



Program Title: Interreg III Strand C – PRAXIS: Making Rural Entrepreneurship Work

Pilot Project: «MESURA: Micro-Enterprise Start-Up in Rural Areas»

Brief Description of PRAXIS Project

Heraklion Development Agent S.A. participates as a partner to PRAXIS project, which is funded by the European Initiative INTERREG IIIC.

PRAXIS Rural Entrepreneurship seeks to address the current lack of employment opportunities in Europe's rural areas. Not only are they few and far between, but they also lack diversity. General negative perceptions of rural areas mean that often they are not seen as places where businesses can thrive. As a result, younger, skilled generations are now abandoning them for towns and cities, creating a skills deficit that acts as a further deterrent to new employers considering setting up businesses there.

PRAXIS Rural Entrepreneurship will expose all partners (15 in total active in 9 countries) to new ideas and approaches to entrepreneurship in rural areas. The partnership will undertake and disseminate the results of a survey to investigate the experiences of PRAXIS partners in supporting rural businesses to successfully innovate and become more competitive. The outcomes of the survey will guide the activities of four pilot projects to test the effectiveness of different ways of implementing rural development policies.

PRAXIS Rural Entrepreneurship identifies good practice, facilitates future development of regional rural entrepreneurship partnerships and strategies, supports business innovation and fosters an entrepreneurial culture in rural areas. It also aims to ensure that rural entrepreneurship activities are eligible under the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the Territorial Cooperation strand of the future Structural Funds.

The project has four pilot projects and is producing a number of tools for communicating their findings: a website, a communication plan,

two information leaflets, newsletters, a toolbox for developing regional strategies, policy recommendations, a micro-enterprise start-up guide, a final analysis and evaluation and a handbook on developing successful innovative rural entrepreneurship initiatives in Europe. A number of meetings and seminars, at which partners can exchange experience and expertise, are also being organised. Whilst facilitating practical cooperation between the partners; PRAXIS also supports partners in central and Eastern Europe with the implementation of European law and funding programmes; assists partners in Romania and Bulgaria with preparations for accession to the EU; creates joint trading opportunities; and accesses sources of funding to support cross-border projects and activities.

The duration of the program is October 2004 - September 2007 and the total budget amounts to 1.753.000 € (ERDF contribution comes to 1.000.000 €)

For further information, please visit www.praxisnetwork.net

Brief Description of M.E.S.U.R.A Pilot Project

The pilot project M.E.S.U.R.A.: Micro-Enterprise Start-Up in Rural Areas, which is being coordinated by Heraklion Development Agent, strategically aims to support the foundation of micro-enterprises in rural areas based on existing potential. For the implementation of the project, the gained experience of Leader II and Leader Plus programs as well as of relative European Social Fund's programs will be exploited.

MESURA is based upon the principle of "supply to the local demand" and its implementation depends on the development of an official network among partners in order to acknowledge all barriers related to financial, legal and administrative issues. In addition, the network will facilitate potential entrepreneurs to establish and operate micro-enterprises in the inland.

Supporting potential and existing entrepreneurs, includes three axes:

A. Training schemes on entrepreneurship via seminars in selected municipalities in rural areas of essential business activities and further development potential.

In the above mentioned framework, three sets of seminars will be organized by the end of 2006 consisting of groups of people, especially young generations, interested in entrepreneurship. The seminars are of 30 hour duration and will include the following thematic axes:

- Basic principles of entrepreneurship
- Entrepreneurship in rural areas: Barriers and challenges

- Entrepreneurship in rural areas: The national and European framework
- Financial, legal and administrative issues
- Business Plan Design
- Business Plan Implementation

B. Business Plan Design Guidance

A consulting team will enlighten participants on the context and structure of business plans.

C. Business Plan Implementation Guidance, monitoring and assessment of new-established micro-enterprises

A consulting team will monitor the implementation of Business Plans and will assess the total effectiveness of the project. In addition, a micro-enterprise start-up handbook will be distributed as an essential tool on developing successful innovative rural entrepreneurship initiatives. The guide will include valid information on the formation and funding of enterprises as well as data for the supporting organizations on local, regional and national level.

Partnership

- Essex County Council, Eastern, UNITED KINGDOM - Lead partner
- East of England Regional Assembly, Bury St Edmunds, UNITED KINGDOM
- East of England Development Agency, Cambridge, UNITED KINGDOM
- Business Link for Essex, Chelmsford, UNITED KINGDOM
- Writtle College, Chelmsford UNITED KINGDOM
- Province of East Flanders, Gent BELGIQUE-BELGIË
- Province of WestFlanders, Brugge BELGIQUE-BELGIË
- Aragon Technological Institute, Zaragoza, ARAGÓN, ESPAÑA
- Picardy Regional Council PICARDIE, FRANCE
- Heraklion Development Agency S.A., Heraklion, CRETE, GREECE
- Province of Mantua, Mantova, LOMBARDIA, ITALIA
- Province of South Holland, Den Haag, NEDERLAND
- Office of the Marshal of the Opolskie Voivodeship, Opole, POLAND
- The Pomeranian Association of Rural Municipalities, Gdansk, POLAND
- Arad County Council, Arad Romania

The total budget for Heraklion Development Agent amounts to 264.000€ (European Funding 75%: 198.000 € / National Funding 25%: 66.000 € - Ministry of Economy and Finance).