

Revitalising Rural Futures: Prioritising People-Centred Development

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Overview

- ▶ Rural Change
- ▶ Rural Europe: Painting a Picture
- ▶ Key Challenges
- ▶ Consequences
- ▶ People Centred Policy

Changing Rural....

► Rural Restructuring.....

- Fundamental Rural Change – Pace, Persistence and Totality not seen in history.....

- Driven by..

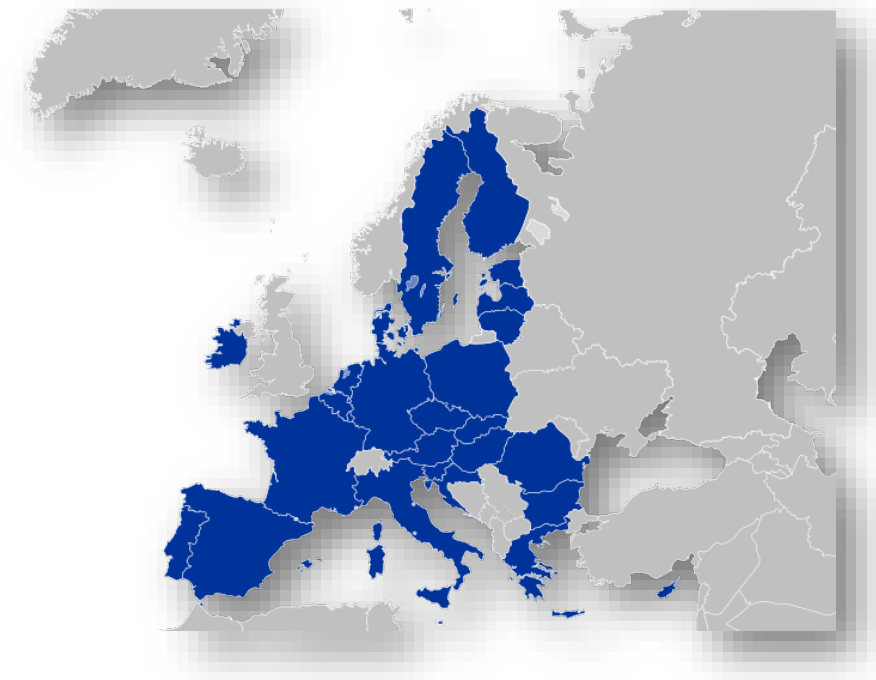
- Technological Innovation
 - Social Modernisation
 - Globalisation



► Still, we have Diverse Rural Areas...

Rural Europe: Painting the Picture

- ▶ **Rural areas:** 80% of EU's total areas.
- ▶ **Population:** 30% of EU's population reside in rural areas.
- ▶ **Employment:** Agriculture remains significant, but has declined (5%) total EU workforce in agriculture, forestry and fishing
- ▶ **Economic Contributions:** Agriculture, but also tourism, renewable energy and small-scale manufacturing (Eurostat).



Key Challenges	Explanation
Economic Decline	Stagnation or decline as primary industries diminished.
Infrastructure/Services	Inadequate transportation networks, broadband internet access, healthcare facilities, and educational institutions and social services.
Demographic Change	Aging population, declining birth rates, out-migration of young people, in-migration of new-comers.
Digital Divide	Many rural areas lack high-speed internet access, which hampers economic development, educational opportunities, and access to essential services.
Environmental Challenges	Vulnerable to climate change, pollution, and natural disasters, food security.
Access to Finance	Rural businesses/Entrepreneurs' challenges in accessing finance and investment capital.
Employment	Absence of high-quality employment opportunities
Gender Inequalities	Access to land, succession in farming, high quality job opportunities, discrimination.

Recent Evidence....

(Long-term Vision for Rural Areas Report: Key Achievements and Ways Forward: March 2024)

Rural Aging 

Digital Connectivity improved **but** speeds still poor 

Rural producing renewable energy 

Gender Gap – highest in rural areas 

Food Security and natural resources 



Key Challenge	Consequences
Economic Decline	Lack of investment, declining infrastructure, and struggling local businesses.
Infrastructure	Hinder economic development and quality of life.
Demographic Change	Strain local services and lead to social isolation among older residents.
Digital Divide	Exacerbates existing inequalities between rural and urban areas.
Environmental Challenges	Affect agricultural productivity, biodiversity, and the overall resilience of rural communities.
Access to Finance	Limit ability to start or expand businesses and create jobs in rural areas.
Employment	Outmigration
Gender Inequalities	Unequal society, outmigration

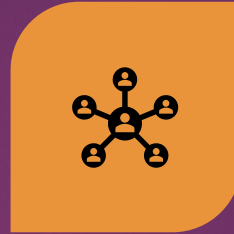
Greater Consequences....



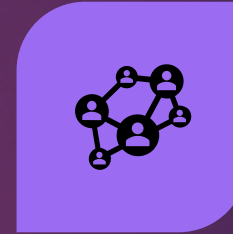
**PERPETUATE A
CYCLE OF
RURAL POVERTY,**



**LIMITED
OPPORTUNITIES,**



**SOCIAL
INEQUITIES,**



**ULTIMATELY
UNDERMINING
THE WELL-BEING
AND RESILIENCE
OF THESE
COMMUNITIES.**



**LONGER-TERM
UNREST AND
DISSATISFACTION**



Paints a
Bleak
Picture...

But also....

- ▶ Highlights the importance of the task ahead!



Addressing Challenges

&

Avoiding Consequences

Requires comprehensive policies and strategies at the EU, national, and local levels:

- ▶ Focusing on economic diversification,
- ▶ Infrastructure development,
- ▶ Social inclusion,
- ▶ Innovation support, including a focus on social innovation and social enterprise
- ▶ Environmental sustainability,
- ▶ Support for rural communities and businesses.
- ▶ Support for the well-being of rural people

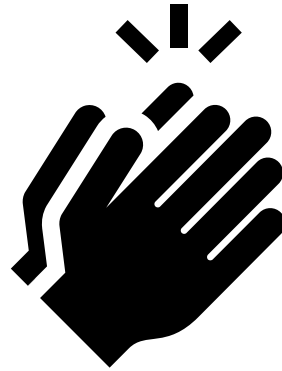
EU Policy is there....

- ▶ CAP Strategic Plans
- ▶ AKIS – EIP-AGRI
- ▶ LEADER
- ▶ Smart Villages
- ▶ Gender Equality Strategy
- ▶ Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas
 - ▶ Rural Pact
 - ▶ EU Rural Action Plan
 - ▶ Way Forward
 - ▶ Rural Revitalisation Platform
 - ▶ Etc.

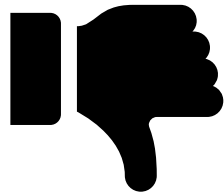


European Wide Policy....

National Diversity of
Implementation



Not Implemented





People must be Central to Policies and Strategies...

It must be about 'Rural People..'

Policy and Action:

- ▶ Not Areas but People/
Community Focused

People-based approach:

- ▶ Their lives
- ▶ Their communities
- ▶ Their well-being



RURALIZATION

Finally... Rural Challenges.....

"I would spread the cloths under your feet

*But I, being poor, have only my dreams
I have spread my dreams under your feet
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams"*

*"The Cloths of Heaven" by W.B. Yeats
(Seizing opportunities and embracing change)*





Thank You!