



# Vision for rural areas

**The long-term vision for EU's rural areas by 2040**  
Alexia Rouby – European Commission - DG AGRI

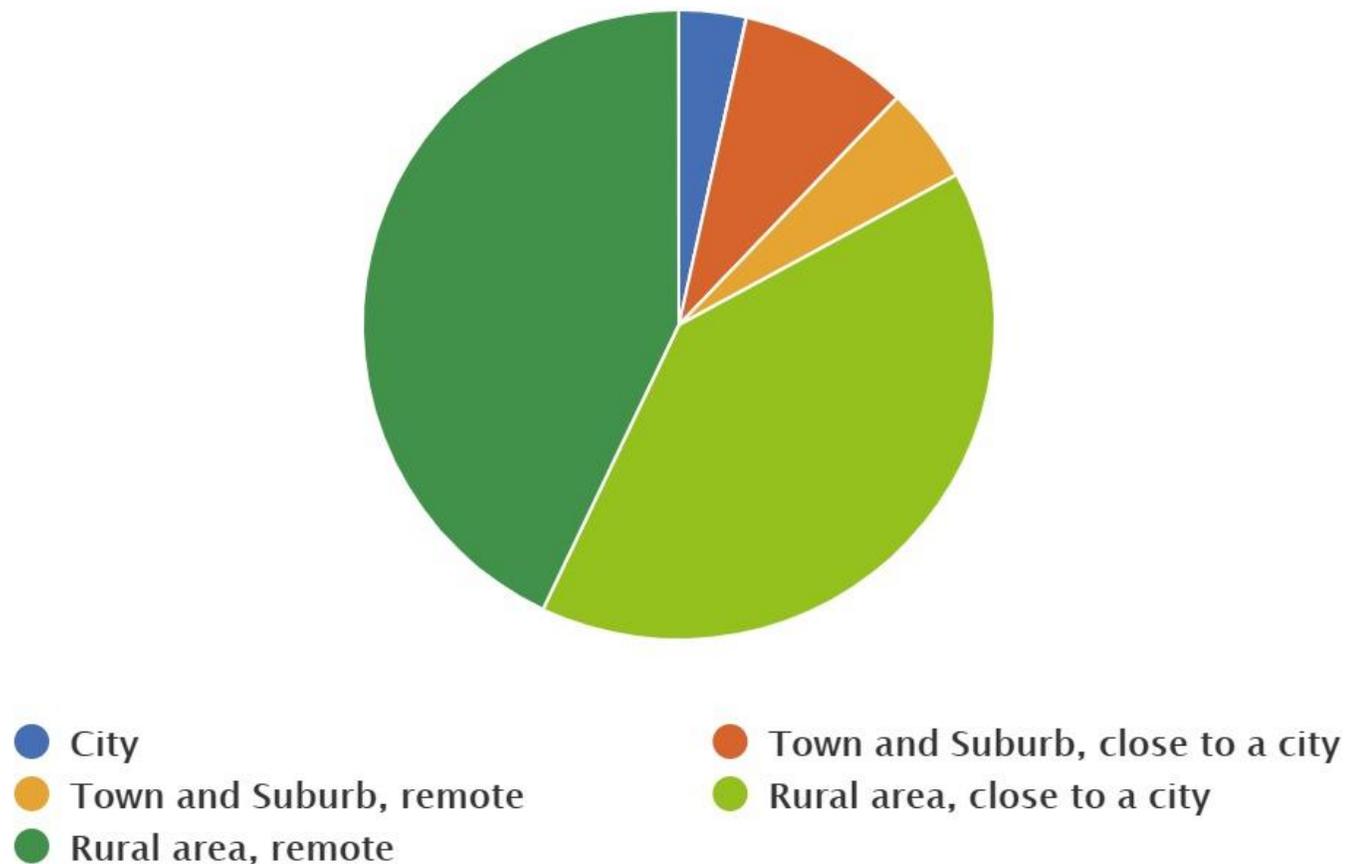


# EU rural areas

- 83% of land
- 30% of population

EU land area, 2018 (in million hectares and percentage)

Source: LUISA Base Map 2018 (EC-JRC)



