

# Finnish experiences on rural proofing

*Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Ministerial adviser /  
Rural Policy Council, acting secretary general  
Antonia Husberg*

*ENRD 27th of January 2022*



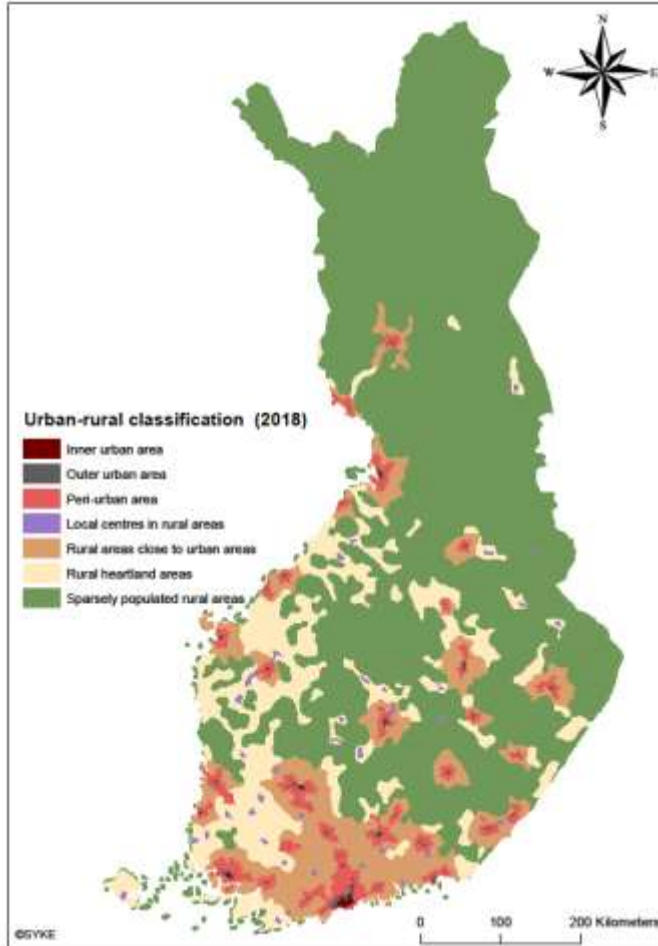
Rural Policy Council



# Content

1. Finland – one of the most rural countries
2. Rural proofing in Finland
3. Case examples
4. Recognised strengths and weaknesses
5. Rural proofing of legislative drafting

