

European Network of Living Labs

– a first step towards a new Innovation System!

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Rio Nacimiento Living Lab (RioNLL)

Rio Nacimiento Living Lab pursues social innovation and development in rural areas. Rural development will help to assure improved levels of wellbeing for people living in rural areas. “Social innovation” refers to an ongoing process in which people are the main engines of change. A by product of rural development would be a reduction of migratory flows from rural areas to large urban areas. The use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) will hopefully stimulate employment, SME development in the area and improve the quality of life of people living in rural areas.

Description of Concept

RioNLL has been promoted by the citizens of Abla (Almería) as an attempt to explore new mechanisms for social innovation. They have been managing the process, defining its main objectives and identifying key partners, to stimulate local development and improve the quality of life of all people living in the area. In doing so, the people of Abla, have demonstrated leadership in the process of social innovation, and have attracted the interest of other institutions, research groups and private enterprises.

The citizens of Alba have been involved in the innovation process since its inception, focusing on priority needs and contributing to the identification of appropriate solutions. They have participated in all phases of the process of development of services and products, from design to implementation and evaluation. Social and technological effectiveness are essential factors.

The main objectives of RioNLL are: to experiment with and better understand the role of innovation to improve social and health services for rural populations; to emphasize the role ICTs can play in various sectors of rural development; to promote new mechanisms for citizen participation; to promote Abla’s cultural heritage as a basis for boosting the tourism industry in the area; to improve natural resources management, the development of sources of renewable energy and to expand educational resources.

References and Track Record

Primary stakeholders already engaged in RioNLL are:

- The people of Abla (and, more in general, of the whole Rio Nacimiento area)
- The health services of Abla. They offer an in-depth understanding of the health and social issues in the area and the commitment of dedicated personnel.
- The local authorities. They provide infrastructure and mechanisms to facilitate people’s participation.
- I2BC (Institute for Innovation on Human Wellbeing). It is responsible for monitoring and evaluation and to develop and make available to all other stakeholders tools for collaborative work.
- The University of Málaga and the University of Córdoba through the ‘Spain Special Network’ Foundation (FREE). They provide support in the fields of technological and social sciences.
- The “Fundación Vodafone España” (Vodafone Spain Foundation). It contributes extensive expertise with initiatives based on social inclusion at the national level.
- Companies as Lynka, Novasoft and Ihman. They contribute knowledge and expertise in the development of ICT-based products and services such as intelligent environment technologies, human-machine interface solutions, and virtual reality.

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