

ENRD webinar

## Interim Thematic Group meeting on the Long Term Rural Vision

### Rural#2040 Highlights report

The aims of this meeting were firstly to provide Thematic Group (TG) Members with more space for understanding the drivers and scenario logic discussed in the previous TG meeting; and secondly to start building the scenarios and to further explore them in preparation for the TG meeting in December. After a brief introduction to the other activities of the ENRD TG, participants listened to a recapitulation of the previous discussions by the JRC. This was followed by a plenary where participants raised questions and discussed the drivers to be used for the main axes of the scenarios. Then they split into four groups - one for each scenario - and started to add more key words and working titles - as well as considered how other drivers might play out. After the reporting back and general discussion in the plenary, they heard about the next steps for the Foresight exercise and other TG activities.

#### Event Information

**Date:** 20 October 2020

**Location:** Virtual meeting

**Organisers:** ENRD Contact Point

**Participants:** 50 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** Further insights into the drivers and scenarios to be developed in the Foresight exercise for the Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas.

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

## Recap of the September meeting and discussion of the scenario logic



**Anne-Katrin Bock (JRC)** reminded participants of the steps followed in the previous meeting. These involved: firstly, discussing the key factors that might affect a 'day in the life' of different rural actors in different types of rural areas across Europe; secondly, using this as a concrete starting point for identifying the drivers that could shape the future of rural areas; thirdly, selecting the drivers that were likely to have *the greatest impact* on rural areas towards 2040; and finally, voting on the top ten important drivers to identify the *most uncertain* regarding the direction of their future development. The two strongest candidates from the voting appeared to be demographic change and multilevel governance. These were refined by the JRC to propose two axes for the discussion: the degree of direct citizens participation in governance and shrinking versus growing rural areas. Participants made many interesting comments about these concepts, including:

- **The need to take account of climate change and other key drivers.** Several participants considered that climate change - either in the form of possible responses to it or in the form of moderate versus extreme scenarios - was a more important and meaningful variable for one of the scenario axes. However, it was argued that the full implications of climate change and other key megatrends could be dealt with in more depth in each of the four scenarios without making them part of the axes;
- **Making the concept of citizens participation in governance more concrete.** Some participants also argued that while direct citizens participation in governance was extremely important, it was difficult to measure and too simplistic a basis for capturing all the ingredients of multilevel governance such as bottom-up and top-down coordination and access to services. Reference was made to certain international definitions of 'good governance' and these will be explored further; in the meantime, the idea of weak versus good governance was used, also including direct citizen participation.
- **Clarifying the definition of the demographic change driver.** The concept of rural area 'growth' was too loaded and narrow concept. Alternative suggestions included 'developing' or 'expanding' rural areas or territories.

## Building the scenario logic – break-out discussions and report back

Participants split into four working groups to brainstorm about how different drivers might play out and affect rural areas in scenarios characterised by 1) shrinking rural areas with ‘weak’ governance (and low direct citizens participation); 2) shrinking rural areas with ‘good’ governance (and high direct citizens participation); 3) expanding rural areas with ‘weak’ governance (and low direct citizens participation); 4) expanding rural areas with ‘good’ governance (and high direct citizens participation).

- The break-out groups produced a preliminary set of characteristics, ideas, and working titles for each of the four scenarios which were captured on virtual post-its. These will be further analysed and developed by the JRC as a starting point for the next TG meeting.

Some of the general comments made by participants in the report back to the plenary included the need to:

- focus more on the future by considering how the megatrends such as climate change and digitalisation might affect the different scenarios;
- look back from 2040 and consider the steps required to empower rural communities to get to a more desirable future;
- distinguish between formal government structures and governance which builds and draws on human capacity;
- clarify the scale of the scenarios and whether they refer to all rural areas or just some of them; and
- ensure that the concepts and categories are people centred, clear and meaningful to non-academic audiences.



### Next Steps

- The JRC will work on all the ideas and comments made by participants and produce a more refined framework to continue the discussions on the Foresight exercise, i.e. to further develop and discuss the set of scenarios at the TG [meeting](#) on 2 & 3 December 2020. Participants were invited to send any further comments to the ENRD mailbox ([rural-vision@enrd.eu](mailto:rural-vision@enrd.eu)).
- In parallel, the ENRD continues working together with the European Commission to complete and roll out a workshop toolkit for stakeholder engagement. A preliminary proposal was presented to a [meeting of the National Rural Networks](#) on the 22 October 2020. Work is also progressing on the preparation of the ENRD Conference on the Long-Term Vision to be held in March 2021.
- Participants were reminded of the importance of completing by end of 30 November the on-line [questionnaire](#) of the European Commission’s Public Consultation on the Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas.



### More information

TG members and rural actors are encouraged to consult the information and knowledge sources as well as to send ideas and material for the ENRD [web portal on the Long Term Rural Vision](#).

## Long Term Rural Vision Portal