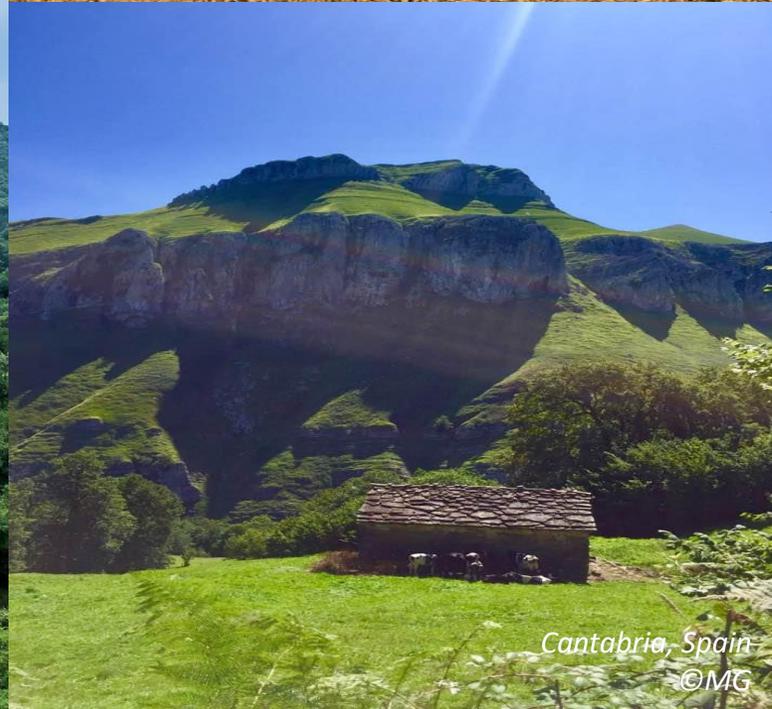
# EU's rural areas



*Flanders, Belgium*  
©MG



*Drenovo, Bulgaria*  
Picture by Vladimir Haltakov



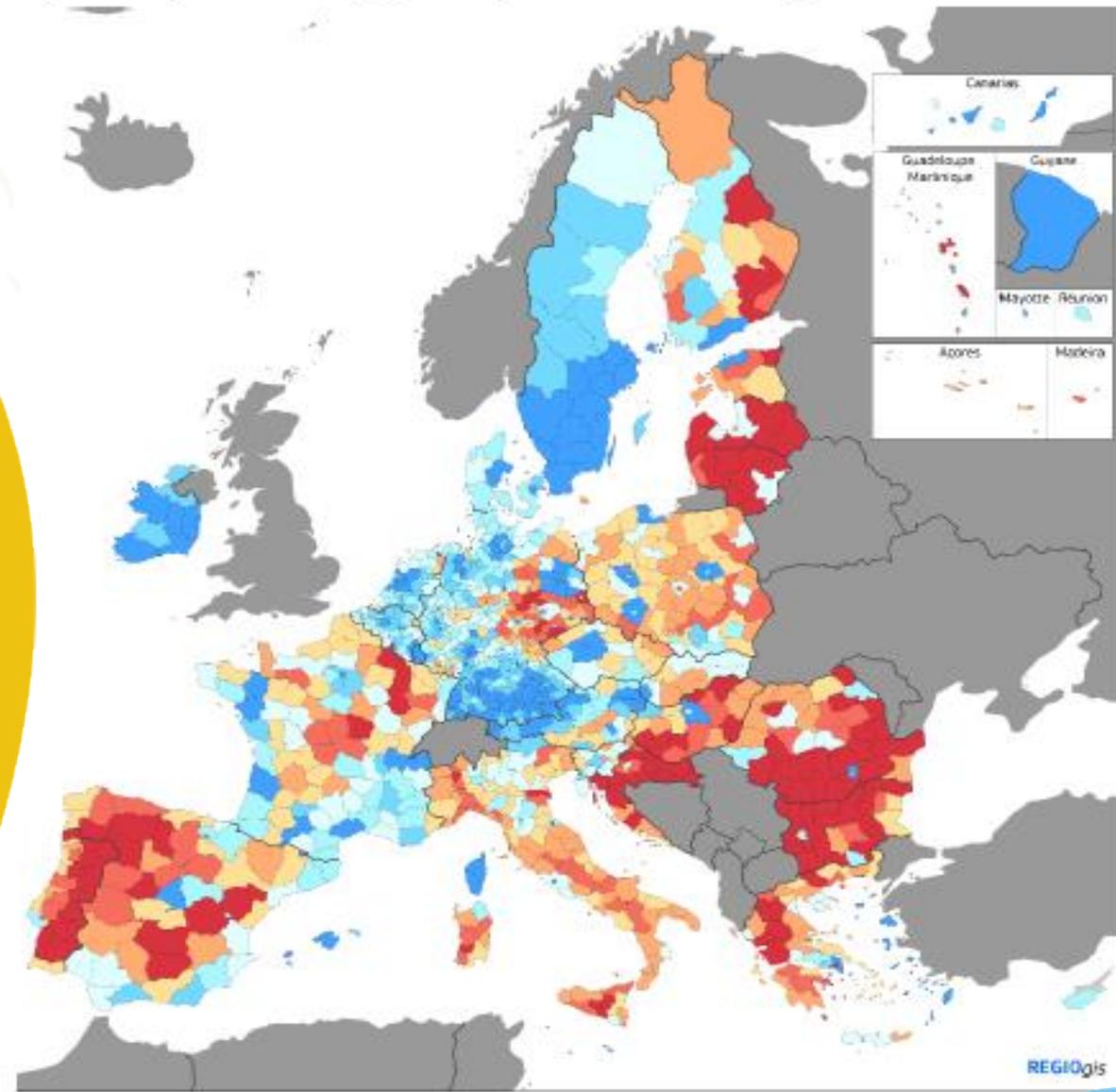
*Cantabria, Spain*  
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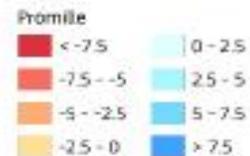
*Mako, Hungary*  
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Map 6 Average annual crude population growth rate in NUTS-3 regions, 2014-2019

