Gloucestershire Living Lab

ROBUST
RURAL-URBAN UPDATE

Rural-Urban Outlooks: Unlocking Synergies (ROBUST) is a European research project that advances our understanding of the interactions between rural and urban areas. Its main premise is that strong, mutually-supportive linkages between rural and urban areas are key to realising smart, circular and inclusive development for a sustainable Europe. ROBUST kicked off in June 2017 and will run until May 2021. The project brings together 24 European partners representing both research- and practice-oriented organisations. They work with 11 regional Living Labs and five Communities of Practice.
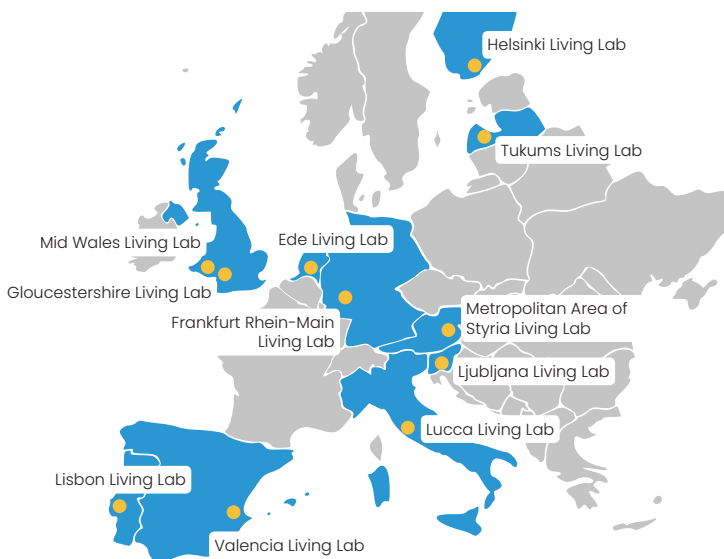
Living Labs

ROBUST Living Labs operate in 11 European countries. They bring local stakeholders together to work on developing and testing new ways to solve problems specific for the region. In this respect, Living Labs are 'user-led', with researchers informing and supporting the progress of Living Labs, rather than the other way around.

In ROBUST, Living Labs are analysed through the themes of:

- New Business Models and Labour Markets
- Public Infrastructure and Social Services
- Sustainable Food Systems
- Cultural Connections
- Ecosystem Services

These themes bring together researchers and practitioners into Communities of Practice that are built around these themes. Communities of Practice provide a structured forum for sharing real-time experiences and findings from the ROBUST Living Labs.

Gloucestershire Living Lab

In Gloucestershire, the three themes analysed in the Living Labs are business models and labour markets, sustainable food systems and ecosystems services.

A range of new policies are emerging that affect the way that urban-rural relations in the county will develop. These include:

- the Industrial Strategy, that highlights regional competitive advantage and plans for a high-skills economy;
- the Resources & Waste Strategy, that aims to maximise value flows by reducing waste and reusing materials; and
- the Agriculture Bill, which links the enhancement of natural capital, through food production, to future agricultural subsidy.

Finally, the public consultation around the "Gloucestershire 2050 vision" has devised possibilities for economic growth, environmental enhancement and urban expansion.

Such policies are explicitly connected to ambitions for a circular economy. They envisage a reduction in food waste, maximising values and lifecycles of materials, and ensuring that rural and urban benefits emerge from land management.

We will therefore focus our LL around the question: **how viable is a Circular Economy (CE) model of growth and prosperity in Gloucestershire?**

Living Lab Agenda

The Living Lab in Gloucestershire will consider the feasibility of circular economy (CE) and natural capital (NC) growth models in the county, and their potential for improved urban-rural linkages.

In the New Business and Labour Markets theme, the objective is to record, articulate and experiment with CE and NC business models, values and practices and to identify barriers to expanding CE and NC practices, such as shared operations.

In the Ecosystems Services theme, the objective is to explore (i) the potential for circularity within integrated water resources management; and (ii) links with the NC agenda in terms of new institutional arrangements to provide ecosystem goods and services.

In the Sustainable Food Systems theme, the objective is to collaborate with stakeholders in food procurement contracts to identify and promote practices which reflect CE approaches to material flows, for example minimising waste.

Our research aim is to establish the level of interest in the initiation and/or expansion of CE and NC growth models in Gloucestershire; and to understand how CE and NC approaches affect rural-urban relations in and around the county.

Next Steps

Having agreed this Living Lab agenda, the first task will be to carry out some exploratory interviews with knowledgeable stakeholders in the three Community of Practice themes - New Business and Labour markets, ecosystems services and sustainable food systems (see left). Five interviews per theme will be carried out, as a form of baseline intellegence gathering, which will complement documented Rapid Appraisals that have already been written.

In parallel with the interviews, we will carry out stakeholder network analysis to give us a clear picture of governance structures linked to the three themes. We will attend meetings of these networks to discuss CE and NC possibilities, and to discuss opportunities for experimentation. Examples of these networks include the Local Nature Partnership, the Local Enterprise Partnership Rural Group and the Gloucestershire 2050 Vision Boards.
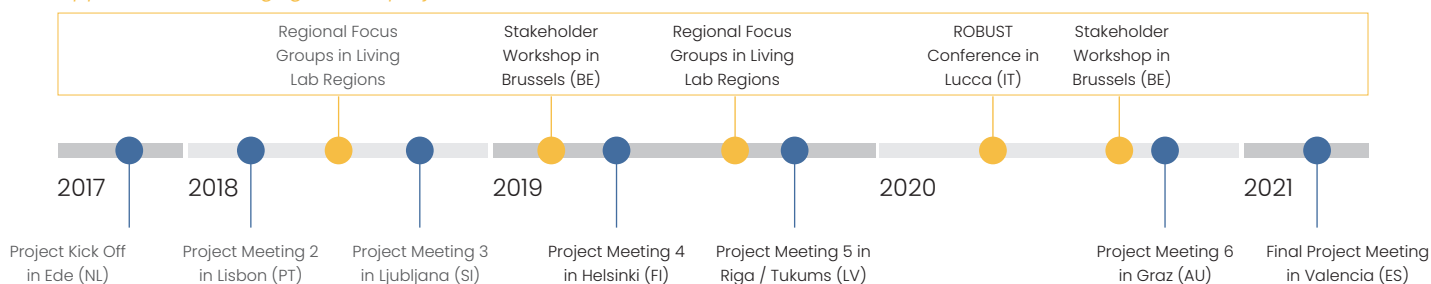
Local Contact Information

Gloucestershire Living Lab

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ROBUST Project Timeline

Opportunities to engage in the project

Regional Focus Groups in Living Lab Regions

Stakeholder Workshop in Brussels (BE)

Regional Focus Groups in Living Lab Regions

ROBUST Conference in Lucca (IT)

Stakeholder Workshop in Brussels (BE)

2017   2018   2019   2020   2021

Project Kick Off in Ede (NL)

Project Meeting 2 in Lisbon (PT)

Project Meeting 3 in Ljubljana (SI)

Project Meeting 4 in Helsinki (FI)

Project Meeting 5 in Riga / Tukums (LV)

Project Meeting 6 in Graz (AU)

Final Project Meeting in Valencia (ES)

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