations at international seminars: including smaller events with international participants on a national or regional level, this was well (more than) achieved 5. One documentary web video, updated and extended more than once 6. One manual (on regional branding, as spin off of WP 5) 7. Twelve local public exhibition / awareness meetings: almost all 13 partners have organised more than one of these events, throughout the project/pilot phase and/or the dissemination phase 8. Three inter-project workshops: these ranged from external project representatives being present in workshop session in Vital partner meetings or Policy Forums or vice versa, to closer collaboration as with the "Rural Alliances" (INTERREG IVB NWE) or Making Places Profitable (MP4, IVB NSR), with which development of an extension and cluster (together with DC NOISE) was discussed. 9. Four international Policy Forums, organised almost annually throughout the project. 10. A general working method / standard on how to set up regional projects on rural development (Rural Power Pack), developed eventually into a web-based tool-box 11. One dissemination / marketing strategy, basically resulting in the final dissemination phase of the project 12. Deployment of a mobile implementation team – instead a change of strategy has been implemented, and now includes of a network of (fixed) observatories embedded in the "country pages" on the website and set up by the project partners and associated partners, rather than using a mobile team. From these observatories, both own events (such as the "Get Together" meeting in June 2014 and partner region events) and webinars have been organised, as well as project meetings, workshops, webinars conferences and individual regions in a larger area have been visited together with representatives of the Vital RA project, thus taking on the role originally set out for the mobile teams. 13. One communication system with filing system for documents and videos and information bank – integrated in the (partly internal) website. 14. Nine international partner meetings – eventually 14 throughout the project lifetime. 15. Twenty-one expert meetings for work packages – eventually more than 30 meetings, parallel to the partner meetings or as individual (core group) meetings during the implementation of the RPP, and expert "webinars" in the dissemination phase of the project.
Plaque to identify the source of funding
No
If no, please elaborate
No material investments

State briefly how well the project met its overall aim and objectives in communicating the project as stated in the project communication plan

In the dissemination phase, a combination of local events (dissemination within the partner regions) and contacts and/or visits to regions outside the project area was foreseen. Latter was originally planned with "mobile teams", but it turned out that use of the redeveloped website and new media, including webinars, in combination with individual contacts to external regions and large external events were just as (or even more) effective.

The dissemination phase resulted in several expert webinars through Skype on subjects such as broadband internet and (digital) health services, local branding campaigns and events in almost all partner regions, Master Classes and (so far) 10 country pages from all VRA partner regions and some external regions, following (Skype) visits to the "Get Together" event in June 2014. More external country pages will be added in the (near) future, as a follow-up of contacts in external (project) meetings and new projects to be set up. Newsletter 9 and a table of all events provide the report of the dissemination phase - both were added as enclosures.

Finally, as already mentioned, the Policy Forums, web presence and visits to large external events proved successful elements in the communication and dissemination of the project as a whole but also (results of) individual pilots.

Did you meet the indicators as stated in the project communication plan?

Yes

If no, please elaborate

State briefly the most important achievements in communications and publicity over the lifetime of the project

- Digital presence: use of the updated website www.vitalruralarea.eu (well over 15,000 visitors and 50,000 page views) for building and dissemination of the Rural Power pack, but also events as the Policy Forums, a web-video and links to pilot descriptions and video's distribution of the Newsletters etc.; the website www.educationer.eu for the e-learning tools developed (focusing on SMEs, for e-learning on energy solutions: over 30,000 visitors) and numerous webpages and links on a partner level.
- presence of the project or individual partners/pilots on EU wide events (Open Days, EU meetings on digital agenda etc.), national conferences and events (Norwegian conference on Lifestyle and Health, Dutch EU Open/Showcase Days "Europa Kijkdagen", etc.
- establishing links to partner or other EU projects, such as "Rural Alliances" (INTERREG IVB NW Europe), Making Places Profitable MP4 (www.mp4-interreg.eu, IVB NSR), ACE for Energy (www.aceforenergy.eu, IVB NWE), the NSR DANS Cluster (www.dans-cluster.eu) and numerous others through the partners, leading eventually to new project partnerships for VB project proposals.
- establishing links to network organisations such as the European Network for Rural development ENRD (<https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/>), LEADER+, the RURACT, the EIP-AGRI Network, and specific events such as the "Summer School for Sustainable Tourism 2013" where especially the branding pilots presented..
- more local or regional "awareness" meetings, with participation of politicians, entrepreneurs and other stakeholders, and the number of participants ranging from 25 or 30 to several hundred or even more for example the "Meetjesland" day, the Langenhagen local food, culture and bicycle tour, or the Finnøy "Tomato Festival".

