

THE EXODUS FROM RURAL DISTRICTS IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION
CONTRIBUTION TO THE EU GREEN PAPER ON TERRITORIAL COHESION FROM
THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE INNOVATION CIRCLE NETWORK GATHERED IN
TALLINN 4TH DECEMBER 2008.

The Innovation Circle Network is a trans-European non commercial association of municipalities, regional authorities, public institutions, enterprises and individuals working for strengthening of the rural areas in Europe. The network is in particular focused on the development in the Baltic Sea Region where the small towns and municipalities are experiencing a steady outflow of migrants, who are moving to the bigger cities in search for workplaces, educational facilities and what they consider to be better living conditions. In a globalized world it is quite possible for a city to sustain on imports, where as in previous times the surrounding countryside was the main provider of basic foodstuff, energy and other raw materials.

This exodus from the countryside and peripheral districts poses a threat to the urban communities when such primary production as agriculture, forestry, mining and energy-production suffer from a lack of manpower, initiative and entrepreneurship when the young and educated move away. Investments are today primarily made in the more urban areas.

The Innovation Circle Network firmly believes that all regions in Europe must be included in the investment strategies of national and international decision makers, if the Lisbon and Gothenburg strategies are to be fulfilled. The main objective of the IC network is to focus on these challenges and organize small municipalities and medium sized towns in such a way that their own strategies are not ignored by the central governments or international bodies.

Local initiatives must not be ignored and a special focus must be directed towards the young and educated, who are more mobile than the older generation. Innovative actions and investments in modern infrastructure are basic elements to make the periphery more attractive for those with initiative, high motivation and entrepreneurial capabilities.

Initiatives from central governments and various EU programmes should be utilized to enhance innovative ideas which are based on local action plans. Those who live in these more peripheral areas are the ones who should have the greatest influence on such development programmes. The programmes in question must be organized in such way that local initiatives are supported. Furthermore, local actions should be part of transnational activities where access to other innovators and diversity are guaranteed.

On the behalf of the Innovation Circle Network:

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