

ESPON



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SPANISH PRESIDENCY  
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# ESPON Seminar

## Small and medium-sized cities in Europe

15-16 November 2023 in Cuenca, Spain

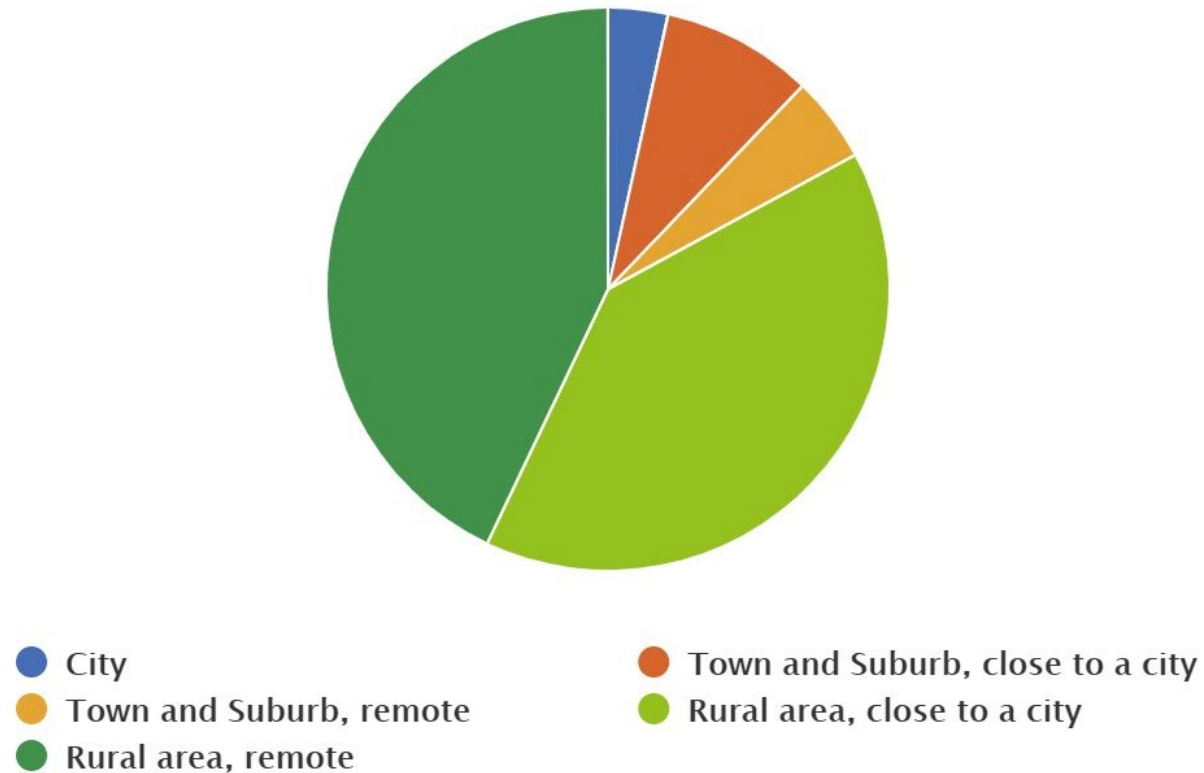
*Rural innovation ecosystems &  
rural-urban linkages  
in the long-term vision for the EU's rural areas*

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European Commission, DG Agriculture and rural development*

# European ruralities: some figures

EU land area, 2018 (in million hectares and percentage)

Source: LUISA Base Map 2018 (EC-JRC)



- ▶ **83% of land**
  - 50% remote
- ▶ **30% of population (137 million people)**
  - 1/3 remote

