

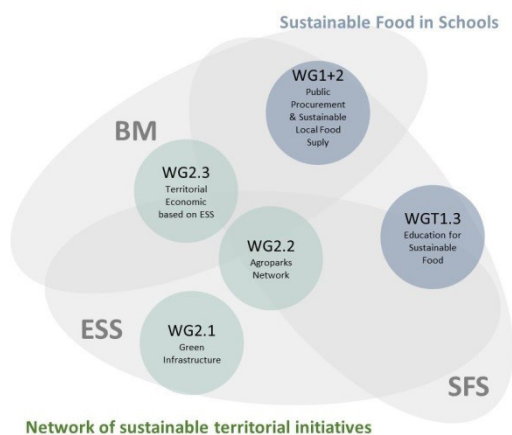


Rural-Urban Outlooks: Unlocking Synergies (ROBUST) is a European research project that advances our understanding of the interactions between rural and urban areas. Its main premise is that strong, mutually-supportive linkages between rural and urban areas are key to realising smart, circular and inclusive 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.

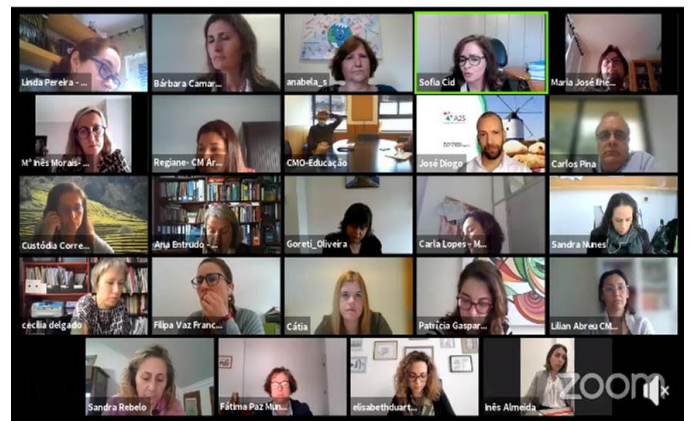
## Lisbon Living Lab

The central theme of the Lisbon Living Lab - A Territorial Economy of Proximity - reflects the importance of approaching the Territory in a unitary way, where the rural and urban dimensions are complementary without any hierarchical relationship. The strengthening and enhancement of the relationship between these dimensions, through new business models and the promotion of sustainable food systems that capitalize on ecosystem services, are the main objectives of the Living Lab. To achieve this objective, the Living Lab's work was structured into two Working Groups (WG), which bring together several relevant stakeholders in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area. WG1 meets around a Sustainable School Feeding Program. WG2 meets around a Network of Sustainable Initiatives motivated by ecosystem services.

The logic of structuring and operating the Living Lab in Lisbon has always been based on the perfect articulation between the objectives of the Working Groups and the three CoP - Ecosystem Services (ESS), New Business Models (BM) and Sustainable Food Systems (SFS) - as reflected in the diagram below.



## Governance Innovations



The structuring of the Living Lab in Lisbon, in terms of governance, was designed and built solely and exclusively for this project. The actors involved, the dialogue and discussion that takes place in the working groups and sub-groups is new in the context of the Lisbon Metropolitan Area, as well as the relationship and accountability of the different actors.

The interconnected participatory practice is not common, but it is desirable, maintaining some expectation about the role that regional and intermunicipal powers can, and should, play as entities that aggregate and dynamize rural-urban dynamics. In other words, although there is an expectation that the dynamics created within the scope of the Robust project will last beyond 2021, a radical change in governance structures is not expected, and may not be desired, but rather to take advantage of existing institutions, such as the CCDR-LVT, Lisbon Metropolitan Area or the municipalities, and the integration, or internalization, of the principles and methodologies worked at the level of the Living Lab.

The Territorial Proximity Economy developed at the Lisbon Living Lab confirmed that the growing interdependence between urban, rural and peri-urban areas has created functional territories where it is possible to reinforce forms of cooperation, integration and mutually beneficial synergies, exploring new opportunities, increasing the global critical mass and contributing to greater territorial cohesion.

Thus, opportunities for action require more balanced and integrative intervention models. The rationalization of new business models, the valorisation of services provided by ecosystems and the proximity and sustainable food systems presupposes increasing rural-urban partnerships and stimulating new formats of territorial governance, aiming above all to reinforce environmental, economic and social complementarities, enhancing benefits for the Territory.

The Lisbon Living Lab Territorial Economy of Proximity, and the principles on which it is based, has a total alignment with the current European and national strategic and policy objectives, so the seeds created in the working groups can form the basis for projects to be carried out, streamline and materialize by the 2030 horizon.

## Beyond ROBUST

The partnership created around the Living Lab in Lisbon is completely informal, dependent on the will and trust established between the partners, and between them with the Robust team.

The leadership of the working groups has been instrumental in making the work more dynamic and successful, as well as the support and monitoring that CCDR-LVT and IST give to the functioning of the Living Lab and its working groups are essential for the maintaining pace and work, the articulation between work groups. It is the intention of the Living Lab team that the partnerships created within the scope of the Robust project and the activities planned and considered relevant to enhance synergies between rural, urban and peri-urban areas, can continue beyond November 2021, the project's completion date.

However, the perception of the partners is that the maintenance of these partnerships and the resulting work will depend on other types of "stimuli", eventually linked to the new strategic framework for the present decade.



## ROBUST Final Conference

The ROBUST Final Conference will take place online on 21 and 22 September 2021.

For more information visit [rural-urban.eu](http://rural-urban.eu)

## Local Contact Information

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To learn more about the ROBUST project and to get the latest information about cutting-edge research on rural-urban issues visit [www.rural-urban.eu](http://www.rural-urban.eu)



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