

The 2nd ENRD workshop on Social Inclusion focused on the role of youth as the driving force to reverse demographic trends in rural areas. For rural youth to remain in rural areas, these areas must be attractive enough and be able to provide the right skills and opportunities for them to progress.

Participants presented inspiring youth initiatives and projects being carried out by young farmers and entrepreneurs from Austria, Bulgaria, Finland, Germany, Spain, England and Scotland. Examples focused on youth entrepreneurship, rural-urban linkages, communication, vlogging and digitisation.

Discussion of these examples and specific policy tools and practices e.g. exchange schemes, LEADER for youth and ways of combining policy tools and funds produced recommendations for policy to improve rural areas' attractiveness to young people.

Event Information

Title: ENRD Social Inclusion Workshop "Making rural areas more attractive for young people"

Date: 3 May 2018

Location: Brussels, Belgium

Organisers: ENRD Contact Point

Participants: 57 participants from 13 MSs

Outcomes: Learning from inspiring youth examples and understanding how to use available tools and funds in support of young people in rural areas

Web page: enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/enrd-workshop-making-rural-areas-more-attractive-young-people_en

Meeting Highlights

Demographic trends

An [overview of the age structure and demographic trends in rural areas](#) was provided. The rural population has fallen by 1.2% (2011-2016), while the overall EU-28 population has increased by 1.4%. GDP per capita in rural areas is 72.9% of the EU28 average. 18.8% of young people (aged 15-24) in rural areas (EU-28) were unemployed in 2016. A considerable part of migration in the EU is represented by an age group between 25-50. Migration from rural areas can be characterised as leaving to go to towns and suburbs or cities within the same EU MS, as well as migration to other EU MSs. (Source: CAP context indicators 2014-2020 - 2017 update - Eurostat)

Seven inspiring examples from young people

This workshop provided selected examples of stimulating experiences that involve young people in the fields of entrepreneurship, digitisation and communication among others. Youth representatives from six Member States presented some fascinating projects and initiatives in which they are involved and which aim at tackling crucial issues for rural areas.

A Spanish initiative funded under LEADER – the [Odiseu project](#) – works towards reducing **depopulation** and brain drain by organising paid internships in rural areas, interconnecting rural youth with companies and supporting generational renewal on farms.

Interlinking urban youth with rural areas is also at the core of the [Baba Residence](#) (Bulgaria) project, where young people spend time living in villages and engaging with elderly people experiencing life in a traditional rural setting.



In Scotland, thanks to the Scottish Association of Young Farmers-[SAYFC](#) a specific participative structure, Agri and Rural Affairs, was set up to help ensure that rural youth are actively involved in policy making, contributing to better **social inclusiveness**.

Walking a [smart transformation](#) path with awareness via **digitisation**, by allowing for a decentralisation of the workforce and increased services, is at the core of the philosophy of the project launched in a remote German village of Schickelsheim.

Youth-targeted communication, personally delivered by young and charismatic communicators from the rural area, can be very effective, as one of the most famous [vloggers](#) from Finland, Joonas Hellman, outlined.

To improve local economies, **buying local products** is fundamental, so the organisation Rural Youth Austria launched an initiative that aims to motivate young people to [buy local](#) products using flash mob techniques and campaigns tools.

Youth in rural areas are also a precious resource when it comes to **preventing rural crime**. In Northern England, the [Fields of vision](#) project has been set up by young people in order to share a tool via WhatsApp which local people can easily use to report any suspicious activity in rural areas to the police.

A selection of explanatory posters was also presented based on these case studies.



Success factors and Transferability - entrepreneurship, communication and services

Participants discussed project success factors and the wider transferability of the projects presented.

To promote **youth entrepreneurship**, working in networks is crucial. A Finnish programme enables young people to gain experience by undertaking company internships in their summer breaks. Networks of youth entrepreneurs co-managed by young people are a useful resource to share relevant knowledge and provide mentoring. Networks can offer training and skills for a fair price. In Romania, young people are offered access to sub-measure 6.2 funding (start-up aid for non-agricultural activities) to promote craftsmanship and traditional jobs.

For effective **communication** to/by young people, seven success factors and elements of transferability were identified:

1. **Active participation** – which can be a transferable element using peer-to-peer mentoring.
2. **Youth language** – to avoid institutional jargon and let youth speak to youth.
3. **Intergenerational links** – to include a youth perspective into the NSUs work and other key institutions.
4. **Connectivity** - connectivity goes beyond ‘access to broadband’: face-to-face meetings, events in schools.
5. **Enabling environment and Bottom-up approach** - young people are unable to travel to reach major cities and the centres of power. More flexible encounters and networking opportunities are required.
6. **Trust and confidence** – this aspect goes two-ways: youth must be trusted and adopt a “Let’s do it” attitude.
7. **Skills** – training to youth in rural areas to effectively use communication channels is crucial. In many areas youth organisations provide this kind of training.