# Population growth (2014-2019)



Average annual crude population growth rate in NUTS3 regions, 2014-2019



Source: DG REGIO based on Eurostat data



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*Our rural areas are the **fabric of our society** and the **heartbeat of our economy**. The diversity of the landscape, culture and heritage is one of **Europe's most defining and remarkable features**. They are a core part of our identity and our economic potential.*

*We will cherish and preserve our rural areas and **invest in their future**.*

President Von der Leyen – July 2019



# How?



## Public consultation and engagement

Open public consultation (2300) + Eurobarometer (27 000) + Rural voices (stakeholder workshop package - 3000) + Rural vision Week (600)



## Analysis

12 themes  
All aspects of rural life



## Foresight

Participatory scenario building + research projects



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# Vision for rural areas



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## Challenges in rural areas



Analysis

- Demographic change
- Low income levels
- Limited access to services
- Low connectivity
- Feeling of being overlooked
- Limited resilience



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# Vision for rural areas



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## Opportunities in rural areas



Analysis

- Key for ecosystem services
- Bio- and circular economy
- Ecological and digital transitions
- Increasing demands from society
- Recovery from COVID 19 crisis



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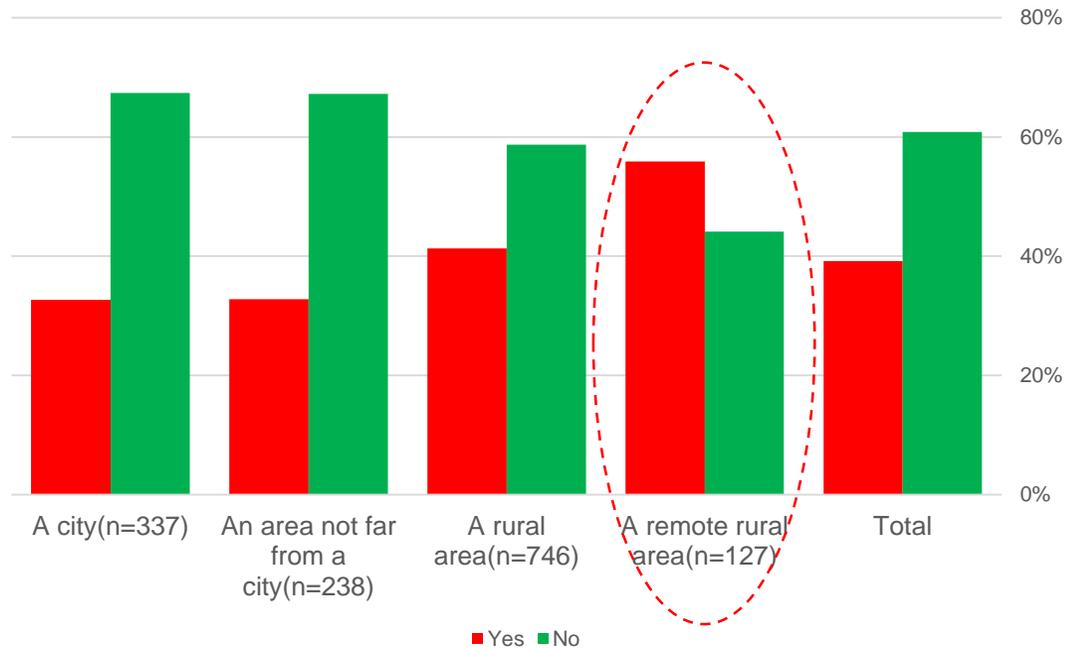
# Governance in rural areas



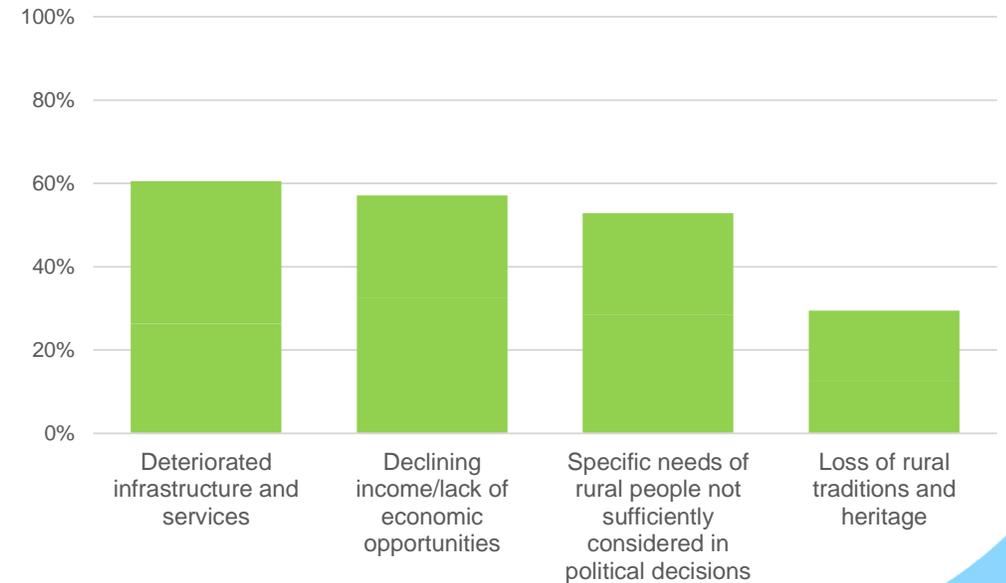
## Do you feel left behind by society?

