



Horizon 2020 Marie Skłodowska –Curie

European Training Network RurAction

10 Positions for Early-Stage Researchers¹ offered

Application Deadline 26.03.2017

The European Training Network RurAction (“Social Entrepreneurship in Structurally Weak Rural Regions: Analysing Innovative Troubleshooters in Action”) announces **10 positions for Early-Stage Researchers** with the option of awarding the doctoral degree. The positions last **36 months** and are expected to begin between September and November 2017. Early -Stage Researchers (ESRs) with a strong interest in research about regional development, social entrepreneurship and social innovations are invited to apply for positions at leading research institutions and acknowledged social enterprises in **Austria, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Poland and Portugal**.

Project

RurAction is an integrated research and doctorate programme funded by the European Union in the Horizon 2020 Marie Skłodowska-Curie ITN Action. RurAction recognizes a lack of knowledge and cross-sectoral trainings at the intersection of rural development, social innovation and social entrepreneurship research. It addresses this gap by systematically integrating these three fields of research. RurAction offers a unique opportunity to 10 Early Stage Researchers to investigate highly relevant topics about social innovations and social entrepreneurship in rural regions. The 10 Early Stage Researchers will benefit from transnational high quality trainings, bringing together both academic education and practical skills trainings provided by social enterprises with great expertise in innovative rural development. The enrolment as PhD students in the contributing universities enables the ESRs to contribute to their institutionalized PhD courses, complementary to the RurAction trainings.

¹ Early-stage researchers are those who are, at the time of selection by the host institution, in the first four years (full-time equivalent) of their research careers and have not yet been awarded a doctoral degree. This is measured from the date when they obtained the degree which formally entitles them to embark on a doctorate.



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A consortium of seven leading research institutions and two highly experienced social enterprises will run the training network. The consortium is formed by the **Leibniz Institute for Research on Society and Space** (IRS - Erkner/Germany), **Adam-Mickiewicz-University** (AMU - Poznan/Poland), **the Roskilde University** (RUC - Roskilde/Denmark), **University College Cork** (UCC - Cork/Ireland), **Ballyhoura Development** (Kilfinane/Ireland), **Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography** (IfL - Leipzig /Germany), **University of The Aegean** (UAE - Mytilini/Greece), **Otelo eGen** (Vorchdorf/Austria) and **University Institute of Lisbon** (ISTE-IUL - Lisbon/Portugal). Each institution offers one Early Stage Researcher position - except of the Leibniz Institute for Research on Society and Space which offers two ESR positions. Please find an overview of the positions attached.

Project timeline

The successful candidates will be appointed in autumn 2017 and employed in a 3-year full-time position. The contract will cover allowances for living, mobility and family (if applicable) according to the mobility requirements of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie ITN Actions.

Questions?

For more information on application requirements as well as on the conditions of the training programme, please don't hesitate to contact project manager Marie-Julie Jacquemot at the IRS (Phone: +49 3362 793-269, E-Mail: Marie-Julie.Jacquemot@leibniz-irs.de).



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Overview on the PhD-positions offered

| Field of research | PhD position | Hosting |
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| Work Package 1: Challenges and dynamics of structurally weak regions | | |
| ESR 1-project: Dynamics of rural regions in Europe – an economic investigation | Regional studies confirm a growing economic (and social) polarisation of rural regions: While some regions are faced with serious and increasing weaknesses, in other rural regions problems are less severe. The question is which socio-economic factors create these differences. Another issue to be considered is in which ways demographic change will economically affect the regions in the future. The economic dynamics of all of the selected RURACTION regions will be investigated by statistical analyses of existing structural data. The investigation not only includes the current situation but also analyses of structural changes and the deduction of future prospects in order to provide regional (social entrepreneurial) actors with information about future challenges and potentials for acting. | Adam-Mickiewicz-University Poznan/Poland |
| ESR 2-project: The political framework for rural development and social entrepreneurship | The situation of structurally weak rural regions is also a matter of political support and policy measures. A quantitative online survey of experts will be conducted in the seven selected RURACTION regions. The interviewees will be policy makers from the field of regional and rural development on the regional, national and EU level. It will be examined how the experts assess the importance of structurally weak rural regions in the context of regional development policies, which programmes/measures they assess as being important (in the future), how they assess the success of the implementation of respective programmes/measures and what they see as supporting or hindering factors. The experts will share their awareness regarding social entrepreneurship, assessments of its potentials for rural development, willingness to support respective initiatives, etc. This way, (e.g. regional/national) differences in policy makers' attitudes, in their motives for (not) supporting social entrepreneurship – and thus potentials for political support – will be investigated. | University of The Aegean, Greece |