# The rural vision by 2040



**Shared goals for 2040**



**Rural action plan (EC)  
&  
Rural Pact (everyone)**



## **Stronger**

Empowered communities  
Access to services  
Social innovation

## **Connected**

Digital connectivity  
Transport links and  
new mobilities

## **Prosperous**

Diversification of economic  
activities  
Sustainable food production

## **Resilient**

Resilience to climate change  
Environmental resilience  
Social resilience

# The long-term vision for the EU's rural areas



## LONG-TERM VISION FOR RURAL AREAS

### 10 SHARED GOALS FOR 2040

1. **Attractive spaces**, developed in harmonious **territorial development**
2. Engaged in **multi-level** and **place-based governance**
3. Providers of **food security**, economic **opportunities**, goods and **services** for wider society
4. Dynamic communities focusing on **well-being**
5. **Inclusive communities**
6. Flourishing sources of **nature**
7. Fully benefiting from **digital innovation**
8. **Entrepreneurial, innovative** and **skilled** people
9. Lively places equipped with efficient, accessible and affordable **public and private services**
10. Places of **diversity**

#### Goal 2

« Rural areas are engaged in **multi-level governance**, developing integrated strategies [...] benefitting from [...] **interdependencies between urban and rural areas** »

#### Goal 7

« Fully benefiting from **digital innovation** with equal access to **emerging technologies** [...]»

#### Goal 8

« **Entrepreneurial, innovative** and **skilled** people **co-creating** technological, ecological and social **progress**»

# Rural innovation

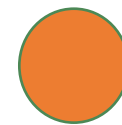


- Limited literature and evidence (lack of relevant indicators)
- **Specificities:**
  - **Innovation is sparked by internal and external challenges** rather than by knowledge creation
  - Innovation tends to be more **incremental**
  - **Social innovation** plays a greater role
  - **Cooperation and networking** are essential, within the area, and beyond, to source knowledge from urban areas, other rural areas, other countries.
- **Weaker enabling conditions:** lower **education** levels, lower **capacity to invest in R&D** and **access innovation support**, infrastructures, limited funding for cooperation
- **Opportunities:** **green transition**, digitalisation and **social pressures** and **influx of rural newcomers** as drivers of innovation.