Two out of five respondents feel left behind by society

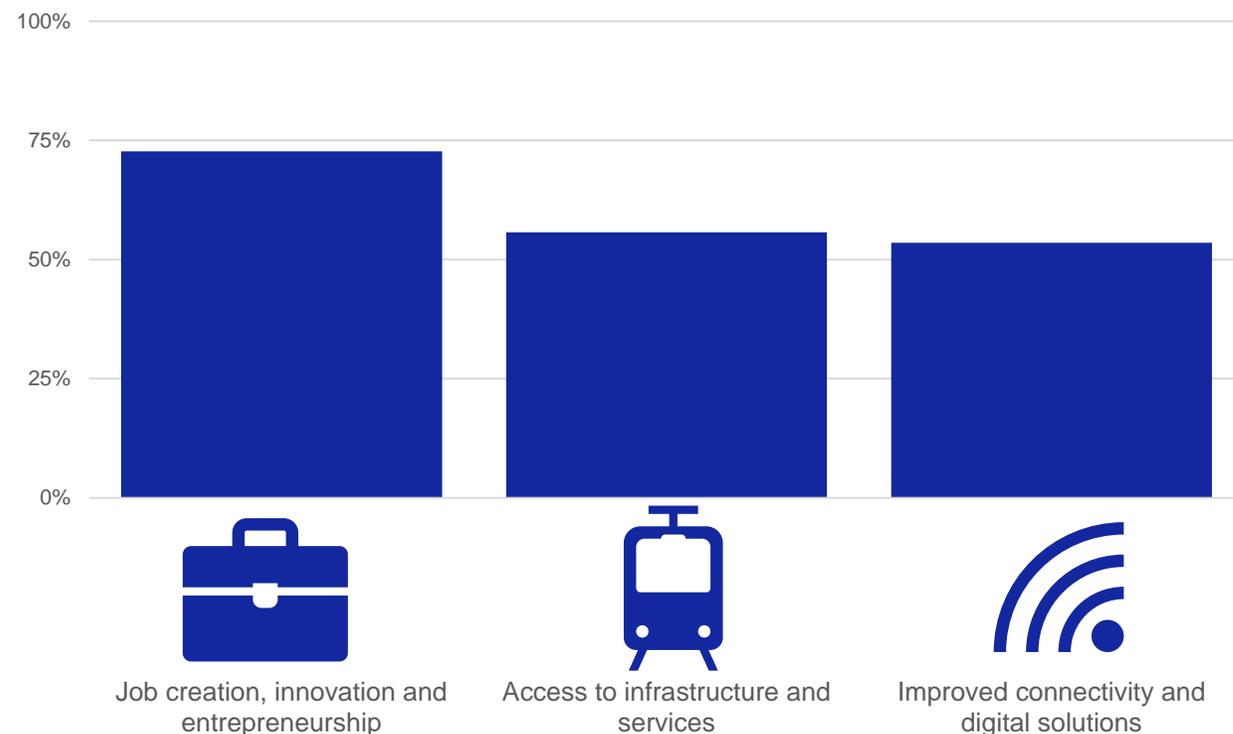
- 39 % yes
- 61 % no



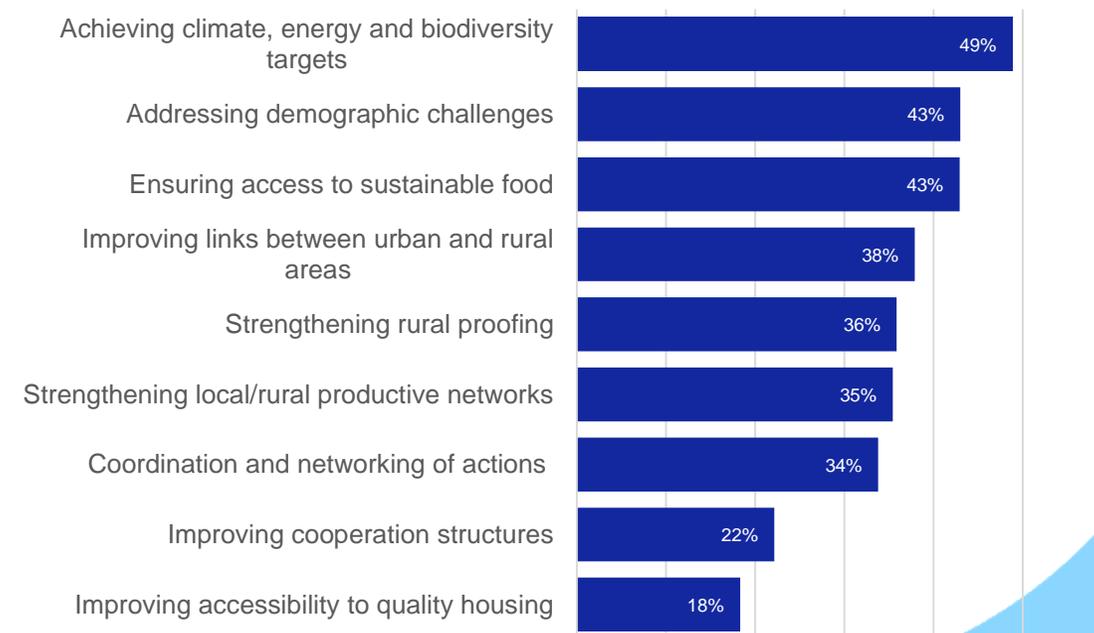
- **Reasons** seen as most important by those who do:
  - Deteriorated infrastructure and services
  - Lack of economic opportunities
  - No consideration of specific needs in political decision-making



