

ENRD webinar

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Thematic Group meeting on the Long Term Rural Vision

### Rural#2040 Highlights report

A total of 55 participants from 23 EU Member States attended the [second meeting](#) of the Thematic Group to help build the EU Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas (LTVRA) announced by the President of the European Commission.

Participants continued with their work on the Foresight exercise in order to further develop the scenarios defined during the first and interim TG meetings. These will form important building blocks for the EU Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas. On the second day, there was a session to discuss the activities taking place to involve stakeholders across Europe in the LTVRA and to consider next steps for the Thematic Group.

#### Event Information

**Date:** 2 & 3 December 2020

**Location:** Virtual meeting


**Organisers:** ENRD Contact Point


**Participants:** 55 participants attending in a personal capacity - but including experience from MAs, NRNs, European organisations, the European Commission, Local Action Groups (LAGs), stakeholder organisations and researchers.

**Outcomes:** Insights for the Foresight exercise and on how to support stakeholder engagement in the development of a Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas.

**Web page:** [2nd TG meeting on Long Term Rural Vision](#)

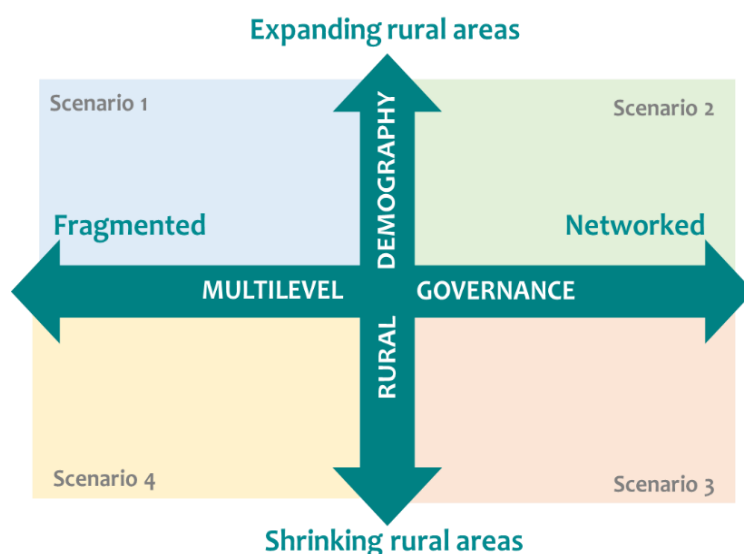
### Progress so far

 **Florence Buchholzer (DG AGRI)** delivered an opening presentation to put the Foresight exercise in the context of the other activities contributing to the LTVRA. She reminded participants that previous TG discussions had focused on the drivers shaping the future of rural areas by 2040 and had identified those which were having the greatest impact and at the same time were most uncertain. These were then used to define plausible scenarios or images of rural areas in 2040 based on trends and narratives. The scenarios provide an illustration of the diverse futures possible for rural areas in 2040. They are building blocks for the Vision but not the Vision itself. The Vision will build on the information derived from the Foresight exercise (as well as the public consultation and other stakeholder engagement activities) to arrive at set key goals for 2040 and a pathway for achieving them. It should also identify the enabling conditions for supporting people and rural areas to make the transition to 2040.

 **Anne-Katrin Bock (JRC)** reminded participants of the main steps taken so far in the Foresight exercise and explained that this TG meeting is the last full meeting that will be dedicated to building the scenarios. The JRC will use the conclusions from this meeting to finalise the scenarios and prepare the final report that will be presented at the ENRD conference in March 2021.

Anne-Katrin pointed out that the [first TG meeting](#) (September 2020) has helped to identify and prioritise the relevant drivers that will shape the future of rural areas, and to start defining the scenario logic. Discussions were continued during the [interim TG meeting](#) (October 2020), and first steps were taken towards developing the scenarios. The starting point for the second TG meeting was the scenario logic with the axes defined as; i) Fragmented vs. Networked multilevel governance and ii) Expanding vs. Shrinking rural areas (in population terms - see figure 1), and further developed outlines of the scenarios. The scenarios are not forecasts but describe alternative futures which - as a set - will help to identify relevant elements of the Vision.

