



**GEOMATICS RURAL INFORMATION SOCIETY INITIATIVE PLUS**

**Grisi+**

**NETWORKING SEMINAR**

***Date: Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> November 2012***

***Venue: Council Chamber, Galway County Council, Prospect Hill, Galway.***

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**Report**

**9.15am to 9.45am: Welcome Speeches (Cllr. Terry O’Flaherty, Cathaoirleach, West Regional Authority & Cllr. Tom Welby, Mayor of County Galway):**

The network event commenced with welcome speeches by Cllr. Terry O’Flaherty, Cathaoirleach, West Regional Authority and Cllr. Tom Welby, Mayor of County Galway.

In her address Cllr. O’Flaherty stated that “she was delighted to welcome the participants to this first networking event for the Geomatics Rural Information Society Initiative or “GRISI Plus” Project, jointly hosted by the West Regional Authority and Galway County Council.” She went on to emphasize the worthwhile nature of the project given the focus on economic development, and in particular, the use of Information Communication Technology to enhance the attractiveness of rural areas for newcomers, entrepreneurs and tourists and she wished the project every success having no doubt that the involvement of the West Regional Authority and Galway County Council will yield significant benefits for the rural parts of West Region through exchange of best practice with all the project partners.

In his speech, Cllr. Welby stated that he was “delighted to be here today for the networking event organised as part of the GRISI plus project.” He believed that organisations in remote and peripheral parts of Europe are taking action to address the depopulation of their own rural areas and it only makes sense that Galway County Council share experiences and benefit from what Information Technology offers in dealing with the challenge. He welcomed and encouraged the innovation that the West Regional Authority and Galway County Council are showing by participating in GRISI PLUS project and the success in attracting Interreg IVC



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funding to the region to assist them to identify new ways of tackling rural depopulation and he stated that he would encourage the continuation of these efforts.

#### **9.45am to 10.00am: Overview of the GRISI PLUS project...Mr. Brian Barrett.**

Brian Barrett provided an overview of the GRISI PLUS project. At the outset he stated that the objective of the project is to improve the effectiveness of and enrich economic development policies in rural areas by increasing the use of geographical information and geomatic tools. He then provided particulars of the identification and the transfer of Good Practice in order to develop the attractiveness of Rural Territories to attract new inhabitants and promote local products through the use of geomatics and geographic information systems. He concluded by providing details of participating Partners as well outlining some of the Good Practices being proposed in various regions. PowerPoint is available from the Grisi Plus Website.

#### **10.00 to 11.00am: Snapshot/Synopsis of Good Practices from other Partner Regions of special interest for the West Region and for Galway County.... Mr. Shane Winters and Mr. Brian Barrett.**

Shane Winters provided an overview two Good Practices from other regions of special interest to the West Regional Authority. These were the 1.Dingli – Development of a Heritage & Nature Trail within a Rural Area (Malta) and the 2.Mura-Drava BIKE – Establishment of Cycle Paths & GPS Navigation Systems in Rural Area (Slovenia). In his overview he provided details regarding the objectives, target groups, activities, timescales, budgets and focussed on the possibility of transferring both Good Practices to the West Region. PowerPoint is available from the Grisi Plus Website.

Brian Barrett gave a presentation on two Good Practices from other regions of particular interest to Galway County. These were the SOHO SOLO – Small Office Home Office (France) and Organisation of Fruit & Vegetable Producers (Cyprus)). With regard to the Soho Solo Good Practice he provided details of the objectives and relevant statistics relating to the success of the project including the numbers of new inhabitants in the region. With respect to the Organisation of Fruit & Vegetable Producers he outlined the objectives, background, target groups, main phases, strengths and weaknesses, difficulties and solutions, transferability and future actions and improvements. PowerPoint is available from the Grisi Plus Website.