# What components should the EU's long-term strategy and action plan for the future of rural areas include?

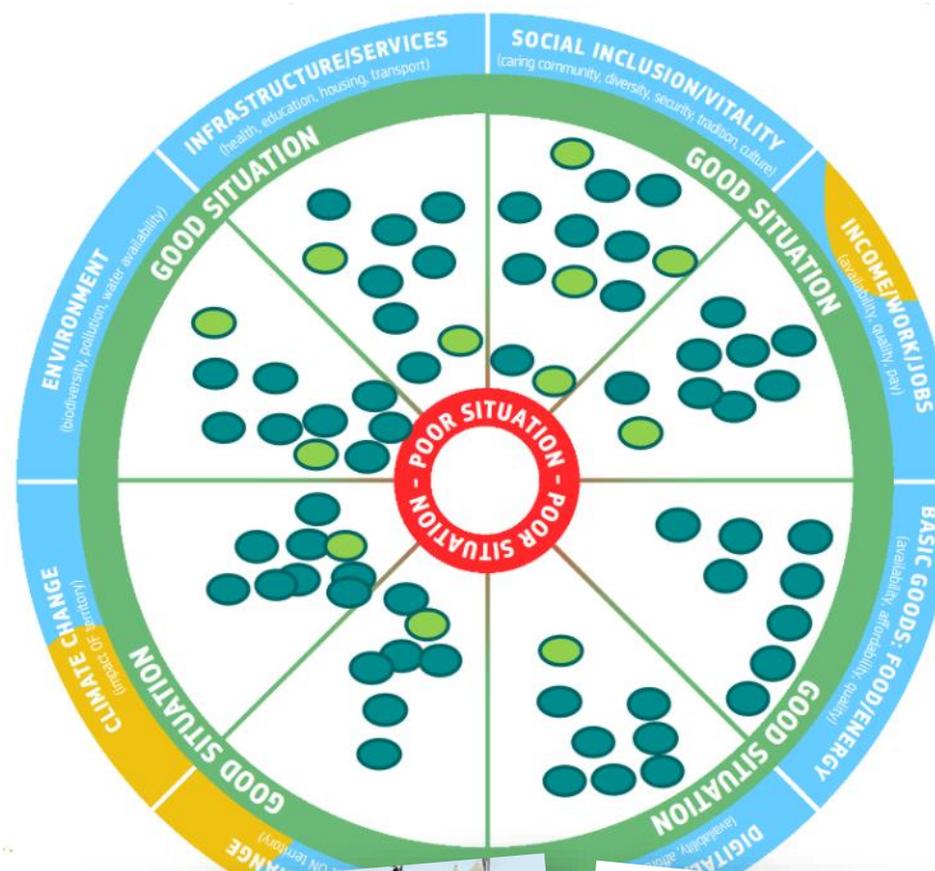


Strategies to **enhance the economic perspectives** of rural areas are seen as key elements for the long-term strategy



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« Rural voices »  
 Stakeholder engagement tool  
 (22 languages)  
 170 responses from 19 countries

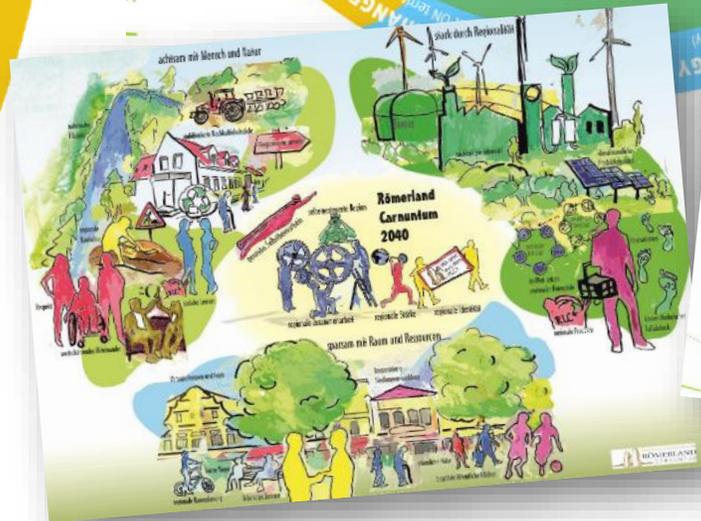


**1. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION**  
 CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION  
 Human induced greenhouse gas emissions, pollution, overexploitation of natural resources and environmental degradation are increasing global warming, ocean acidification, desertification, biodiversity loss and changing climate patterns. These, and the actions to address them, will lead to significant changes for people, assets, economies and ecosystems. How will our area be affected?

