



ENGINE Newsletter

July 2025 (No. 1)

*Shaping the future of rural
entrepreneurship and
innovation through education*



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Introduction



Driving Rural Entrepreneurship and Innovation: Introducing the ENGINE Project Newsletter

Sustainability, multifunctionality, endogeneity, entrepreneurship, and innovation are now widely recognized as key drivers of rural development. These elements enable rural areas respond to emerging social, economic, and environmental trends while addressing unique challenges of rural areas. A holistic approach to rural development relies on mobilizing endogenous potential—knowledge, skills, and resources—and aligning them with targeted initiatives. In this context, entrepreneurship and innovation are essential tools for unlocking underutilized capacities and fostering locally tailored growth. HEIs can play a crucial role by designing academic programs that bridge education with rural needs.

While many EU university programs emphasize entrepreneurship and innovation, they often remain urban-centric, overlooking rural-specific challenges. Hence, there is a clear need for education that reflects the realities and opportunities of rural regions. The ENGINE project (ENTrepreneurial rural Growth through exchanging of Good practices wIthIn Network Education), funded by Erasmus+ (Project No. 2024-1-PL01-KA220-HED-000244962), addresses this gap. It identifies the entrepreneurial and innovation potential of rural regions and reviews current university programs to identify knowledge, skills, and competencies gaps. At the heart of the project is EDUPACK—an educational tool designed to strengthen rural entrepreneurship and innovation. By integrating EDUPACK into HEIs curricula, ENGINE aims to equip students with knowledge, skills, and competencies they need to drive sustainable rural development.

To keep our community informed and engaged, we are proud to launch the ENGINE Newsletter. Each edition will share project updates, partner highlights, and regional insights to foster transparency, knowledge sharing, and collaboration across the rural entrepreneurship ecosystem.

We invite you to explore the first issue and join us on this journey of learning, innovation, and rural transformation.



Katarzyna Żmija

Project Coordinator
Krakow University of Economics

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Project Overview



01 Objectives

To assist students in enhancing their rural – specific innovation and entrepreneurial skills

To facilitate innovative learning and teaching practices through modernized and standardized EDUPACK content

02 Outcomes

Analysis Framework for Rural Innovation and Entrepreneurship Potential

A comprehensive and universally applicable guide for identifying the potential of rural areas to support innovative entrepreneurial initiatives, alongside the knowledge, skills, and competencies required for their effective implementation.

Local Leadership Toolkit

A methodological resource providing methods and tools to support the development of standardized entrepreneurship and innovation education tailored to rural contexts within European universities.

EDUPACK—An Innovative Educational Tool

An original educational package integrating tailored teaching materials and methods to equip students with the knowledge, skills, and competencies essential for fostering innovative enterprises and driving sustainable rural development.

Open Agreement for Networked Inter-University Use of EDUPACK

Designed to establish a collaborative framework for the long-term adoption and implementation of EDUPACK across European higher education institutions.

03 Impacts

Empowering Rural-Oriented Leaders

To equip students and graduates with entrepreneurial and innovation-related knowledge, skills, and competencies tailored to rural contexts, thereby fostering informed career choices in rural development and leadership.

Advancing Social and Economic Development

To foster vibrant and sustainable rural communities by cultivating entrepreneurial and innovation-driven leadership, thereby generating long-term economic growth, and enhancing social cohesion and well-being.

Facilitating Knowledge Exchange and Partnership

To promote inter-institutional collaboration and the dissemination of best practices and innovative teaching methods, while strengthening ties between higher education institutions and rural stakeholders.

Enhancing Higher Education Institutions Capacity

To strengthen the capacity of higher education institutions to design and deliver high-quality entrepreneurship and innovation programmes that address the specific needs of rural areas.

Enabling Smart Policy for Rural Innovation

To generate insights for policymakers to support strategies that promote entrepreneurship and innovation in rural areas.