Both presentations were followed by a discussion. The following points were established:

- With respect to the first presentation by Shane Winters on the Dingli – Development of a Heritage & Nature Trail within a Rural Area (Malta) and the Mura-Drava BIKE – Establishment of Cycle Paths & GPS Navigation Systems in Rural Area (Slovenia) it was established that the majority of walking and cycling trails have now been mapped by

the GIS departments of the 4 local authorities in the West Region and this mapping process would be made available to the project partners in Galway County Council and the West Regional Authority. A number of websites already contain details of the many trails located throughout the region and the development of mobile tourism applications for smart phones has added a further dimension. For example the development of the Greenway app for the Newport Mulranney Route in County Mayo along the old railway line had not only sustained businesses in a mainly rural area but had been instrumental in the setting up of some new enterprises. It also helped to attract many tourists and visitors. The West Regional Authority has developed and implemented an app for the Hymany Way in East Galway for the promotion of a walking and cycling route in a remote and peripheral area. This app is available free to download on to iphones and smart phones and is intended to make the area more attractive for residents and newcomers.

- With regard to the presentation by Brian Barrett on the SOHO SOLO – Small Office Home Office (France) and Organisation of Fruit & Vegetable Producers (Cyprus). Participants were particularly impressed by the Soho Solo project most especially the budget and the involvement of the local community in villages in order to encourage the settlement of newcomers. In addition the employment of a full time official on the ground to assist with re-settlements in the GERS Region was considered to be a key element of the Good Practice. In addition the SOHO SOLO website is constantly being updated with information and is always current. The fact that all the information is readily available and located on one website is of enormous benefit to any potential newcomer into the region. With regard to the Organisation of Fruit & Vegetable Producers (Cyprus) the participants were impressed with the Good Practice and could appreciate its transferability to the West Region by virtue of the similarities of both regions from an agricultural point of view.

**11.30am to 12.15pm: Presentation on the “LookWest” Initiative ....Mr.Paul Keyes, WDC.  
Presentation on the “Made in Galway” Initiative....Mr. Brian Barrett.  
Q & A session.**

Paul Keyes, an invited speaker from the Western Development Commission then gave a detailed presentation on the work of the WDC in the launch and continued support of the “LookWest” Initiative: [www.lookwest.ie](http://www.lookwest.ie). The “LookWest” initiative is a Good Practice being proposed by the West Regional Authority for the GRISI+ Project. At the outset he provided background details of his organization and its location which coincides with that of the West Region. He then went on to highlight the objectives of the LookWest Initiative, relevant statistics and he provided screen grabs in order to explain how the Initiative actually works. He emphasized the role which social media now plays in dissemination and communication. He noted the similarities between the SOHO SOLO – Small Office Home

Office (France) and the LookWest Initiative. PowerPoint is available from the Grisi Plus Website.

Brian Barrett gave a presentation on the “Made in Galway” Project: [www.madeingalway.ie](http://www.madeingalway.ie). Initially he detailed the origin, the objectives and goals of the initiative and later he outlined the implementation process, activities, expected results and the dissemination and exploitation process. He emphasized that producers update the website themselves and that if they do not carry out an update every 3 months they are removed from the website. PowerPoint is available from the Grisi Plus Website.

A lively discussion followed whereby a series of questions were posed by the participants in relation to both Good Practices.

**12.15pm to 12.55pm: Presentation on “All Ireland Research Observatory” ....Ms. Aoife Dowling.  
Q & A session.**

Aoife Dowling an invited speaker from the All-Island Research Observatory (AIRO) [www.airo.ie](http://www.airo.ie) then provided a presentation on “Improving Evidence Informed Planning in Ireland.” At the outset she provided details on the background and work of AIRO. She went on to highlight details of the Census 2011 and how it relates back to the mapping process and GIS. She demonstrated relevant statistics, key facts and figures for the West Region with regard to rural areas and provided examples of data visualization through AIRO. Ms. Dowling then focused on various by products of Census 2011 and drew attention to the All-Island accessibility mapping and deprivation index as well as new ways of mapping for example unemployment in the region. PowerPoint is available from the Grisi Plus Website.

Following the presentation, participants at the event posed a series of questions in relation to the work of AIRO.

**12.55pm to 1pm: Concluding Remarks....Mr. Mark O’Donnell, Director West Regional Authority.**

The Director of the West Regional Authority Mr. Mark O’Donnell thanked the speakers for their very detailed and informative presentations. He extended gratitude to the participants for their animated contribution to the event. He believed that the Good Practices being proposed for possible transfer to the West Region and County Galway offered opportunities for rural areas. He agreed that websites offering information for potential newcomers to any region must contain information which is current and up to date. From the discussions at the event he was of the opinion that websites in themselves had been overtaken by Social Media and these avenues of communication are the way forward and should be exploited to the maximum.