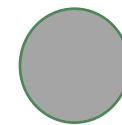
# Rural economy



Agriculture,  
forestry & fishery



Industry &  
construction

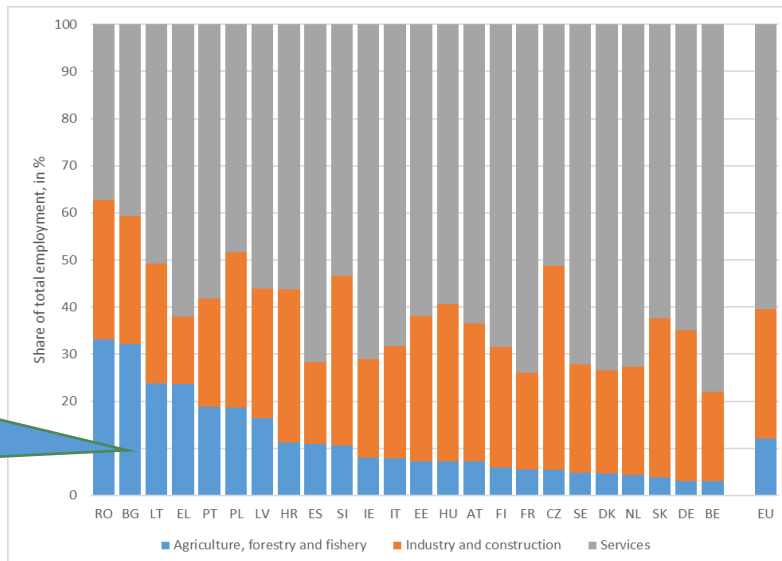


Services

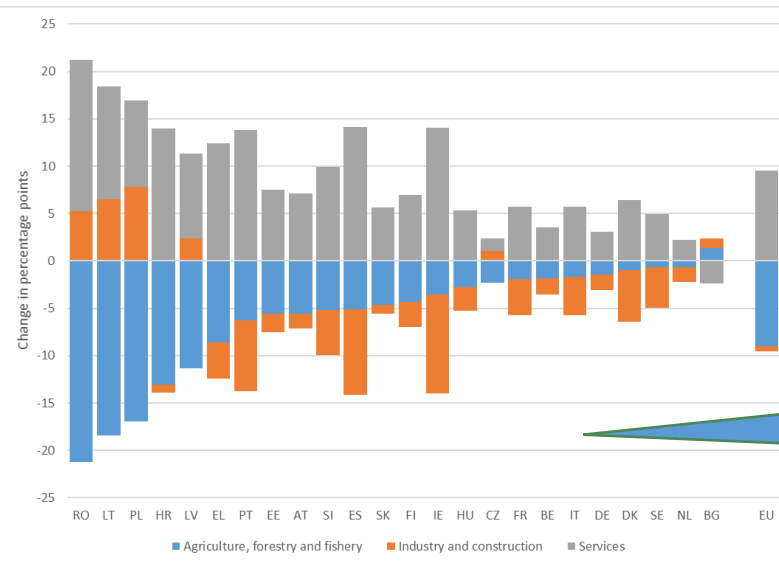


**Share of  
employment  
2018**

**Farming  
still  
important**

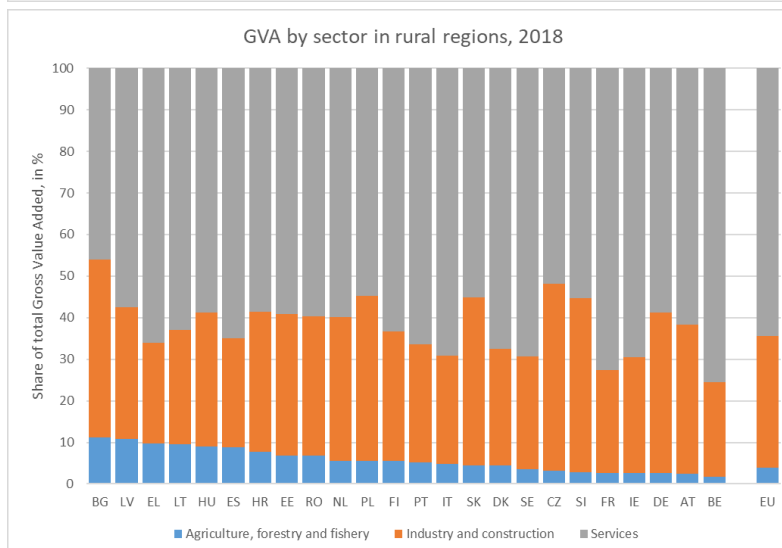


**Evolution of  
employment  
2000-2018**

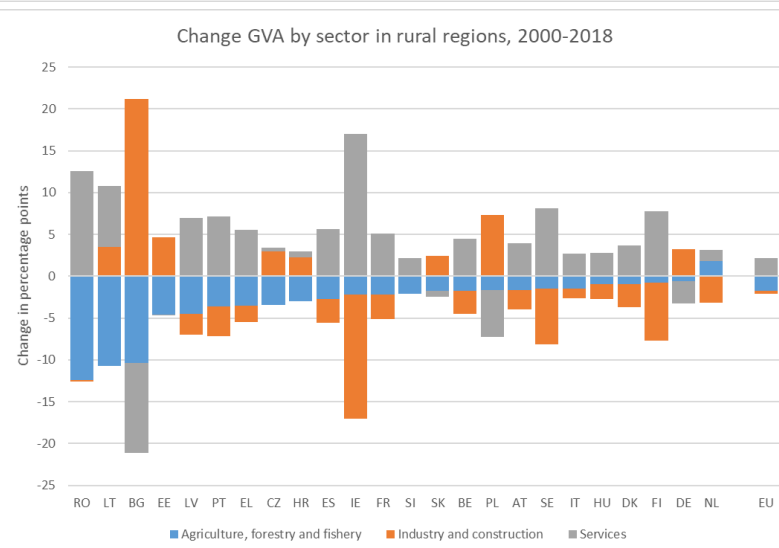


**But economies are  
diversifying**

**Share of  
Gross value  
added  
2018**



**Evolution of  
Gross Value  
added  
2000-2018**



# Initiatives that help

- Places to **meet** and **innovate jointly**: **Third places, Fab Labs**
- **One stop-shops** to support (funding and advice): **Innovation hubs** and digital innovation hubs
- **Cooperation support** to enhance **social capital** and **facilitate co-creation**
  - **LEADER/community-led** local development & **Smart villages**
  - **European innovation partnership** Agriculture
  - **Horizon Europe multi-actor projects**
  - **Rural-urban partnerships** : proximity, circular, green economy, food partnerships
  - **Cross-border** cooperation projects
  - **International** cooperation projects
- **Consolidating the enabling factors**: infrastructures, distance learning, digital skills at early age, facilitating installation of newcomers, decentralised university centres

# Innovation in the EU rural action plan

## LONG-TERM VISION FOR RURAL AREAS

### 10 SHARED GOALS FOR 2040

### EU RURAL ACTION PLAN

#### 9 Flagship initiatives

1. **Rural revitalisation platform**
2. **Research and innovation** for rural communities
3. Sustainable multimodal **mobility** best practices for rural areas
4. Rural **digital futures**
5. Support rural municipalities in **energy transition** and fighting climate change
6. Climate action in peatland through **carbon farming**
7. **EU mission** : a soil deal for Europe
8. **Social resilience** and **women** in rural areas
9. **Entrepreneurship** and **social economy** in rural areas





# The rural action plan: 24 thematic actions

## ► Rural revitalisation platform

- Enabling factors, self-assessment tool
- Launch 29 June 2023

## ► Research and innovation for rural communities

- **Horizon EU 2021-2024 launched (120 M€)**
- **Startup village forum**
- **EIP-AGRI,**
- **RIS3 platforms**
- Horizon EU 2025-2027

## ► Education and youth

- Study on rural young people access to ERASMUS and ESCP