Participants who discussed the topic **of services for young people**, including broadband and digitisation identified the following success factors and elements of transferability:



1. **Improving rural image** – this can be done by better marketing/sharing success stories.
2. **Knowledge exchange between generations** – the legal framework can be adjusted to facilitate it.
3. **Active, young, and innovative people** – trained youth to better understand the local context and operate in it.
4. **Thinking and cooperating in networks, bringing people together** - Interlinking urban & rural – by expanding the links between the city and the village through Universities, NGOs, professional networks.
5. **Better connectivity with public transport.**
6. **Welcoming culture.**

Combination of policy tools and funds

A broad variety of [policy tools](#) available to support rural youth was described. Some of these tools are directly targeted at young beneficiaries. The Young Farmer Scheme of CAP Pillar I, the Youth Employment Initiative funded by the European Social Fund and ERASMUS+ are among the more substantial support mechanisms. Young people can also benefit from developments funded through more general EAFRD measures, including LEADER, advisory services, and cooperation, while a good number of National Rural Network initiatives support rural youth.

Pia Winsten (Rural Youth Europe) presented the situation of [rural youth in Europe](#), focusing on the outcomes of the recent discussions at the European Youth Forum and the Rural Youth Parliament. The key finding relates to the need for creating conditions in rural areas to enable youth to fulfil their potential. This includes tangible factors, such as adequate infrastructure, but equally importantly ‘soft’ factors, such as the opportunity to participate in decision-making, jobs and the importance of traditions.

Rebecca Dawes presented the [Rural Youth Project](#), research aimed at better understanding rural young people, aged 18-28. The project combines an online survey, analysis of vlogs of 15-20 rural young people and a Rural Youth Ideas Festival, to be held in Scotland in July 2018. The target countries for the research are England, Scotland, Wales, Austria, Australia, Canada and the USA. The results will help to identify and engage young rural leaders to help them drive positive change within their local rural communities.

Participants explored these in a discussion session identifying the added value, the transferability of the topics between areas and how to involve youth more in policy design.

Added value and the role of youth: exchange schemes, LEADER and policy tools

Participants identified the added value of initiatives and projects presented, what advice was needed to make it happen elsewhere and suggested how youth can be involved in shaping policies and designing tools.

Young farmers exchanges, as witnessed by those who have participated – such as [Gethin Owen, a Welsh young farmer](#) – certainly add value to the work of young farmers. Participants agreed that these exchanges provide valuable opportunities to grow and to share relevant knowledge. This, including exposure to new cultures, languages and diversity improves self-confidence and knowledge.

Regarding advice and transferability, it was noted that flexible design of the schemes and ease of process increases the rate of participation in the schemes themselves. Providing allowances to replace staff while these exchanges are being undertaken is also a good incentive. In order to involve youth in designing these schemes, the existing youth or farmer organisations play a key role. Arranging more opportunities to meet in decision-making centres such as Brussels can also be productive.

For **locally led initiatives** the motto should be proactive, thinking positively ‘WHY NOT?’ rather than the negative ‘WHY NOT!’. This idea of proactiveness is part of the essence of LEADER. The main added value that LEADER can facilitate is the ownership of these initiatives by youth, while at the same time empowering youth through the projects. For a project to be transferable it must be well thought out and have a sound strategy with a long-term perspective to support it. Projects must be community-based and anchored to the local context.

To ensure better involvement of younger people in LEADER it is useful to disseminate clear and attractive messages to improve the image of rural areas and, last but not least, it is essential to have enthusiastic people working for the LAGs. An inspiring example is a [Swedish LAG's project](#) that integrates young refugees through rural communities. The project aims to provide education on cultural norms, environment and diversity delivered during rural camping trips. These trips are organised several times per year and young migrant leaders are involved in the organisation.

Several elements that could add value to youth **projects and aid access to funds** focused on the preparatory stage of youth actions. These included the need for advance funding, streamlining/digitalising/simplifying applications and relevant processes, and a strong need for advice and for better information on various sources of support and funding.

In discussing project implementation, the ‘**international element**’ – learning from others with different backgrounds, and the fact that participants of youth projects can also add value by sharing their experiences of the project were emphasised. The group agreed that a key indicator of success for youth initiatives and projects is the successful ‘transition’ from participants – e.g. in a training course – to employment or to a form of accreditation or recognition. Group members provided clear advice to young colleagues in other Member States to collaborate with other stakeholders, to be patient and not to let go of the initiative until you take it to the final desired outcome. Information – communication – working together with the young and keeping it simple are the key elements to be transferred to all youth initiatives.

Outcomes and Actions

A panel of workshop participants including young farmers, youth organisations and LAGs acted as keynote listeners during the event. They fed back sharing their views on the usefulness of the event for their daily work and provided insights into potential future activities.

The meeting helped in reinforcing the idea that “it is people that make rural areas attractive” and integration and networking are crucial participation methods in the hands of young people in rural areas.

Rural young people appear to be dynamic, active and well-educated, but there is a need for a supporting and enabling environment to develop ideas and projects.

Exchange schemes are very useful tools for rural youth, with an opportunity to increase participation. Rules are useful but flexibility (less bureaucracy and easier procedures to access funds) is fundamental for creative ideas to become reality.

Finally, participants took away new ideas and especially a good dose of enthusiasm that will inform their future work and that of the ENRD on this topic.