State briefly the biggest challenges in communicating the project

Internally: As Branding was one of the Work packages of the project, branding of the regions participating in this WP on a regional level, involving businesses, local governments, tourism sector and other stakeholders, was both a key deliverable and challenge of this project. This worked well once ambassadors were involved, but also required political backing as was not always the case (Langenhagen) and consistency of national policy, as was the case for Meetjesland (brand successful, organisations as such has meanwhile been suspended).

Externally: the originally foreseen involved of mobile teams to facilitate the transfer and dissemination to other regions proved both difficult to organise (given the delay in the Rural Power Pack delivery and therefore late start of the Dissemination Phase) and less effective than using the chosen, online format for the RPP. A combination of online presence (including country pages), webinars, personal visits to external projects and meetings, presence at large national and EU events and development of new project ideas proved a more effective and efficient approach.

15. Programme Impacts

Programme level impacts

The finalising of the project only effectively towards closure of the project led to a less clear or direct impact in the (new) NSR programme. However, indirectly the Rural Power Pack as such and the results of individual pilots as showcases for rural innovation and (smart) specialisation, for example the success of rural broadband and digital services or branding strategies, can be seen reflected in the innovation, specialisation and regional strategic agenda's as being mentioned in the NSR VB programme, and now being implemented throughout the programme area.

16. Indicators

Indicators										
14.2i Compulsory Indicators - each of the indicators must be established for the project										
Output/ Result/ Impact	Priority/Programme Indicator description	Description	Unit	Baseline	Project target	Source of information	Reported previously	Reached in total	Reached this period	Comments
Raising awareness / dissemination										
Output	transnational dissemination outputs	exhibitions	number	0	12	project results presented at international seminars/activity report	61	91	30	National (48, with internation. visitors) and intl. (43)
Output		own	number	0	3	communication plans WP1, 2	2	5	3	

		events			and 3/activity report					
Output		external events	number	0	4	policy forums/activity report	3	4	1	
Output		published material	number	0	15	manual (target: 1)/activity report and digital (HTML) newsletters (target: 10)/activity report and scientific articles (target: 4)/activity report	3	14	11	not completely updated earlier; 3 instead of 4 scientific articles
Output		websites	number	0	1	external website/activity report	3	3	0	
Output		TV and radio appearances	number	0	0		5	64	59	Not updated previously, see indicator report
Output		dvd's	number	0	1	documentary web video/activity report	1	1	0	Counted as one video, though updated more than once
Output		other	number	0	50	dissemination via media (activity report)	382	432	50	Radio, newspapers and local events, see Indicator Analysis Report
Result	individuals reached by (priority) specific awareness raising activities	exhibitions	number male	0	0		0	100,000	100,000	substantial, see events
Result		exhibitions	number female	0	0		0	100,000	100,000	more then, see events, below
Result		own events	number male	0	0	local awareness meetings politicians/activity and final report/unspecified target	3,541	4,000	459	Probably higher, some events only have rough counts
Result		own events	number female	0	0	local awareness meetings/activity report politicians/unspecified target	2,100	2,500	400	Probably higher
Result		external events	number male	0	0	local awareness meetings inhabitants/activity report/unspecified target	35,964	900,000	864,036	Probably much higher, some events only have rough counts
Result		external events	number female	0	0	local awareness meetings inhabitants/activity report/unspecified target	39,885	1,000,000	960,115	Probably much higher, see above – in some partners female numbers are higher
Result		websites	number male	0	0		9,031	22,500	13,469	For both Vital websites (Vital, Educationer)
Result		websites	number female	0	0		0	22,500	22,500	50%, No earlier specification male- female; Vital 15,000 unique visitors, Educationer 30,000
Result		TV and radio appearances	number male	0	0		0	2,500,000	2,500,000	not counted separately, counted, probably similar to events above
Result		TV and radio appearances	number female	0	0		0	2,500,000	2,500,000	see above
Result	organisations in target groups reached by (priority) specific awareness raising activities	own events	number	0	1	European Parliament/activity report	0	1	1	(Much) more than 10 EU politicians reached
Result		external events	number	0	2	European Authority on RD/Council of Europe/activity report	0	3	3	ENRD, LEADER, RURACT/others, indirectly more
Result		websites	number	0	0		0	3	3	Educationer and Vital, plus local/partners

