EUROPEAN WEEK of Regions & Cities

Strong Regions, Strong Europe



#EURegionsWeek

Vanessa Halhead

European Rural Community Alliance ERCA
European Rural Parliament ERP





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FUTURAL

Empowering the FUTure through innovative Smart Solutions for rURAL areas

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21 partners

10 EU countries



futural-project.eu

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What are we doing ?

- ➔Prototype, test, pilot, and demonstrate community-led innovations in **6 Multi-Actor Pilots** across the EU
- ➔**8 digital Smart Solutions** (SS) under **5 SS domains** to address societal and environmental challenges in rural communities
- ➔SS will be accessible through an integrated **Metasearch Platform**
- ➔Establish **EU-RIF** an event to promote networking and synergies between key actors in the rural ecosystem
- ➔An **Open Call** has funded 10 additional projects to develop their own digital SS
- ➔**Business Models**, **Governance Frameworks** and **Policy Recommendations**



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ERCA and the ERP

European Rural Parliament

European Rural Community Alliance

ERCA supports the rural communities of Europe, through our national and regional rural movements, to develop connections, share experience and mutual learning and take collective action to strengthen their position

- 15 partner national rural movements/ 2 Associates/ 17 countries
- Manage the ERP with PREPARE, ELARD and RYE
- A partner in FUTURAL

https://ruralcommunities.eu/

European Rural Parliament

The ERP is a long-term campaign to express the voice of rural people in Europe; and to promote self-help and action by the rural people, in partnership with civil society and governments.

EUROPEAN RURAL COMMUNITY ALLIANCE

- Partnership of 70 national rural movements, 8 pan-European rural networks, 40 countries
- The ERP brings together rural players – local, regional and national – to exchange experience and agree their rural policy agenda with which to lobby government

https://europeanruralparliament.com/

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“EU rural areas are not innovation deserts - they just innovate differently. While home to roughly a third of Europe's population and businesses, these territories are rarely perceived as places where startups, entrepreneurs and innovative firms can thrive. New evidence proves otherwise”

Start-up Village Forum

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The view from below

- Local stakeholders know what is needed
- have ideas and capacity to innovate and implement appropriate solutions
- lack power and resources but can organise in civil society bodies
- must influence authorities to improve services etc.
- to do this they need knowledge, capacity, structures, intermediary bodies, and an accessible and sympathetic governance and policy environment

The view from above

- Governments at all levels must design policies and deliver services
- need to know what is needed and how to deliver appropriately and cost-effectively
- depend on enabling local stakeholders/ actors to implement many policy aims
- to do this they need the understanding, mechanisms, governance structures, channels to connect locally

Success depends on effective co-creation

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How do the levels connect and work together effectively?

- Devolved governance structures
- Place-based systems
- Rural proofing
- Rural Pacts
- Intermediary civil society organisations
- Rural Movements and Rural Parliaments





The view from ERCA and the ERP

- **Embed rural voices** at every stage of policy making, design and implementation, from consultation to decision and evaluation.
- Guarantee accessible, flexible and transparent long-term **funding programmes** that reach communities and support social impact.
- Apply **Rural Proofing** systematically to all policies and regulation.
- End the growth paradigm and **prioritise sustainability and local needs** and wealth-building in economic and investment models to ensure that prosperity is shared and lasting.
- **Strengthen local capacity**, leadership and entrepreneurialism through technical/digital skills, and lifelong learning opportunities, with a strong focus on empowering young people to build their future in rural communities.
- **Facilitate collaboration** across communities, sectors and institutions, enabling exchange, innovation and solidarity beyond administrative borders.



FUTURAL findings so far

- **Rapid change** is driving communities to develop their own innovative solutions
- Community-led solutions are a **European public good**
- Community led solutions enable rural communities to pursue the **EU Right to Stay** and **tackle the geography of discontent**
- Community-led innovations span many sectors and contribute to addressing Europe's roots of **widening territorial disparities**
- Community-led solutions are **more *effective* than top-down** as they respond to community needs and rely on community engagement and adoption
- The right mix of **policy and governance mechanisms** can facilitate such initiatives, drive **place-based innovation,** address unmet needs, reach vulnerable communities, renew community belonging and trust in government
- **Governance frameworks** influence design, delivery and evaluation of policies and instruments, allowing for more fruitful **collaboration between State actors and civil society**

FUTURAL – Five Governance Frameworks for smart rural futures

1. **Stable multi-level and partnership-based rural governance:** Ensure territorially balanced, participatory and place-based governance for Smart Rurality
2. **Dedicated and predictable financing for community-led innovation:** Secure stable, accessible and place-based funding for rural smartification
3. **Adaptive and innovation-proofed administrative and regulatory environment:** Reduce structural barriers and enable experimentation and innovation in rural areas
4. **Inclusive digital capacity-building and skills:** Strengthen human, institutional and digital capacities as a governance condition
5. **Strong rural innovation ecosystems and networks:** Anchor Smart Rurality in organised civil society and territorial networks

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"Rural areas are the fabric of our society and the heartbeat of our economy. They are a core part of our identity and our economic potential. We will cherish and preserve our rural areas and invest in their future."

Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission

Strong rural futures require not only smart solutions but empowered communities capable of shaping their own development pathways

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