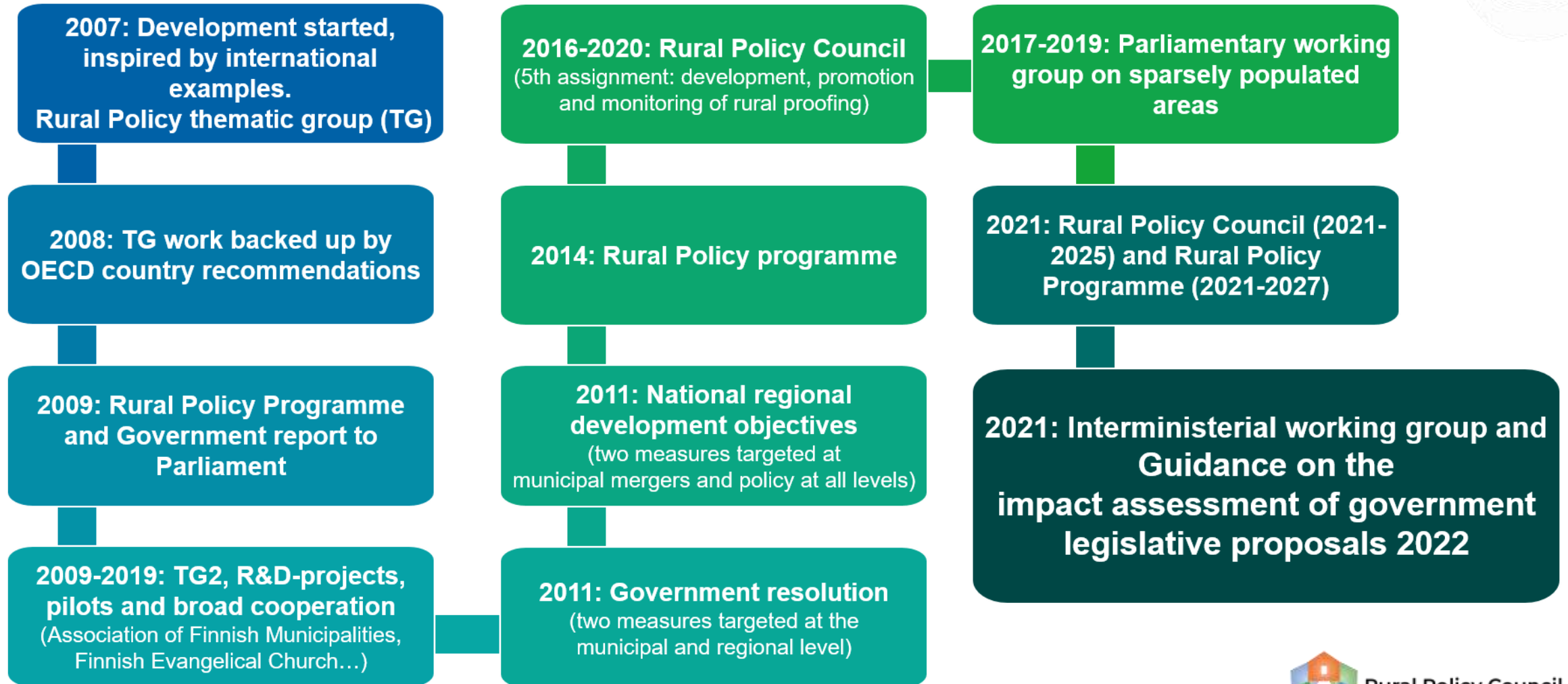
# Finland – one of the most rural countries



- **95%** of Finland's surface area is rural
- **68%** of the surface area is sparsely populated (the green area on the map to the right)
- **28%** of the Finnish population (1,5 Mil. people) live *permanently* in the rural areas
- 18,2 people/sq km of land area (in SPAs 2,5)
- **38%** live in rural areas *part-time* (2,4 Mil. people)
- **40%** of businesses are located in rural areas
- **370 000 km** long *private* road network (tot. road network 480 000 km)
- Finland's national economy is, as an industrial country, exceptionally strongly based on added value obtained from natural resources located in rural areas.



# Rural proofing in Finland: timeline





# Rural proofing in Finland: methods

- Methods used:
  1. **Check-list:** “*does the proposal have impacts on...*”
  2. **Participative workshops** (basic model: Muilu et. al. 2013)
  3. **Relevant (geospatial) data**
  4. **Questionnaire**
- Has mainly been used and developed at the municipal and regional level.
- **Differences in implementation** on the regional/municipal and national level:
  - On a regional and local level the process includes a large number of actors from both the public, private and third sector
  - On a national level impact assessment is often carried out by one or a few public officials. The method is being developed (assessment of government proposals).