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Meet Our Partners

GET TO KNOW THE ORGANIZATIONS WORKING WITH US

The project brings together a multidisciplinary consortium of universities and research institutes from across Europe.



Krakow University of Economics

As the ENGINE project coordinator, KUE brings a century of experience in economic education and research, strong international partnerships, and interdisciplinary expertise. Its role is central to project design, coordination, and development of educational tools tailored to rural entrepreneurship.

Website: <https://uek.krakow.pl/en>



FH Münster University of Applied Sciences

Renowned for its applied research and close ties to industry, FH Münster contributes its strengths in innovation transfer, practice-oriented education, and sustainability—key to aligning ENGINE's outputs with real-world rural development needs.

Website: <https://www.fh-muenster.de/en>



Instituto Politécnico de Viana do Castelo

With deep roots in regional development and community engagement, IPVC offers valuable insight into local resource mapping and participatory education. Its practical experience supports ENGINE's goal of connecting higher education with rural innovation.

Website: <https://www.ipvc.pt/en>



Università degli studi di Foggia

Focused on regional empowerment and sustainability, the University of Foggia contributes multidisciplinary research and expertise in agri-food systems, circular economy, and social inclusion—enhancing ENGINE's responsiveness to rural challenges.

Website: <https://www.unifg.it/en>



Institute of Entrepreneurship Development

As a key partner for innovation and communication, IED leverages its pan-European network and experience in EU projects to support ENGINE's dissemination, stakeholder engagement, and promotion of entrepreneurial education.

Website: <https://ied.eu>



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Highlights from the ENGINE Project

Rural Development Potential for Innovation and Entrepreneurship: Analysis Framework

Rural Development Potential for Innovation and Entrepreneurship – Analysis Framework is a key intellectual output of Work Package 2 within the ENGINE project. It equips institutions with a practical yet conceptually robust framework to identify and mobilise rural development potential through innovation and entrepreneurship.

The document aims to:

- offer a practical and universally applicable instrument for diverse institutions—including academic institutions, non-governmental organisations, and local authorities—to identify and leverage rural potential for innovative initiatives, and

- enhance education, strategic planning, community engagement, and economic development by fostering a deeper understanding of local resources and potentials, and their effective application in the development of rural initiatives.

Content-wise, the document integrates a robust theoretical foundation with detailed practical guidance. It begins with a six-stage methodology, culminating in the development of Rural Development Potential Maps. It is followed by regional case studies from Małopolska, Münsterland, Alto Minho, and Foggia, highlighting local profiles, resource endowments, key development potentials, and exemplary initiatives. The document concludes with an extensive list of references and a suite of practical tools designed to support its effective implementation.



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Originally designed to support university curricula, the framework has broader applicability for higher education institutions, research centres, local authorities, non-governmental organisations, and rural agencies seeking to unlock rural innovation and entrepreneurship.

In practical terms, the guide enables these institutions to:

- employ a standardised, evidence-based approach to diagnosing rural potential
- identify necessary knowledge, skills, and competences linked to entrepreneurship and innovation
- align educational and training programmes with rural realities
- support local leaders and organisations in creating local initiatives, and
- foster community and stakeholder engagement on sustainable regional future.

In turn, key benefits of the framework include:

- enhancing insights into latent regional potential and enabling the development of targeted mobilisation strategies
- aligning local resources with opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurship to strengthen rural economies
- providing a robust methodological foundation for context-specific public policy design and investment planning
- assisting universities in designing relevant, field-based curricula
- supporting regional revitalisation through the establishment of innovation hubs, incubators, and sustainable tourism initiatives, and
- promoting collaboration among educational institutions, local authorities, non-governmental organisations, and communities to ensure sustained development

Central to the framework are Rural Development Potential Maps, which provide comprehensive overviews of local resources and development opportunities within the studied regions. These maps present examples of both existing and potential entrepreneurial and innovative initiatives capable of leveraging identified

resources. Furthermore, they delineate the key competency requirements associated with these initiatives, thereby facilitating the alignment of education and training programmes with regional development objectives. The maps are constructed through the integration of secondary data with insights gathered from stakeholders.