Result		other	number	0	34	regions in Europe27/activity report and national authorities (target: 6), trade and industry organisations (target: 12), other relevant regional stakeholders organisations (target: 6)	0	50	50	Probably more, numerous regions (in)directly through the partner regions and country pages of external "partners"
Strengthening transnational co-operation										
Result	Organisations within and outside the official core partnership involved in the project (i.e. as contributor to activity or output)	activity	number	3	9	educational institutes/knowledge institutes/innovation centres/activity report	228	295	67	Probably more, see indicator analysis report and remark above
Result	individuals within and outside the official core partnership involved in the project (i.e. as contributor to activity or output)	activity	number	0	0	local, regional, national and European politicians and policy makers/activity report/unspecified target	1,291	3,000	1,709	Probably much more, see indicator analysis report and remark above
Output	project administration outputs (I): transnational partner management meetings		number	0	30	international project partner meetings/expert meetings/activity report	68	74	6	14 partner meetings, 60 expert meetings; 4 Policy Forums with each several workshops additionally!
Territorial coverage										
Result	Countries covered by project activities		number (NUTS1)	6	6	participating countries in the North Sea Region/application	6	6	0	
Result	Regions covered by project activities		number (NUTS3)	13	13	participating countries in the North Sea Region/applications	13	13	0	
14.2ii Generic Indicators - indicators must be chosen which are relevant for the project										
Output/Result/Impact	Priority/Programme Indicator description	Description	Unit	Baseline	Project target	Source of information	Reported previously	Reached in total	Reached this period	Comments
Core activities										
Output	developed:	transnational training	number	0	4	activity report	8	15	7	See Indicator analysis report for specification of the figures, and activity report section 4
Output		staff exchange programmes	number	0	4	activity report	8	8	0	Some overlap with the pilots
Result	individuals in different social and age groups undertaken transnational training	male 18-24	number	0	0		0	1,000	1,000	depends on way of counting, see indicator analysis
Output		transnational demonstration projects	number	0	6	demo cases SMEs (2), regional branding (2), welfare and wellbeing (2)/activity report	26	43	17	
Output		transnational knowledge bases	number	0	1	general working method for regional projects on rural development: Rural Power Pack RPP/activity + final report	0	0	0	
Output		schemes	number	0	1	dissemination marketing strategy Europe27/activity + final report	0	0	0	
Output		know-how exchange platforms	number	0	1	scientific support and monitoring group/activity report	1	1	0	
Output		other	number	0	1	mobile implementation team in Europe 27/activity + final report	0	0	0	replaced by other dissemination activities

Raising awareness / dissemination										
Impact	individuals within and outside the NSR with greater awareness of project outputs	male	number	0	0	local politicians, policy makers, civil servants, inhabitants/citizens/activity + final report/unspecified target	913,272	1,000,000	86,728	Probably more, see indicator analysis and above; division male/female not made earlier!
Impact		female	number	0	0	local politicians, policy makers, civil servants, inhabitants/citizens/activity + final report/unspecified target	0	1,000,500	1,000,500	See above, rough division shows slightly more female participants
Impact	organisations within and outside the NSR with greater awareness of project outputs		number	0	20	European Parliament/Council of Europe/European authorities/European regions/national authorities/trade and industry organisations/other relevant stakeholders organisations/activity + final report	27	50	23	Probably much higher, see Indicator analysis
Strengthening transnational co-operation										
Output	project administration outputs (II): shared IT systems		number	0	1	sophisticated system for internal project communication (comsys)/activity report	1	1	0	
Output	project administration outputs (III): other		number	0	3	interproject meetings/activity report	1	5	4	Not updated previously - Much higher including meetings at annual conferences etc.