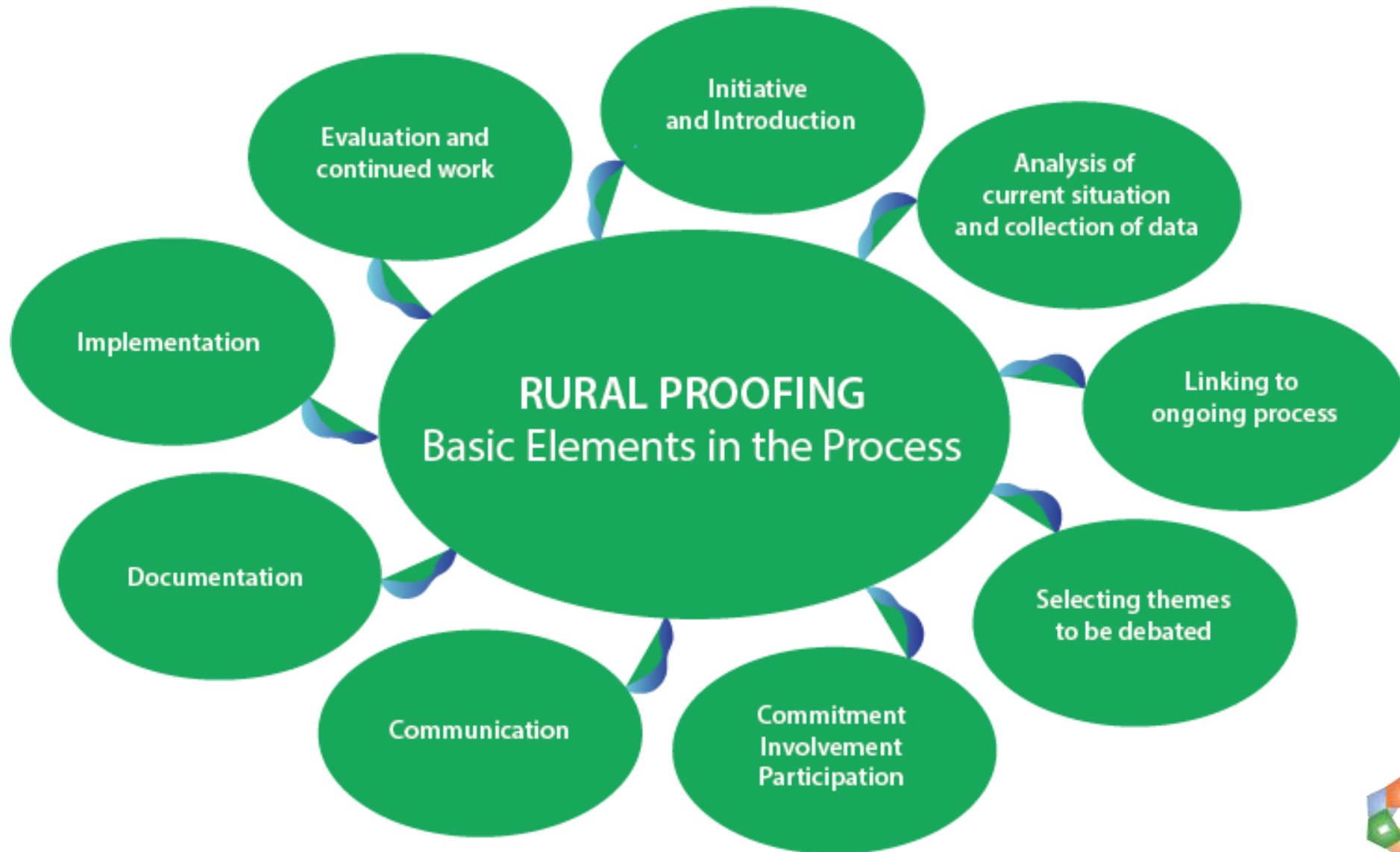
# Rural proofing in Finland: check-list



- **Check-list:** “*does the proposal have impacts on...*”
  - the living conditions, health, well-being, everyday safety and security of people living in rural areas?
  - livelihoods (which livelihoods) and/or the economic structure or the prerequisites for business activities in rural areas?
  - the national security of supply?
  - the prerequisites for finding employment, the income of people living in rural areas or the forms of working?
  - the availability and stability of employees, and functioning of the labour market in rural areas?
  - on smooth running of everyday life and the equal and unimpeded access to and accessibility of services (e.g., health and social services, basic education, education and training, safety and security, digital services, transport, postal services, cultural and sports services) in rural areas?
  - transport connections, travel chains or the conditions for mobility in rural areas?
  - the environment, landscape and/or culture in rural areas?
  - the realisation of democracy, fundamental rights and equality between individuals and regions?
  - activities in associations, inclusion and communality and/or social capital in rural areas?
  - any other economic impacts, such as impacts on the economy and/or vitality of rural areas?
  - other topics e.g., between different types of impacts?
- **If yes**, a more thorough impact assessment should be carried out (participative workshop, questionnaire, geospatial data-analysis).



