



ENRD webinar

2nd Thematic Group meeting on Rural Revitalisation

Highlights report

Participants shared views on a draft self-assessment tool - developed by the Thematic Group (TG) - to support the design of rural revitalisation policies.

During the meeting, the Southern Sparsely Populated Areas Network – SSPA (Spain) and the LEADER Network of Croatia outlined their expectations regarding the support to be provided by the future Rural Revitalisation Platform.

The National Rural Network of Finland shared their experience in the development and implementation of an online rural platform that connects all Finnish actors working in rural development. Breakout discussions and an expert panel helped build recommendations for the future Rural Revitalisation Platform.

Event Information

Date: 31 March 2022

Location: Virtual meeting

Organisers: ENRD Contact Point

Participants: 50 participants from 21 EU Member States, including Managing Authorities (MAs), National Rural Networks (NRNs), European organisations, the European Commission, Local Action Groups (LAGs), national/regional stakeholder organisations and research institutes.

Outcomes: Feedback on the draft Thematic Group self-assessment tool to support the design of policies for rural revitalisation; recommendations to shape the future Rural Revitalisation Platform that will be developed by the European Commission.

Web page: [2nd TG Meeting on Rural Revitalisation](#)

Enabling factors for rural revitalisation



[Enrique Nieto \(ENRD CP\)](#) introduced the draft self-assessment tool developed by the TG to support the design and delivery of rural revitalisation policies and strategies. The tool targets policy-makers, implementers and other interested stakeholders at local, regional and national levels. Guiding questions help reflect on the extent to which a policy or set of policies incorporates the enabling factors for rural revitalisation identified by the TG: i) integrated strategies, ii) multilevel governance, iii) local capacities, iv) territorial cooperation and v) local innovation. The tool will be finalised considering TG members' recommendations shared during and in-between meetings. The final version will be available on the ENRD [website](#).


Setting the scope for the Rural Revitalisation Platform





[Alexia Rouby \(DG AGRI\)](#) pointed out that the Rural Revitalisation Platform (expected to be online in 2023) is a flagship initiative of the Rural Action Plan of the Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas. The platform aims to be a one-stop shop for collaboration and sharing of information, best practices, tools and strategies. It will target rural communities, project holders and local authorities, mostly aiming to support areas suffering from population loss, aging and lack of economic opportunities. The platform will connect with similar national platforms and existing EU initiatives (e.g. future CAP Network, LEADER, Smart Villages, Interreg and Territorial Agenda Pilots). It will be part of a common online space linking with other actions implemented around the Vision, such as the Rural Pact, the Rural Observatory and the Toolkit on combining EU Funds.

Stakeholder experiences, needs and expectations for the Rural Revitalisation Platform

Stakeholders outlined the main elements/features needed for the Rural Revitalisation Platform to support local actors in their actions on the ground in areas suffering from depopulation.

 **Sara Bianchi (Southern Sparsely Populated Areas network – SSPA)** stressed the importance of providing information on policy legislation, project examples, events and funding opportunities, particularly in thematic areas not yet covered by other initiatives at the EU level, such as rural digitalisation, governance, public services, housing and entrepreneurship. The platform should be linked to the Rural Pact and cover topics beyond those of the CAP. It should build an active virtual community with public bodies, businesses and civil society representatives, enabling connections among peers based on shared interests. Language diversity should be an opportunity, not a barrier.

 **Angela Cvjetkovic (LEADER Network of Croatia)** highlighted the importance of boosting the economic diversification of lagging rural areas and enhancing the access and quality of basic services (e.g. health, education, water supply, connectivity) to make these areas attractive and prosperous. EU funds (ERDF, ESF, Interreg, Erasmus +, etc.) already offer opportunities to support actions in these areas but rural actors are not aware of them or lack capacity to access them. LAGs are key actors to channel these opportunities to where this is needed locally. The Rural Revitalisation Platform should facilitate access to information from all EU Funds (e.g. rural projects supported across the EU, funding opportunities and tools) and enable stakeholders to create their own spaces for exchange in their own language.

 **Juha-Matti Markkola (National Rural Network of Finland)** presented the online platform developed by the Finnish NRN to connect all rural actors in Finland, as a sort of 'rural LinkedIn service'. The Finnish platform, that focuses on all relevant themes for rural areas, is inclusive, incorporates user-friendly tools and features, and puts users at the centre. Registered users can create discussion groups, upload events, launch thematic 'speed-dates' with peers, search for stakeholders and experts or upload information on projects. Juha-Matti stressed that it would be relevant to have a similar platform at the EU level which could work in synergy with similar national initiatives.

TG recommendations for the Rural Revitalisation Platform




Participants discussed in groups about the desired key elements and features for the future Rural Revitalisation Platform. The final recommendations are detailed in a separate [output](#) of the TG. An expert panel discussion helped further prioritise and summarise the recommendations. Examples of recommendations from the panellists are:

 For **Emilija Stojmenova** (Rural Digital Innovation Hub, Slovenia), "the platform should be considered as an aggregator connecting to existing information with a good searchable function."

 For **Michael Fischer** (National Rural Network, Austria), the platform should "allow people to create their spaces for interaction when they need them." It should "put users and their needs at the centre of the platform."

 **Anita Selicka** (Latvian Rural Forum) said "we need to make people understand that depopulation and rural development is not important only for CAP stakeholders, but for all."

Introduction to the Rural Pact Conference

 **Alexia Rouby (DG AGRI)** introduced the Rural Pact [conference](#) that will take place in Brussels on 15-16 June 2022. The Rural Pact, launched in December 2021, provides a framework for interaction between all levels of governance and rural development stakeholders to achieve the shared goals of the Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas. All stakeholders are invited to [join](#) the Rural Pact community. The June conference will encourage rural communities in Europe to act and strengthen the potential of rural areas and reinforce their strategic role for the future of the EU. The event will bring together high-level political guests from EU institutions and Member States as well as grassroots representatives to build the Rural Pact's work programme based on common interests for cooperation.