## ► Sustainable multimodal **mobility** best practices for rural areas

- SMARTA NET Networking for municipalities

## ► **Urban mobility framework published**

## ► **Rural Digital Futures**

- Horizon + DEP WP published EDIH Digital skills and jobs platform
- **Pilots on digital education for children in remote areas**
- 5G for smart com.
- Rural digital index

## ► **Rural municipalities in energy** transition & Climate change

- Rural energy communities advisory hub

## ► **Climate action in peatland /carbon farming**

- Comm "Sustainable C cycles"
- 3 LIFE projects
- Just transition fund
- CAP assessments
- Certif. C removals

## ► **EU mission: A soil deal for Europe**

- Calls published

## ► **Entrepreneurship and social economy**

- Clusters of social and ecologic innovation (rural focus) report published – study by RTD
- **Euroclusters call**
- **European cluster collaboration platform**
- Transition pathway for proximity and social economy

## ► **Social resilience and Women in rural areas**

- European care strategy (2022)

# Rural-urban linkages in the four areas of action



## Stronger

- **Equitable participation** of rural people in the governance of rural-urban relations
- Consider **needs of rural & urban on equal footing** in local/regional/urban development strategies
- Improve **service provision**
- Make **local innovation ecosystems fit for rural innovators** (social innovation, networks)
- **Smart specialisation** embracing **diversity**

## Connected

- **Mobility as a top need!**  
=> *Redesign, integrated mobility hubs, rural-rural as well as rural-urban*
- **Digital services**



## Prosperous

- **Valuing regional identities**
- **Cross-sectoral synergies** (tourism, food, creative industries)
- **Strengthening local value chains**
- **Win-win territorial food policies/pacts/procurement**
- **Making circular economy work** (flows)
- Enabling **new ways of working** (multi-locality living)

## Resilient

- **Energy communities (CoM)**
- **Valuing ecosystem services** (cultural landscapes)
- **Sustainable farming, forestry food**
- **Soil health living labs** (urban and rural)
- **Green economy**
- Favouring **women entrepreneurship**





# THANK YOU

**Rural Pact Community – Join us**

<https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/RuralPact>



<https://rural-vision.europa.eu/>



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