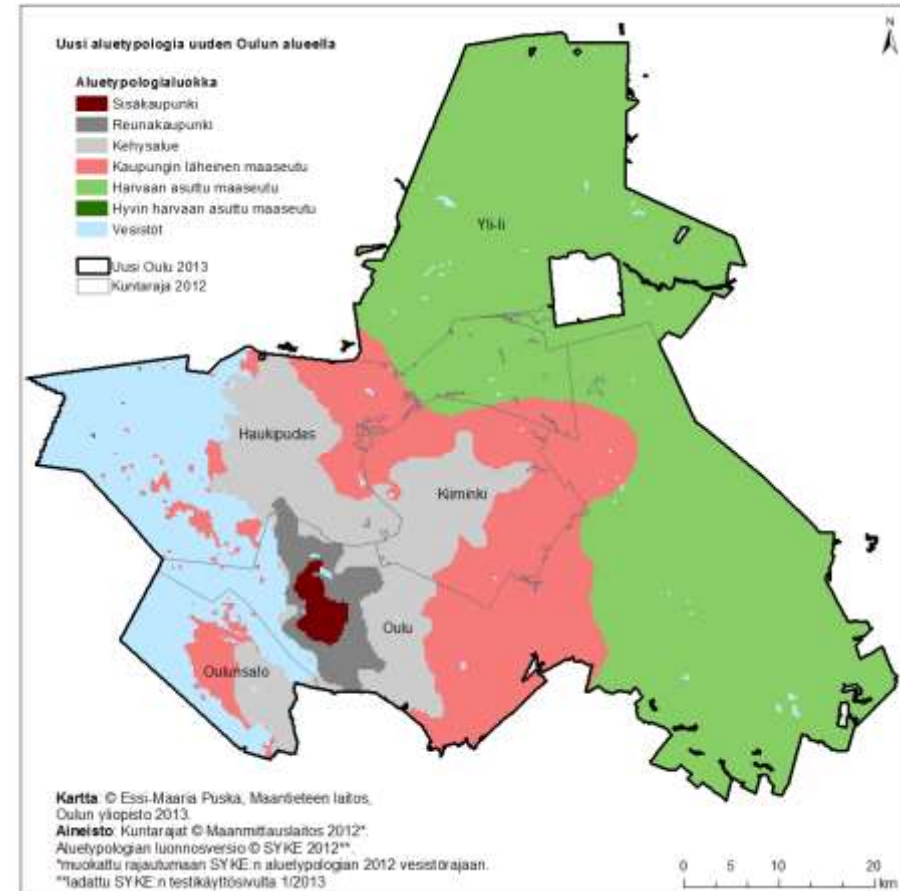
# Rural proofing in Finland: basic elements