The maps integrate key elements such as local rural resources, their associated development potentials, and concrete entrepreneurial and innovative initiatives that activate these potentials. In essence, they serve as a core analytical tool, illustrating how available resources can be transformed into tangible development opportunities.

The maps comprise:

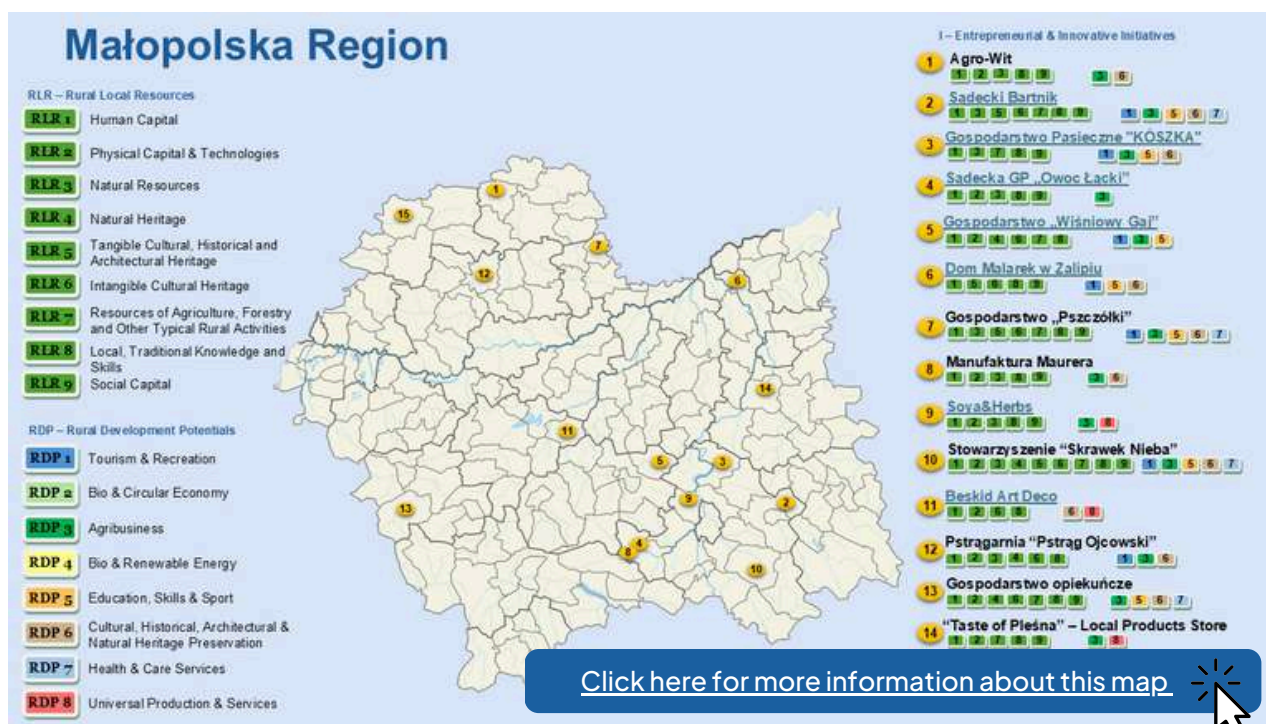
- a description of the socio-economic profile of the region and its rural areas, outlining key regional characteristics and positioning rural areas within the broader regional context
- a graphical presentation illustrating the interconnections among identified rural resources, their most significant development potentials, and corresponding entrepreneurial and innovative initiatives, thereby enhancing understanding of current and prospective opportunities for rural entrepreneurship and innovation, and
- a description of various entrepreneurial and innovative initiatives that leverage identified rural resources and development potentials, accompanied by an overview of the knowledge, skills, and competences required for their effective implementation.