Figure 1: Draft Scenario Axes developed in the Interim TG meeting



## The meeting

After a brief discussion in plenary, participants split into four breakout groups - one per scenario - and analysed their consistency, plausibility and any missing elements. This was followed by a second round of discussions to imagine living in each scenario, focussing on the policy-related changes this would involve, and the implications for climate change adaptation and mitigation, and urban-rural relations.

On the second day, participants swapped places and considered a different scenario from the perspective of their previous discussions. Afterwards, they returned to their original scenarios and considered the points that were most attractive in each of these worlds, the trade-offs, who benefits and who loses, the impacts of extreme climate change and which aspects of the scenario could contribute to the LTVRA. After a report back from each scenario group in the final plenary, participants remarked that there were many similarities between the scenarios regarding the elements for the Vision. They asked whether this hid the diversity of rural areas and was a weakness or whether, in fact, the exercise was uncovering common strands that could inform the Vision.

The JRC explained that they will examine the very rich insights developed in the breakout groups and further develop the scenarios. They will share the results of their work with the members of the Thematic Group and report back on progress at the next meeting before preparing the final report which will be presented at the ENRD Conference in March. They thanked participants for the very valuable input they had made to the Foresight exercise.

## Building stakeholder engagement in the Long Term Rural Vision

During the second day, participants turned their attention to the question of how to capture the voice of rural citizens in different parts of rural Europe within the Vision process and to share information about the wide range of activities that are taking place on the LTVRA. This will be the focus for the next phase of the TG's work. The stakeholder engagement [Workshop Package](#) that was discussed in the first TG meeting is now available on the ENRD website in most EU languages and is being used in a variety of ways. Participants heard reports from a number of initiatives which provide a flavour of what is happening in many parts of Europe.



**Marianne Selkäinen (Managing Authority, Finland)** explained that Finland already has a rural strategy in place for 2030. Activities are being planned to update this strategy with the new time perspective of 2040. A virtual platform is being set up to hold open discussions and carry out foresight 'virtual camps', with a particular focus on involving youth in the discussions.



**National Rural Networks (NRNs)** are supporting communities to contribute to the LTVRA in various ways. **Michael Fischer (Austria)** reported that the NRN is coaching local actors to organise local meetings. They have already organised an online information session with rural stakeholders, municipalities, facilitators and LAGs, and provided practical information and guidance on how to use the Workshop Package. Michael reported that local actors are generally eager and excited about contributing to this European process. **Jan Swoboda (Germany)** indicated they might use the workshop methodology to support LAGs in their preparation for the future strategies. **Ase Classon (Sweden)** mentioned that many local rural areas have their own development plans which already reflect their future vision for their area. The NRN will analyse 10-15 of these plans to extract the most relevant messages for the European Vision. They will also organise a national workshop with national representatives of various rural stakeholders, including researchers.



**Samuel Féret (SHERPA-H2020)** informed participants of the results of the SHERPA annual [conference](#) on the LTVRA. He explained that SHERPA has supported 21 Multi-actor platforms in 17 Member States, bringing together policy makers, civil society and researchers to discuss and design collectively their own visions for their rural areas. In this visioning exercise, SHERPA has received feedback from more than 1 100 people.



**Marie Clotteau (Euromontana)** shared the results of an event organised by the RUMRA & Smart Villages Intergroup of the European Parliament. Dubravka Šuica, Vice-president of the European Commission, had insisted that the rural Vision Communication should not simply be a narrative but should include actionable tools and targets that can be assessed. In effect, it should provide toolbox for transforming rural areas. Members of the Intergroup and the Committee of the Regions had also called for the Vision to be accompanied by a Rural Agenda with a concrete set of measures and tools.



## Next steps and further information

- The **next meeting of the TG will be held on 27 January 2021** and will take stock of developments so far with the aim of identifying the common strands and step changes needed to ensure the LTVRA becomes a reality for communities across Europe. The **ENRD Conference on the LTVRA** is planned for the week **22 March 2021**.
- The LTVRA [Workshop Package](#) for NRNs and other rural stakeholders is available in most EU languages;
- Visit the **Long Term Rural Vision [web portal](#)** to get further information on the process, key resources, inspiring examples, news and events.