**2. DIGITAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE**  
 DIGITAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE  
 Ongoing technological change has potential for both positive and negative impacts. It may reduce the demand for labour in some sectors, whilst offering new scope in others. Broadband connectivity and mobile phones enable digital commerce, service delivery and social contacts provided people have both access and skills. There are issues of data privacy and use. How will our area be affected?

**3. DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE (including urbanisation)**  
 DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE (including urbanisation)  
 Some rural areas are losing population, whilst others are growing. People may move in or move away for a higher quality of life, income, or to retire or for area, or returning home. Changes may not only be in size of population, but also to characteristics (age, gender, skills...). How will our area be affected?

**4. GLOBALISATION / LOCALISATION**  
 GLOBALISATION/LOCALISATION  
 Global supply chains may reduce costs and produce surplus, with large corporations dominating certain sectors, which smaller firms struggle to compete with. Supply chains may offer increased resilience, assurance of labour and environmental standards, and keep profits closer to production. How will our area be affected?



# 'Rural voices'\*



## Public consultation

*Some ideas for specific actions*

New models for supporting entrepreneurship & innovation: incubators, hubs, networks

Foster wide **territorial planning** approaches (move from planning for development to planning for resilience)

Create **appropriate conditions** for local entrepreneurship

Build on the **growing interest to move to rural areas** and working from home: new rurality

Establish **policy incentives to encourage young people to settle in the countryside**

Support **both commercial and social entrepreneurs** and nurture **new ways of working**

...

*\*Commission staff working document – stakeholder consultation - Synopsis report- Annex2 (source ENRD)*

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# Scenarios for 2040



Foresight



JRC Report:  
<https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC125368>

ENRD Thematic Group  
[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/enrd-thematic-work/long-term-rural-vision\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/enrd-thematic-work/long-term-rural-vision_en)

# Long Term Vision for EU's Rural Areas



- **Communication (30 June 2021)**
- **Staff Working Document with analysis, EU policies and foresight (3 parts)**
- **Synopsis Report of the public consultation**
- **Factsheet**

[https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/new-push-european-democracy/long-term-vision-rural-areas\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/new-push-european-democracy/long-term-vision-rural-areas_en)

# The vision and its shared goals

## Stronger

Empowered communities  
Access to services  
Social innovation



## Connected

Digital connectivity  
Transport links and  
new mobilities

## Prosperous

Diversification of  
economic activities  
Sustainable food production

## Resilient

Resilience to climate change  
Environmental resilience  
Social resilience

# Shared goals for 2040



# The Rural action plan

## RAP-EC



### 9 flagships : (short titles from the Communication)

- ✓ Rural revitalisation platform
- ✓ Research and innovation for rural communities
- ✓ Sustainable multimodal mobility best practices for rural areas
- ✓ Rural digital futures
- ✓ Support rural municipalities in energy transition and fighting climate change
- ✓ Climate action in peatland through carbon farming
- ✓ EU mission: A soil deal for Europe
- ✓ Social resilience and Women in rural areas
- ✓ Entrepreneurship and social economy in rural areas.

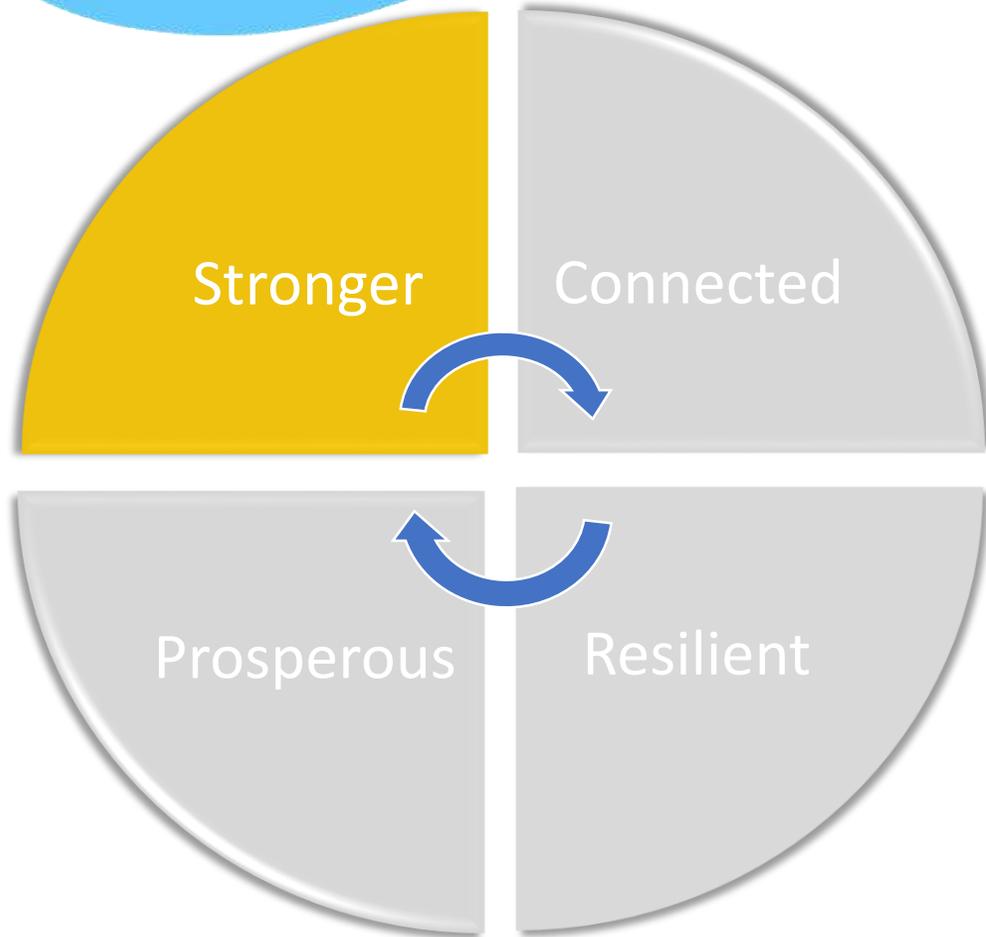
« Will promote LEADER »