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Małopolska's Rural Development Potential



The Rural Development Potential Map for the Małopolska region is accompanied by a concise presentation of the region's profile and its rural areas, providing key socio-economic characteristics. It also includes a brief overview of local resources and their connections to identified development potentials, as well as four exemplary entrepreneurship and innovation initiatives, selected from a broader list of fifteen identified within the region, and considered the most inspiring.

The selected initiatives are:

- **Gospodarstwo Pasieczne "Sądecki Bartnik"**, specialising in beekeeping and the production of natural honey and bee products
- **Dom Malarek w Żalipiu**, preserving and promoting the local tradition of decorating homesteads with distinctive floral motifs
- **Beskid Art Deco**, focusing on the bespoke tailoring of folk and folk-inspired costumes, and
- **Gospodarstwo Sadowniczo-Agrotyrystyczne „Wiśniowy Gaj”**, specialising in agritourism and educational activities.



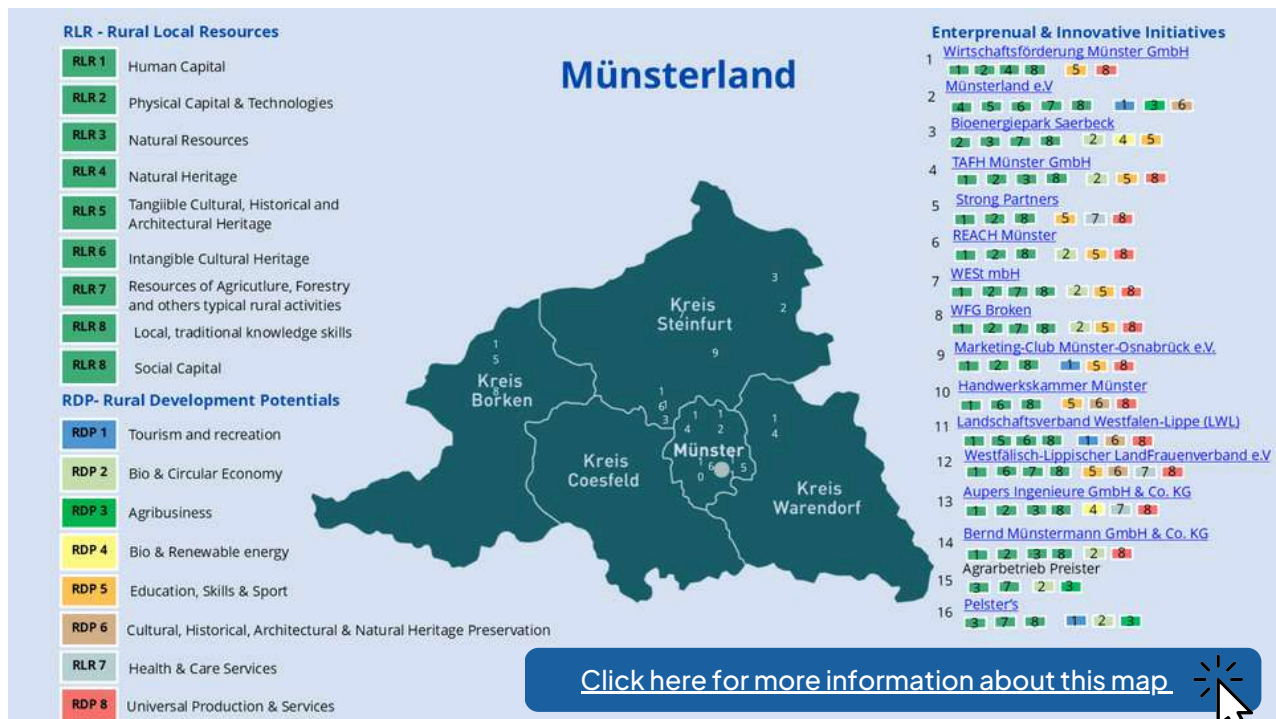
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Münsterland's Rural Development Potential