# Case example: the local government reorganisation

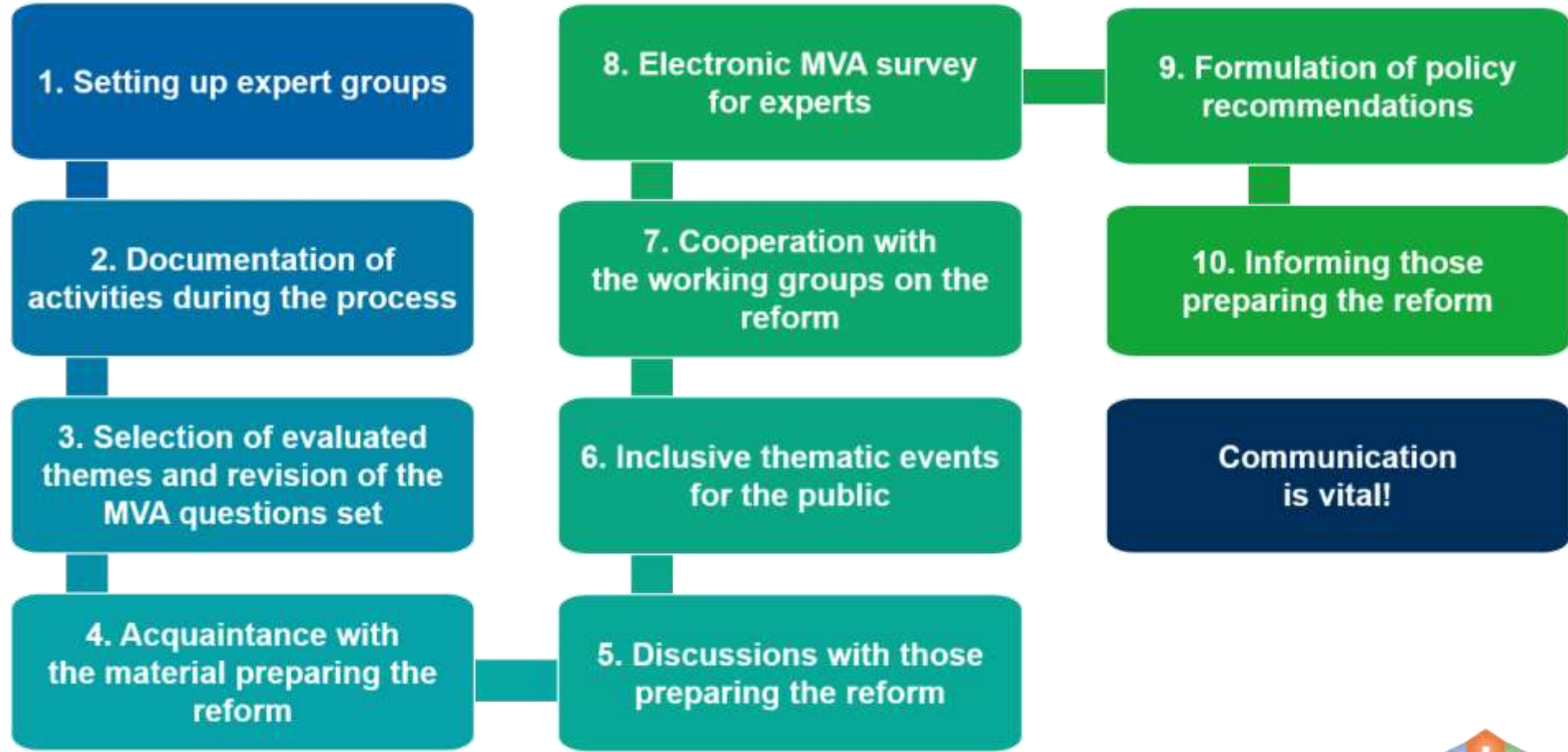
- New municipalities (after municipal mergers) are large and consists of different types of urban and rural areas (as shown in picture of the City of Oulu)
- Themes raised during rural proofing of local government reorganisation:
  - How to ensure that the areas are developed equally (livelihoods, vitality, infrastructure, education, investment, funding)?
  - How to ensure democracy - that the people in rural areas are heard and have the opportunity to participate in society?
  - How to ensure accessibility to public service (health care, school, social services, public transport...) for people living in rural areas?







# Case example: process of rural proofing of regional reform (regional level)



# Recognised strengths and weaknesses



## Strengths

- **Adaptable** method
- Has **raised awareness** of rural issues
- The "results" from rural **proofing can be used** in further development work (strategies, programmes)
- The (participative) process of rural proofing has **improved the cooperation** among actors.
- Enhances **place based policy** and development.

## Weaknesses

- **Voluntary** (few uses rural proofing)
- **Resource-demanding**
- Willingness to **take charge** of the process (linkage to municipal council, steering group, board i.a.)
- One of **many impact assessments** (not a priority)



# Rural proofing of legislative drafting

- Rural proofing has had broad political support from the start, but elected officials have underlined the importance of rural proofing to be *voluntary*
- Rural proofing will be a part of the new ***Guidance on the impact assessment of government legislative proposals in 2022*** (Ministry of Justice)
- **Interministerial working group on rural proofing** (2021-2022) (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry): **Developing the method** in order for it to be easily used within existing legislative processes.
- Investments in **raising awareness and training of legislators** within central government.
- **Rural Policy Council, rural policy networks and Island Committee** - processes for supporting rural proofing (knowledge, information) and assessing impacts of legislative drafting.





**Thank you for your attention!**

For more information please e-mail us:  
[maaseutupolitiikka@gov.fi](mailto:maaseutupolitiikka@gov.fi)



Rural Policy Council