and  
15 accompanying actions

including  
«Enhanced networking for LEADER and smart villages »

# The Rural action plan

RAP-EC



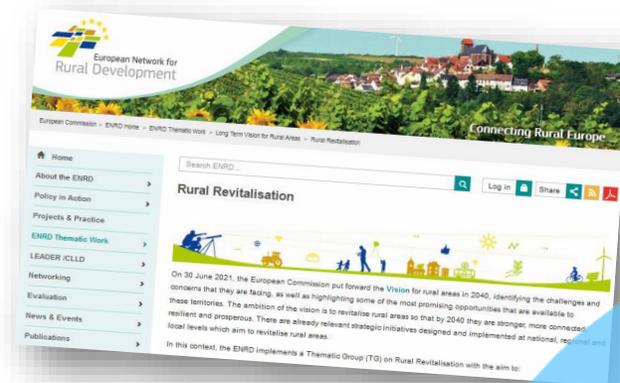
**9 flagships** : (short titles from the Communication)

✓ Rural revitalisation platform

New **ENRD Thematic group « Rural revitalisation »** under the European network for rural development

- ✓ identify and understand the **key enabling conditions to drive rural revitalisation across Europe &** share best practice (*the flagship will promote LEADER & Smart villages*)
- ✓ explore the needs, and develop ideas and recommendations, to help **shape the future rural revitalisation platform**

Platform to come live in 2022/2023.



# The Rural action plan

## Horizontal actions

### Rural proofing

- Review of policies through rural lens
- EU: Screening of European commission work programme => Territorial impact assessment or Rural proofing guidance
- National/regional level: ENRD thematic group Rural proofing

### EU Rural observatory

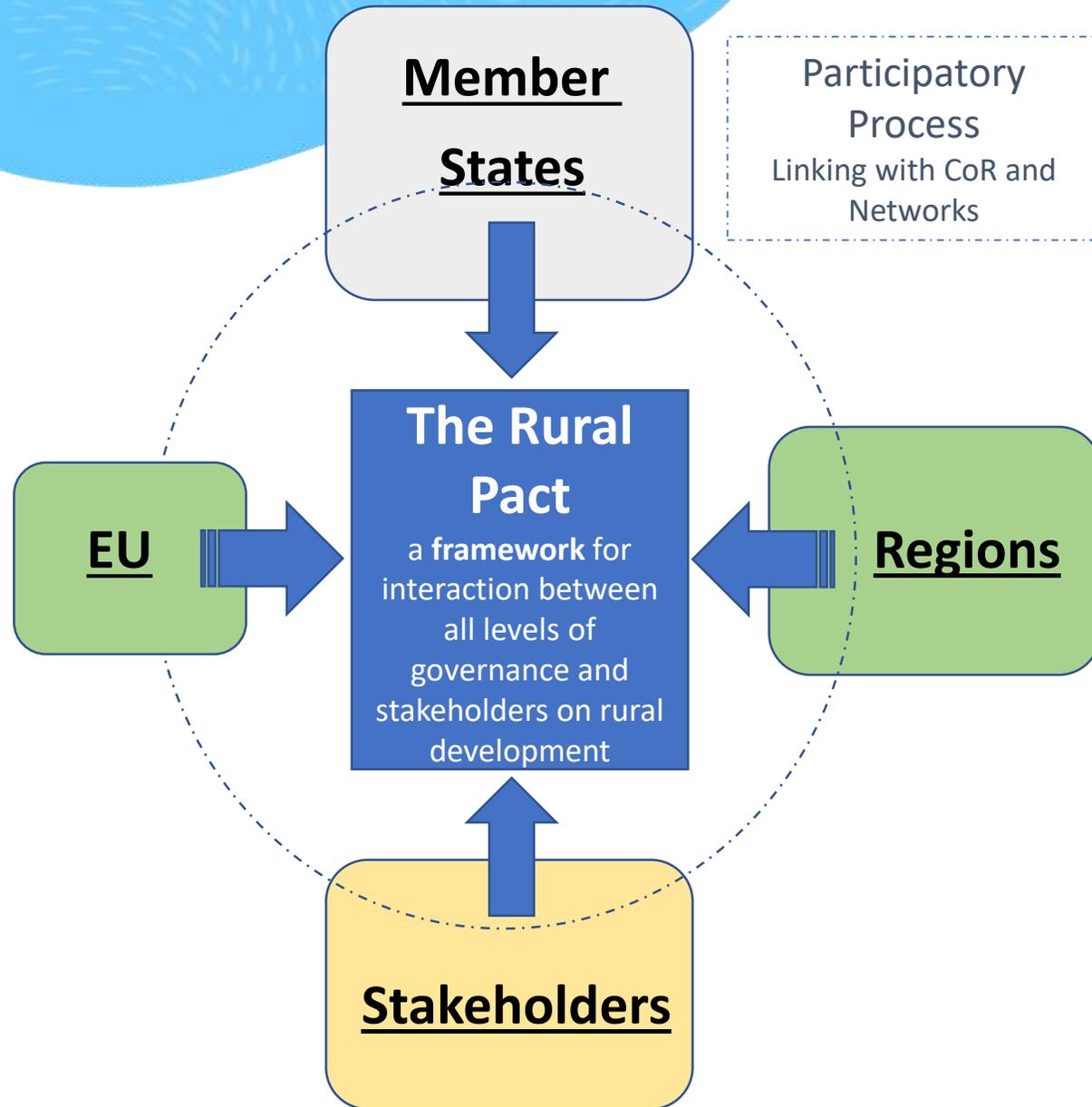
- Centralise data collection on rural areas
- Inform on the relevant initiatives
- Analyse the developments (themes explored each year)
- In practice: Administrative agreement with Joint research centre
- First “dashboards” end 2022