The Rural Development Potential Map for the Münsterland region is accompanied by a succinct presentation of the region's profile and its rural areas, highlighting principal socio-economic characteristics. It further offers a brief synopsis of local resources and their links to the identified development potentials. Additionally, it features four entrepreneurial and innovative initiatives, chosen from a wider pool of sixteen identified in the region, representing those deemed most inspiring.

The selected initiatives are:

- **Bernd Münstermann GmbH & Co. KG**, specialising in plant engineering for material handling, thermal processing, and air pollution control systems
- **Pelster's**, focusing on dairy production and direct-to-consumer food marketing
- **Bioenergiepark Saerbeck**, producing biogas and renewable energy from agricultural residues, and
- **Münsterland e.V.**, specialising in sustainable tourism, agritourism, and cultural heritage tourism.

Zusammen sind das Münsterland und die Twente-Region die älteste Euro-Region, ganz im Sinne der Zusammenarbeit der Uni Münster, der FH Münster, der Hogeschool Saxion und der Uni Twente. Davon profitieren auch unsere Start-up Teams, die in Enschede ihre Co-Founder innen finden und dort auch suchen. Aufgrund der unterschiedlichen Herangehensweisen, z. B. an Themen wie Problemlösung oder Flexibilität ergeben sich Teams mit komplementären Stärken.



Dr. Anne Vorkamp
Innovationsscout

Resiliente Unternehmen gestalten Zukunft, indem sie Veränderungen als Chance begreifen, kreativ handeln und den Menschen in den Mittelpunkt stellen.



Mechthild Leiwering-Hillers
Startup Advisor



FH MÜNSTER
University of Applied Sciences



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Alto Minho's Rural Development Potential



The Rural Development Potential Map for the Alto Minho region is accompanied by a concise overview of the region and its rural areas, emphasising key socio-economic characteristics. It also provides a summary of local resources and their connections to the identified development potentials. Furthermore, it showcases four entrepreneurial and innovative initiatives, selected from a broader list of fifteen identified in the region, highlighting those considered the most exemplary and inspiring.

The selected initiatives are:

- **Terra Rosa Country House & Vineyards**, specialising in the production of local wines, rural tourism, and the provision of accommodation and event services
- **Enhancement of the Ways of St. James – Portuguese Coastal Way**, is a collaborative initiative by ten municipalities along the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela, aimed at enhancing the intrinsic value of the Caminho Português da Costa
- **Alto Minho Wind Farm (Ventominho, S.A.)**, specialising in wind energy production, and
- **Lima Escape Camping & Glamping**, dedicated to promoting sustainable tourism, supporting the local economy, and showcasing the region's natural beauty and cultural heritage.



