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The Future of Europe's Rural Peripheries

Edited by

Lois Labrianidis

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University of Macedonia

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Preface

The book at hand is the outcome of a research project that was financed under the 5th Framework Programme of the European Community for Research, Technology Development and Demonstration activities (1998-2002 – Key action ‘Improving the socio-economic knowledge base’). I would like therefore to take the opportunity to thank the EC for providing us the opportunity to materialise this project.

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Furthermore I would like to thank my colleagues from the various national teams as well as those individuals who have participated in this project and whose contribution is acknowledged in the appropriate chapters.

Most of all I would like to thank all those who contributed their valuable time in replying to our questionnaires (i.e. 4000 questionnaires to the general public and 1000 questionnaires to enterprises), or whose long conversations with us gave us valuable insights (i.e. more than 150 key informants).

The whole endeavour was quite an experience for all of us, since we had to work collectively to produce this outcome. This partnership has by now quite a long history. It began its interaction in its present form in 1998 when a proposal was drafted and submitted to the EU. However, most of us already knew each other and had already collaborated on a bi-lateral basis for several years before that. In a sense this book is a collaborative work throughout. Although individual teams are responsible for each particular chapter, it nevertheless constitutes a collective authorship in the sense that there were extensive discussions for more than three years over every minor detail of this book. Needless to say, this is particularly true of the introductory as well as the concluding chapters.

At times it brought us up against the limits of our potential for agreement as individuals and as national teams and opened up some productive, and I must stress productive, tensions. I believe that we all learned not only through the actual research but also by working with other research teams from different countries, as well as from different scientific disciplines, and I must admit that this was a very interesting and rewarding experience too, though at times it proved to be quite difficult for all of us and particularly for the coordinating team.

I would like to thank the project scientific officer Dr. Nikos Kastrinos for his continuing interest and helpful comments, as well as for his willingness to find solutions to the plethora of bureaucratic problems that have arisen during the course of this work, so as to allow us to proceed unobstructed on our project.

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Lois Labrianidis
Thessaloniki, February 2004

Abbreviations

BL	Business Link
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CSA	Case Study Area
CSF	Community Support Framework
EU	European Union
FoD	Factors of Diversity
FoU	Factors of Unity
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GVA	Gross Value Added
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IT	Information Technology
LAG	Local Action Group
RDA	Regional Development Agency
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
TNCs	Transnational Companies
VAT	Value Added Tax
WTO	World Trade Organisation

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Bringing together case studies from Germany, Greece, Poland, Portugal and the UK, this book examines the contribution of entrepreneurial ventures and new technology in stimulating economic development in rural locations. It looks at instances of 'good practice' in terms of both public and private initiatives and develops a coherent combination of policy objectives facilitating the long-term economic development of the countryside.

Firstly analyzing the key causes and effects of economic restructuring currently affecting Europe's rural areas, the book then explores the consequences that European integration and 'globalization' have had and will have in future. It identifies sources of entrepreneurship and examines their distribution between different gender, age and other social groupings. The book continues to evaluate the extent to which the existing institutional, social and technological environment and infrastructure encourages and facilitates entrepreneurship.

... excellent insights into rurality, peripherality, rural entrepreneurship, technology (ICT), globalization, rural policy making and rural governance, and the sheer diversity of rural places and spaces in Europe. For those with a serious interest in the future of European rural areas, this state of the art text is essential reading; it will certainly be on my student reading lists.

Professor Brian Ilbery, Coventry University, UK

Readers, who are systematically, professionally or not, involved with the issues discussed in the book, will certainly find ample and valuable material to enrich their thought, analysis and possible action ... The introduction of the new countries to the common, not only agricultural, EU policy, and the foreseeable changes in the relationships of the EU with the globalizing economy bring forward new and vital issues. This book will certainly help us deal with them, not only at the academic, but also at the political level.

Michalis Papagiannakis, Universities of Montpellier – France and Athens – Greece and Member of the European Parliament

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