### Combination of EU funds

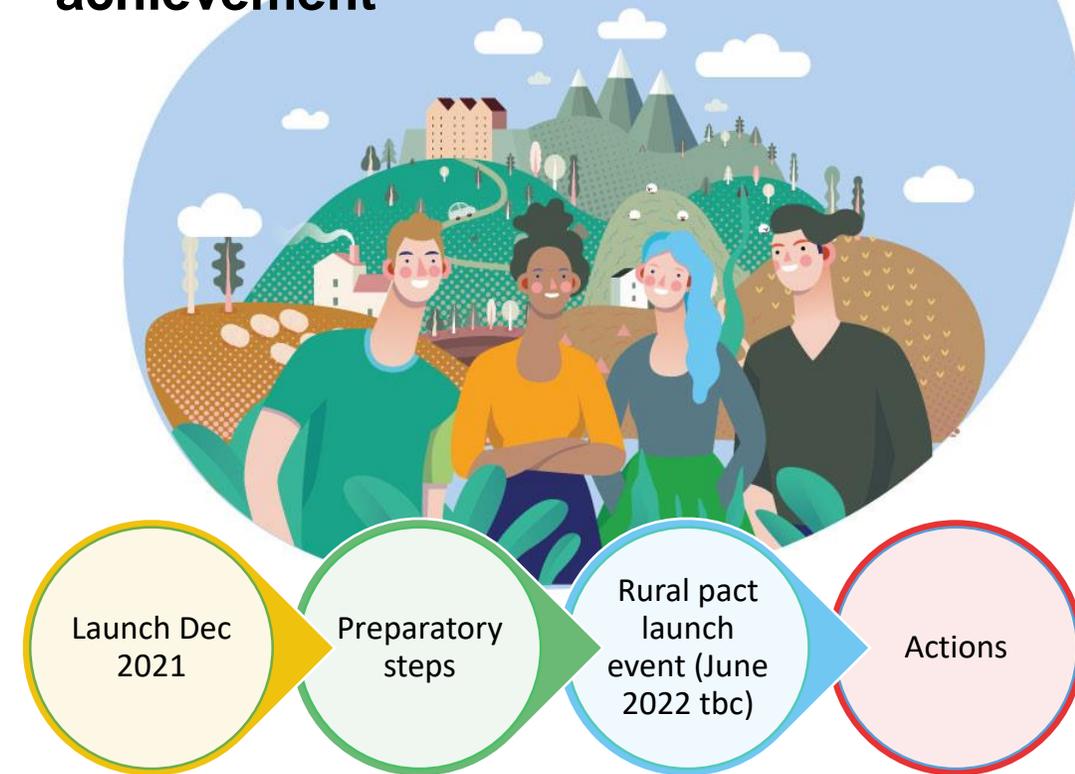
- Toolkit to access to EU Funds for rural areas
- Linking with territorial handbook



# The Rural pact



**Endorsing the shared goals and working together towards their achievement**



**Let us know how you would like to see it done!**

# Next steps

Promotion  
+ Interinstitutional process



End of 2021: kick-off dialogue rural pact => Conference mid-2022

Mid-2023: Evaluation of actions and 2021-2027 programming period

2024: Reflections on 2028-2034



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# Vision for rural areas



**Thank you for  
your attention!**