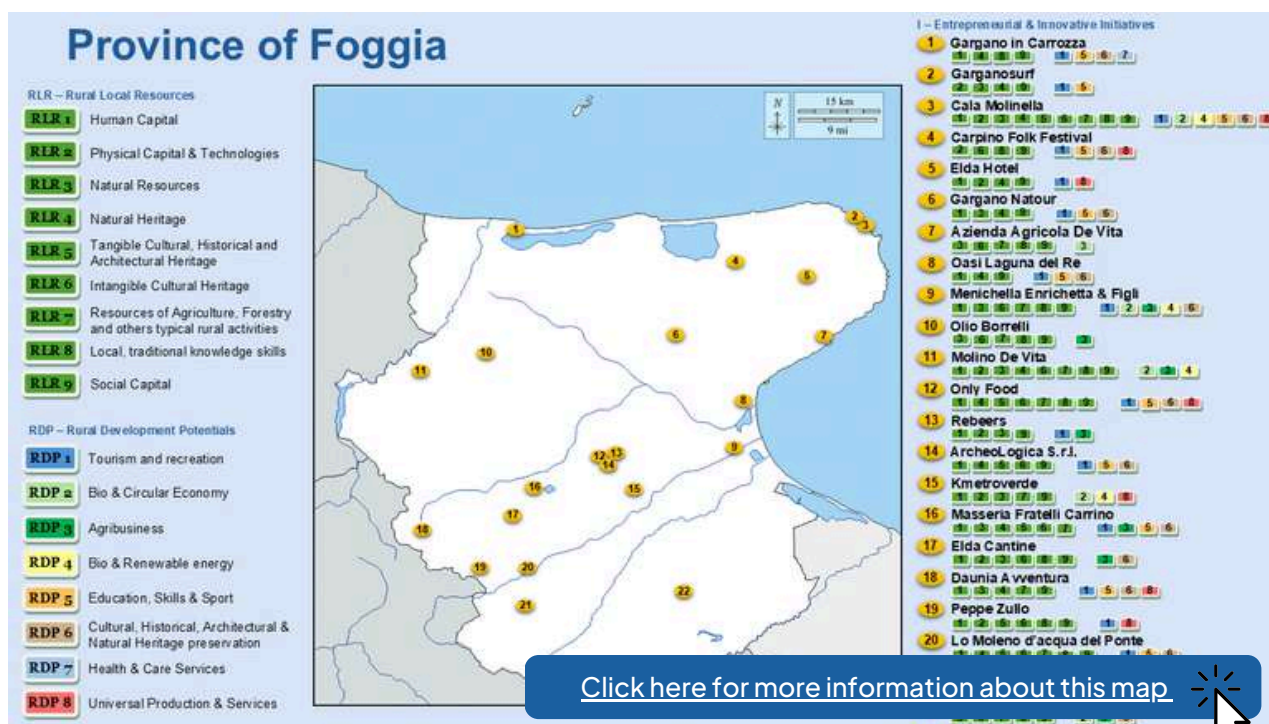
**Instituto Politécnico
de Viana do Castelo**



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Province of Foggia's Rural Development Potential



The Rural Development Potential Map for the Province of Foggia is supplemented by a succinct overview of the region and its rural areas, underscoring principal socio-economic attributes. It further offers a synopsis of local resources and their linkage to the identified development potentials. Additionally, it showcases four entrepreneurial and innovative ventures, carefully chosen from a broader pool of twenty two identified within the region, exemplifying the most inspiring initiatives.

The selected initiatives are:

- **Masseria Salecchia**, which integrates agriculture with social rehabilitation by providing animal-assisted therapy and training programmes for individuals with disabilities or from disadvantaged backgrounds
- **Cala Molinella**, an eco-sustainable holiday village offering cosy cottages, a private beach club, a swimming pool set among olive trees and dry-stone walls, as well as a scenic hill featuring a tree house and an educational farm
- **Kmetroverde**, focuses on revitalising a former industrial site previously abandoned by Ferrovie dello Stato; and
- **Molino De Vita**, renowned for its production of organic durum wheat semolina.



Università di Foggia



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Events



Kick-off meeting of the ENGINE project

On 24-25 October 2024, the Department of Economic Policy and Development Programming at Krakow University of Economics had the honour of hosting the kick-off meeting for the consortium partners of the international research and education initiative – ENGINE. The meeting centred on outlining the key activities to be undertaken within Work Package 2, including: the development of a methodology for identifying rural development potential for innovation and entrepreneurship, the collection of relevant data in the HEI regions, and the integration of these outputs into the final intellectual output – *the Rural Development Potential for Innovation and Entrepreneurship – Analysis Framework*.

