

“Green jobs for young people: Implications for rural development and rural societies future” Stakeholders’ meeting

Summary

Place: COST Association Headquarters Avenue du Boulevard – Bolwerklaan 21, 1210 Brussels

Date: 12.04.2023, 10.00 – 12.30

CA 18213 members: Francisco Simões (Chair); Claudia Petrescu (WG3 leader); Stefan Bojnec (WG4 vice-leader)

Context

The Rural NEET Youth Network and the RURALIZATION organized a joint meeting on the 12th of April with several stakeholders in COST headquarters. Among the participants were representatives of different branches of the European Commission (DG Agri; DG GROW; DG Science), the European Committee of Regions, and several civil society organizations such as the European Council of Young Farmers CEJA, DIESIS or the European Network of Vocational Training.

The meeting aimed to explore new avenues for expanding green jobs opportunities for young people in rural areas.

The meeting was also an opportunity to present and discuss the results of the RURALIZATION project and the work program of the European Rural Youth Observatory (EURYO), a research-oriented association that is expected to result from the Rural NEET Youth Network, leading to possible collaboration opportunities under that initiative.

RURALIZATION project: An exploration of rural young people’s dreams

In the **first part of the meeting** Prof. Tuomas Kuhmonen from Univ. of Turku (Finland) presented online the results from a comprehensive trend analysis that had been conducted in the frame of RURALIZATION. 1.560 trends and 2.200 “rural dreams” of young people (18-30) in 10 EU countries were qualitatively analyzed. The trends were differentiated in megatrends, trends and weak signals. They were summarized to 60 “trend cards”, a tool to be used by policy makers.

The dreams were broken down to livelihood, accommodation, and lifestyle recipes of young people concerning different types of rural areas. A general finding independent from nation state was that around 30% of city dwellers dream to move to a rural area in the next 15 years. The winner were generally rural areas close to the city and remote rural areas (not so much intermediate areas).

The analysis gives generally a positive outlook for strategies to revitalize rural areas by attracting newcomers because this corresponds to many young

peoples' dreams. However, the realization of these dreams must take into account that big megatrends (like urbanisation, globalisation) disfavor rural areas. The hope lies in **weak signals**, i.e. small developments that may become trends in the near future and can be harnessed wherever they occur to develop place-based development strategies. Examples are **educational farms, novel care services, heritage tourism or ecovillages**. Policy approaches to implement this strategy are starting with a local vision; **involving young people in the process; creating incentives for deviant behaviour (supporting small, local, novel, niche, experimental actors and actions); and organizing concerted action between stakeholders.**

More to the story can be found at the rural trends' website www.ruraltrends.eu

Dr. Titus Bahner from Kulturland cooperative in Germany continued in deriving employment conclusions from the RUR project. The project analyzed the impact of newcomers, new entrants in farming and farm successors as three "new rural generations" that engage professionally in rural areas and ignite an up spiraling process of innovation and capital building, counteracting the decline dynamics of rural brain drain and infrastructure deterioration.

In the case studies it was frequently found that **multifunctional and agro-ecological farms are a vital element of this renewal**. As opposed to specialized large scale conventional farming, many job creating businesses can tie in with such farms' activities like **small scale food processing, short circuit marketing, tourism, education or biodiversity enhancement**. They tend to have an overall positive impact on local quality of life in a village which attracts more newcomers.

The case studies of RURBANS school of shepherds (Spain), Gut Wulksfelde farm (Germany), Rural Professional Association in North Savo (Finland) and Commons in Transylvania (Romania) illustrated this process and its regionally different styles of implementation.

The Ruralization process can politically be supported on the local level by **concerted action and a welcoming culture (building "landing strips" for newcomers)**; by improving the bottleneck of access to land for young and new farmers; and on the upper policy levels by creating a more supportive frame for local action, including important changes in the Common Agricultural Policy like shifting subsidies from area-based payments to developing more regional processing and marketing facilities and supporting extra-familiar farm succession.

The **second part of the meeting** was dedicated to the presentation and discussion of the EURYO. This part consisted of four different modules:

- A brief presentation of the Rural NEET Youth Network and the main results achieved after three years of implementation (*please find attached the presentation*)

- A short overview of the European Rural Youth Observatory (EURYO) and intended actions/ activities to be developed
- An overview of the research on rural youth employment and the potential of the green economy to create employment opportunities (**Green jobs & young people: Trends & highlights from the employment side**) (see the policy brief attached)
- A presentation of the research results on rural development and sustainability (**Green jobs & young people: Trends & highlights from the rural development perspective**) (see the policy brief attached)

During the meeting, the discussion was centered on two main topics:

1. How can stakeholders' agenda fit with the EURYO initiative?
2. What opportunities EURYO can benefit from in the near future?

The stakeholders mentioned as main needs on their agenda that EURYO initiatives can cover:

- Identification of research gaps in order to define what DG AGRI/ European Commission needs for HORIZON projects
- Research on rural youth and rural NEETs – data collection (empirical data)
- Bringing the voice of young people, especially NEETs and rural youth, to the public space and decision-makers, as research dedicated to them is rather few and far between
- Bringing together information and data from various projects, research, and studies. This Observatory could be a platform that collects and connects data that already exists. Also, EURYO could make connections between various data produced by different projects/ initiatives. The EC platforms can only share data from official statistics that are standardized, but a considerable amount of information is produced by other projects and the data is public but it takes a long time to search and find it.
- Identify the relevant local actors for working with rural NEETs
- Knowledge about rural youth
- Knowledge about social innovation in solving/responding to rural youth needs
- Indicators to measure social innovation and the impact of the activity, social impact on the community
- Evidence for policies – should be an instrument to transfer the research to policy
- Training on skills improvement

The main opportunities for EURYO further engagement with stakeholders are:

- **The 2023 EU AgriResearch Conference – 31 May – 1 June 2023**, https://eu-cap-network.ec.europa.eu/events/2023-eu-agriresearch-conference_en
- EU CAP Network event at the end of May – EURYO and COST Action could be presented to other stakeholders – in May there will be 2 online meetings of the thematic group on rural youth:

- o 9 May – online - 1st meeting of the Thematic Group on Rural Youth Employment: the Voice of Rural Youth - https://eu-cap-network.ec.europa.eu/events/1st-meeting-thematic-group-rural-youth-employment-voice-rural-youth_en
- o 23 May – online - 2nd meeting of the Thematic Group on Rural Youth Employment: the Voice of Rural Youth - https://eu-cap-network.ec.europa.eu/events/2nd-meeting-thematic-group-rural-youth-employment-voice-rural-youth_en
- PACT for Skills on Tourism – could collaborate with the partner that makes research on tourism
- RURAL PACT – Revitalisation Conference
- Horizon program

Useful links for RURALIZATION

<https://ruralization.eu/>

Useful links for EURYO

<https://rnyobservatory.eu/web/>

Useful contacts

Ruralization

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Rural NEET Youth Network

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