14.2 iii. Priority indicators - chose at least 1 output and 1 result indicator

Output/Result/Impact	Priority/Programme Indicator description	Description	Unit	Baseline	Project target	Source of information	Reported previously	Reached in total	Reached this period	Comments
Priority 4 promoting sustainable and competitive communities										
Output	transnational integrated / implementation strategies		number	0	1	Rural Power Pack with co-operative agreement approach CAA/activity + final report and contribution to ENRD networks on European (target: 1) and national level (target:6) as well as the Committee of the Regions (target: 6) and Vital networks (target: 2)	0	1	1	Implemented in 2013, but updated and finalised only towards the end of the project, future updates expected beyond project lifetime!
Result	transferred transnationally and implemented:	new technologies	number	0	0	(a) empowered SMEs, (b) regional brands developed, tested and implemented, (c) services on well-being and welfare available/final report/unspecified target	0	23	23	See pilots below, not all pilots can be specified as (new) technologies
Result		pilots	number	0	0		0	45	45	Slightly higher if transferred pilots to other regions and extensions or phases within pilots are included
Result	people from target groups in the NSR reached / provided access to new / improved services or other outputs in priority 4	male	number	0	0	people from target groups in the NSR reached/provided access to new or improved services or other outputs in priority 4/final report/unspecified target	0	5,000	5,000	Rough estimate based on number of participants to courses etc. – see also Indicator Analysis Report
Result		female	number	0	0	people from target groups in the NSR reached/provided	0	5,000	5,000	See above, roughly 50%

access to new or improved services or other outputs in priority 4/final report/unspecified target

female estimated, though in some courses/pilots substantially higher

Environmental Indicators

Output/Result/Impact	Priority/Programme Indicator description	Description	Unit	Baseline	Project target	Source of information	Reported previously	Reached in total	Reached this period	Comments
Environmental issues										
	Population and human health			0	0		0	3	3	lifestyle courses and tools
	Air and climatic factors	Reduction in green house gas emissions	CO2 equivalent (tons)	0	0		0	1	1	pilot rockflour on sustainable fertilizer implemented
	Energy efficiency			0	0		0	3	3	e-learning courses on energy saving, renewables

Did you encounter any difficulties regarding the indicator monitoring of your project?

Only technical – during the duration of the project there appears to have been a mismatched of the figures indicated in the online system and those reported in the “indicator analysis reports” as developed by a member of the project’s Scientific Group, despite some communication on this issue with the secretariat.

Some indicators (for example the number of target groups reached nationally and internationally) was “not countable”, especially in the last reporting period, as was stated in the enclosed (fifth) “Indicator Analysis Report” and specified in its Annexes.

17. Achievements Report

Achievement Report filled in and submitted

Yes

18. Enclosures

Enclosures

Format e.g. book, CD, DVD etc	Description	No. of pages/photographs
Report	Monthly dissemination report Dutch (example)	3
Newsletter	Newsletter 10, “Popular version” executive summary of the final report and project results	6
Newsletter	Newsletter 9 on Dissemination	6
Report	Dissemination overview/Table	1
Report	Fifth Indicator Analysis	26

19. Feedback

Feedback

Events		
First Level Control Seminars	4	
Lead Beneficiary Seminars	4	
Thematic Seminars	3	
Annual Conferences	3	
Documents		
Reporting Material	3	
Application Material	3	
Info Sheets	4	
Fact Sheets	4	
Online		
Monitoring System	3	
Website	2	We were asked to update our Northsea website several times, but due to technical problems this proved not possible eventually

Contact and Support	
Partner search	3
Pre-assessment process	3
Project changes procedure	3
Secretariat in general	3
Relevant desk officer	3

Finalise

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