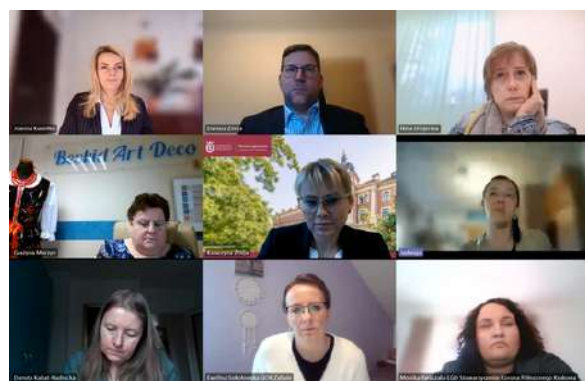


[Read more on ENGINE' website](#)



Rural Consultation in Małopolska: Stakeholder Perspectives

On 28 February 2025, the first rural consultation meeting under the ENGINE project was held in the Małopolska region, bringing together 20 participants representing agriculture, entrepreneurship, local government, public institutions, Local Action Groups, non-governmental organisations, advisory services, and academia. The meeting served as a platform to present the project's objectives and progress while actively engaging local stakeholders in advancing its mission. Through open and constructive dialogue, participants analysed local resources and the development potential of rural areas in Małopolska, discussed examples of entrepreneurial and innovative initiatives capable of harnessing these potentials, and identified the essential knowledge, skills, and competencies required for their effective implementation to drive sustainable rural entrepreneurship and innovation.



[Read more on ENGINE' website](#)



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Fostering Dialogue in Alto Minho

On 10 and 12 March 2025, the Polytechnic Institute of Viana do Castelo hosted two online Rural Consultation sessions, engaging 23 stakeholders including entrepreneurs, association representatives, officials, educators, and local experts. The sessions served as a forum to identify and discuss local resources, development opportunities, and innovative initiatives driving rural development in Alto Minho. Participants also examined new inspiring initiatives, alongside the essential knowledge, skills, and competencies required for effective rural entrepreneurship.



[Read more on ENGINE' website](#)



ENGINE at “The New Sustainable City” in Foggia

On 24 March 2025, the University of Foggia participated in a discourse convened by the Municipality of Foggia as part of “The New Sustainable City” initiatives—an annual fair dedicated to food, tourism, and the local agri-food sector. The event provided a forum to present and promote the ENGINE project and exchange ideas on sustainable rural development. Central to the discussion was the rural development potential map, highlighting innovative and entrepreneurial initiatives within the Province of Foggia. Stakeholders were invited to assess the map's accuracy and relevance through anonymous questionnaires and open dialogue, ensuring it effectively reflects local resources and development potentials.



[Read more on ENGINE' website](#)



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Resilient Futures in the Daunian Mountains

On 3 April 2025, Professor Marilena Labianca, a member of the ENGINE consortium, convened a workshop on long-term development strategies for rural and marginal territories at the Department of Economics, University of Foggia. The session provided an excellent opportunity to introduce the ENGINE project to students and regional stakeholders. Participants shared valuable insights into rural development, presenting concrete examples of strategies aimed at fostering community innovation, diversifying economic activities, and enhancing tourism to counter land abandonment and depopulation—two of the area's most pressing challenges. As part of the discussion, one of ENGINE's key stakeholders provided critical feedback on the project's mapping of innovative initiatives in the province, assessing whether rural local resources and development potentials are accurately and effectively represented.

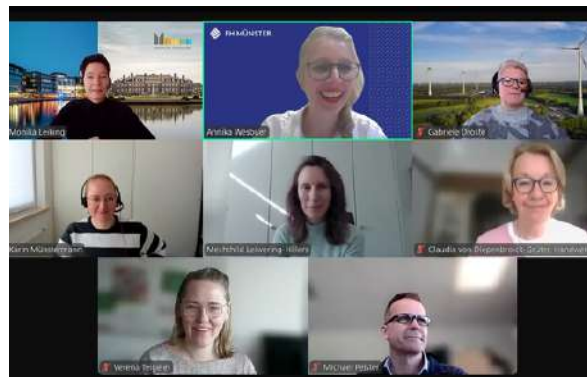


[Read more on ENGINE' website](#)



