

BUILDING BLOCKS FOR A REVISED TYPOLOGY OF RURAL AREAS

Given the diversity of rural areas within the EU, it is important that each Member State and region applies not only an appropriate definition of rural areas, but also has the opportunity to apply a context relevant typology of rural areas.

In this context three “Building Blocks”, which can be used to define a typology of rural areas, were proposed:

- degree of physical handicap;
- environmental sensitivity, and;
- socio-economic disadvantage.

The weight accorded to each building block can be used to create individual typologies that are appropriate given Member State or regional specificities.

Each building block is a composite of individual factors (see table), and each factor can be measured by a specific set of indicators.

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Building Blocks	Factors
Rural Definition	1 <i>Population Density</i>
	2 <i>Urban Areas</i>
	3 <i>Land Use</i>
Block 1-Physical handicap	4 <i>Physical Handicap</i>
Block 2-Environmental Sensitivity	5 <i>Environmental Sensitivity</i>
Block 3-Socio-economic disadvantage	6 <i>Demography</i>
	7 <i>Socio-economic problems</i>
	8 <i>Economic structure</i>
	9 <i>Access to urban services/economies</i>

In this way, specific typologies relevant for rural development policy targeting purposes can be developed.

The potential to address the ‘new challenges’ of rural development policy are also important aspects for consideration in a typology. However, the indicators relating to these issues do not lend themselves to being categorised in a common way.



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DEFINING RURAL AREAS

Thematic Working Group (TWG) 1 on
Targeting territorial specificities and needs in rural development programmes



European Commission
 Agriculture and Rural Development



Rural development is a wide and complex topic with many different themes and areas of interest. In order to ensure that rural development issues are understood and promoted across Europe, “working groups” of experts have been established within the ENRD. They present a detailed analysis of relevant themes, with a strong Europe-wide dimension and the overall aim of increasing knowledge and ensuring greater effectiveness in the current and future delivery of EU rural development policy.

THEMATIC WORKING GROUP 1 – OVERVIEW

Europe’s rural areas are diverse in terms of many physical, socio-economic, environmental and institutional factors. This diversity is one of Europe’s greatest resources but nevertheless it creates challenges for many Member

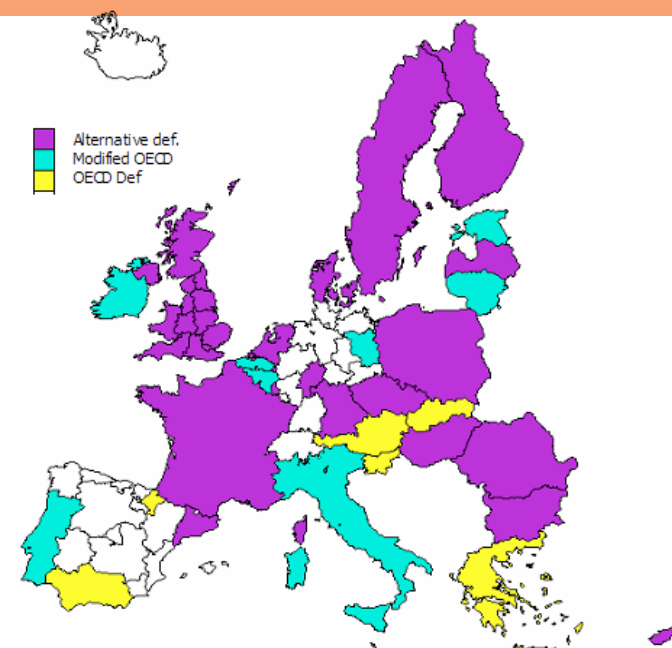
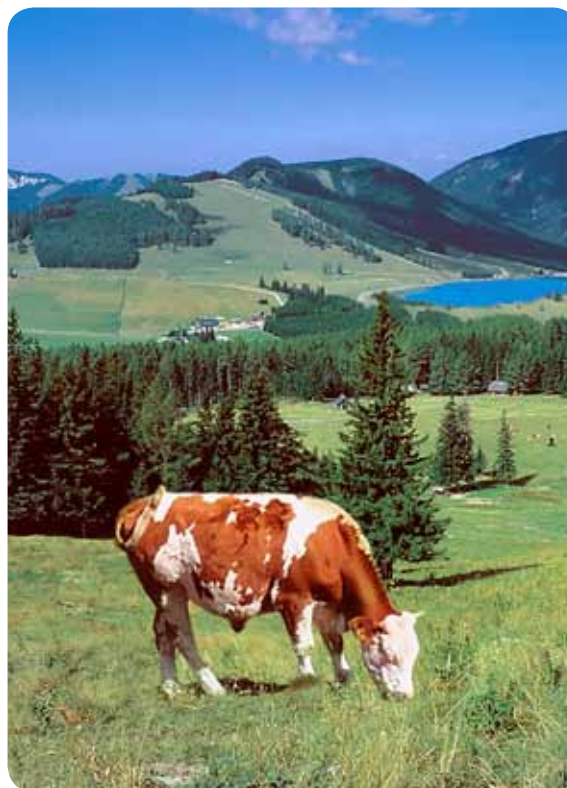


States on how to accurately define rural areas. This definition is crucial for EU rural development policy design and ensuring its complementarity with other EU funds aimed at developing rural areas, especially those with distinct needs.

Thematic Working Group 1 was set up in 2009 to address these issues and specifically aimed to improve the efficiency of Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) in the targeting of territorial specificities and needs of rural areas. Chaired by the Commission (Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development—DG AGRI) it carried out an in depth analysis of 23 national and 12 regional 2007-2013 RDPs.

The Group’s work focused on how Member States and regions:

- defined or targeted rural areas for the 2007-2013 programming period in their RDPs;
- addressed the issue of demarcation and complementarity between the different EU or national funds;
- targeted territories of specific interest and assessed the relevant needs of these territories; as well as the application of measures and resources within and outside the RDPs to meet those needs.



The OECD definition of rural areas¹, offered by the European Commission for use by Member States, was only taken up by a minority of national and regional RDPs and the findings of the working group suggest that it may not meet the needs of many Member States. Rather, Member States or regions use a wide variety of territorial definitions to target their RDP measures. Depending on their focus these definitions can be broadly clustered, either as sectoral (e.g. farming and forestry) or territorial (e.g. areas eligible for axis 3 measures). There is a strong awareness among the Member States of the need for clear demarcation between EU funds, and also of the potential for complementarity between the EAFRD and other funds, so as to ensure developmental needs of EU rural areas are met.

1. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as predominately rural areas are defined these areas in which more than 50% of the population lives in rural communes. Rural communes are the communes with population density below 150 inhabitants / Km²