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| <p>ESR 3-project: Discourses on regional problems and cultural knowledge patterns</p> | <p>The persistence of regional problems is also a matter of discourses on regional problems, represented by cultural narrations and media, and of cultural knowledge patterns they produce. Discourses may either reinforce negative perceptions or support the view that it is time for creative solutions. In other words, leveraging potentials for the support of innovative approaches (e.g. of social entrepreneurship) may depend on the ways in which problems typically are discursively framed and on respective cultural knowledge patterns. They may differ between different regions. Thus, in the ESR 3-project public discussions of regional problems as well as cultural knowledge patterns will be analysed and compared by conducting a qualitative discourse analysis (of regional newspaper articles) and qualitative interviews with residents. Comparative studies will be carried out for the Mid-West (IE), the Uckermark (DE) and the Mühlviertel (AT).</p> | <p>Leibniz Institute for Research on Society and Space, Erkner/Germany</p> |
| <p>Work Package 2: On a mission for the region. How social entrepreneurs tackle problems in structurally weak regions</p> | | |
| <p>ESR 4-project: Social entrepreneurial actors as troubleshooters in rural regions</p> | <p>Social entrepreneurs are known for generating and implementing solutions for social problems. However, there has been limited research to date on what makes them troubleshooters. The aim of this project is to analyse practices and institutional aspects of social entrepreneurial problem solving activities for rural regions. It will be investigated from which definition of the problem they start out, which objectives they define, which activities they engage in, which institutional measures they develop, what difficulties arise, what institutional obstacles occur, which measures are developed to overcome them, how the problem solving process is modified, what are the supportive or hindering factors for specific aspects of problem solving, which organisational structures are built, and how sustainability of problem solving is ensured. The ESR will conduct participant observation during the secondments in the Mid-West/IE, the Uckermark/DE and the Phthiotis/EL region. Furthermore qualitative interviews will be carried out with social entrepreneurial actors and regional stakeholders in order to reconstruct internal and external perspectives on the social entrepreneurial organisation of problem solving.</p> | <p>Ballyhoura Development CLG, Kilfinane/Ireland</p> |
| <p>ESR 5-project: Social entrepreneurship as a collaborative process</p> | <p>The ESR 5-project focuses on processes of collaboration and networking. The main research interest is in how social entrepreneurs proceed and succeed with developing new ideas and problem solving mechanisms in collaboration with different stakeholders and how, as collective actors, they bring together the capacities of different people. It will be examined how social entrepreneurial actors network in rural regions, which stakeholders are involved in the problem solving process, to what extent social enterprises are the result of collaborative processes and collaborative action. Furthermore, it is of interest what kind of supportive or hindering factors in terms of (regional and supra-</p> | <p>Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography, Leipzig/Germany</p> |