Introducing Münster's Rural Development Map: Insights from Stakeholders

On 9 April 2025, FH Münster University of Applied Sciences convened an online stakeholder consultation, engaging 20 representatives from local initiatives and institutions across the Münster region, including community leaders, entrepreneurs, educators, and public officials—all actively involved in rural development. The primary focus was the presentation and review of the Rural Development Potential Map for Münsterland, developed under Work Package 2. The meeting facilitated a rich exchange of insights, enabling stakeholders to validate, critique, and enhance the map's findings. The discussants also highlighted the essential competencies and knowledge required to foster innovation and entrepreneurship within Münsterland's rural landscape.



[Read more on ENGINE' website](#)



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Looking ahead

WP3 – PREPARING LOCAL LEADERSHIP STAKEHOLDER TOOLKIT

Laying the Foundations for Rural Entrepreneurship and Innovation Education

In June 2025, the implementation of the third work package - WP3: PREPARING LOCAL LEADERSHIP STAKEHOLDER TOOLKIT - was formally initiated. This work package aims to develop methods and tools that align entrepreneurship and innovation (E&I) education with the evolving needs of rural development, both present and future.

Under WP3, project partners will collaborate on the following tasks:

- conducting a comprehensive analysis of existing E&I curricula at partner universities to develop a teaching framework adapted to rural areas
- defining a graduate profile tailored to rural contexts, and
- identifying rural stakeholders whose knowledge and experience can meaningfully inform and enhance the educational process.

The activities undertaken in WP3 are essential to the subsequent development of the EDUPACK tool. They will provide the foundation for determining what should be taught - and how - in order to effectively support the growth of rural E&I leaders.

WP3 involves a series of research-based and analytical activities, including:

- formulating criteria for analyzing the current state of E&I education in higher education institutions - this activity will result in a methodological framework that defines a set of criteria for evaluating teaching content, outlining graduate profiles, and identifying rural stakeholders to be involved in the educational process
- conducting a comparative analysis of E&I teaching programs at partner universities - the aim is to develop a joint Academic Standardized Content Plan for Rural Entrepreneurial Education; based on a review of each partner's E&I curricula, standardized content compilations will be created, assessed for consistency, and evaluated for

their potential to support the development of rural entrepreneurship leaders; each university will also identify a set of locally recommended curriculum components, which will ultimately be integrated into a unified Academic Standardized Content Plan

- developing an academic profile of a rural entrepreneur (EU-wide) - the objective is to create a shared, EU-wide academic profile of an E&I graduate equipped to foster rural development; each university will first define its own graduate profile based on its recommended local curricula, which will then be standardized and merged into a single document outlining the core knowledge, skills, and competencies relevant to the rural context, and
- conducting an initial analysis of rural stakeholders in E&I education - this activity focuses on identifying and analyzing key rural stakeholders who should be involved in the teaching process; a joint stakeholder database will be developed, along with four national reports based on each university's E&I programs; these reports will describe stakeholder roles and propose ways to engage them meaningfully in educational process.

The outcomes of these activities will be compiled into IO3 - the Local Leadership Toolkit - a comprehensive resource containing methodology, analytical tools, and implementation examples for universities aiming to develop E&I curricula tailored to rural contexts.

This work package is coordinated by the Instituto Politécnico de Viana do Castelo (Portugal), with active participation from all partner universities and advisory support from IED. Through this collaborative effort, WP3 will provide not only an in-depth analysis of the current state of E&I education, but also a solid foundation for a new, integrated academic approach to preparing future leaders of rural entrepreneurship and innovation.



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ENGINE
Education for Rural
Entrepreneurship
& Innovation

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ENGINE - ENTrepreneurial rural Growth
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