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| | regional) networks can be identified. The research will be executed by qualitative interviews and qualitative network analyses at the selected social enterprises in the Uckermark (DE), the Phthiotis (EL) and the Baixo Alentejo (PT) region. | |
| ESR 6-project: Tackling social and economic exclusion in a sustainable manner | One important question when it comes to solving social problems is how social entrepreneurs address social and economic exclusion. Many peripheral rural locations continue to reflect a strong reliance on agriculture and/or other production-based employment which is often part-time and low-paid. Furthermore, poorly developed and inefficient physical infrastructures often characterise rural locations. Consequently, rural based social enterprises have evolved as a mechanism of regional services delivery, including the integration of people at risk of social and economic exclusion including the unemployed and/or underemployed. ESR 6 analyses the social entrepreneurial strategies developed by social enterprises to tackle rural-based social and economic exclusion. This entails an examination of the types of services delivered, of the contributions to tackling regional social and economic exclusion including job creation, and also of the strategies adopted by individual social enterprises to sustain themselves. The ESR will conduct document these experiences through an analysis of secondary data and qualitative interviews with both social enterprise actors and costumers of the services in the RURACTION regions Mid-West (IE), Phthiotis (EL) and Baixo Alentejo (PT). | University College Cork, Ireland |
| Work Package 3: The generation and the impact of social innovations in rural regions | | |
| ESR 7-project: The emergence of social innovation in rural regions | Usually, populations in rural regions are supposed to be hostile to innovations. They are seen as traditionally minded groups which are inclined to preserve existing assets. Following this observation, social innovations which by definition create novelty would be a challenge. Hence, social entrepreneurs aiming at creating innovative solutions for regional development would have to make particular efforts to convince residents and to empower them for being innovative, otherwise they would not be socially accepted. ESR 7 investigates how social entrepreneurial actors seek to generate creativity in rural regions, how they get residents involved and empowered, which forms of participation they develop, and which are supporting and hindering factors for successful participation. Furthermore, it will be a question which type of innovation is created in rural regions, in how far social innovations partially refer to traditional elements, however combining them in a new way. The ESR will carry out participant observation and qualitative expert interviews with involved actors in the RURACTION regions Uckermark (DE), Mühlviertel (AT) and Phthiotis (EL). | Roskilde University Denmark |
| ESR 8-project: The spatial spread of social | To be considered a social innovation, individual projects offering a novel social practice require a spatial spread of the practice. ESR 8 analyses the spread of innovative solutions as part of an innovation | Leibniz Institute for Research on Society and |



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| <p>innovations. How and under which conditions do innovative social practices “travel”?</p> | <p>biography. This will be done for RURACTION initiatives in the Mühlviertel (AT), the Uckermark (DE) and the Baixo Alentejo (PT) region. The regional (and international) spatial spread of the innovative approach will be observed. It is a task of the project to reconstruct the courses of the spreads, to examine driving forces (such as key individuals, the media) and to investigate in how far the original practices are modified by the “mobility process” of social innovation. Qualitative interviews with involved actors and document analyses will be the methodological tools of the ESR 8-project.</p> | <p>Space, Erkner/Germany</p> |
| <p>ESR 9-project: The impact of innovative solutions on regional discourses and the perception of rural development</p> | <p>Contrary to the ESR 3-project, ESR 9 does not look back to discourses prior to, but parallel to the implementation and the spread of the innovative approaches. It will be examined in how far the implementation of innovative approaches triggers media responses, how they are portrayed in the reports, and how approaches of problem solving are discursively further processed in the respective regions. Furthermore, it will be investigated in how far residents are aware of such innovative approaches to solutions and how they perceive potentials for the development of their region. A qualitative discourse analysis (regional newspaper articles) and qualitative interviews with selected regional residents and decision makers will be conducted for the Mid-West (IE), the Uckermark (DE) and the Mühlviertel (AT). ESR 3 and ESR 9 will work as a tandem, i.e. they exchange empirical findings and jointly discuss results.</p> | <p>OTELO eGen, Vorchdorf/Austria</p> |
| <p>ESR 10-project: The socio-economic impact of innovative solutions on regional development</p> | <p>This project is conceptualised to analyse in how far – as an effect of social entrepreneurial activities – economic, political and/or social impacts can be noted. A standardised online survey of experts will be conducted for the five RURACTION regions which are operation fields of the contributing social enterprises. An appropriate set of indicators will be adopted from existing operationalisations in databases such as the OECD Better Life Index and the European System of Social Indicators (GESIS) . Actors of social enterprises, regional economic experts, regional politicians and experts of social welfare associations will be asked to assess in how far jobs have been created, the provision with goods and services has been improved, regional policy strategies for rural development have been modified, social networks have been built, further initiatives have been started, social coherence has been improved, social life has become more vivid, etc.</p> | <p>ISCTE - University Institute of Lisbon, Portugal</p> |



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