



RESOLUTION

Creating better opportunities for Europe's youth and young families in rural and remote areas

Adopted at the YEPP Council Meeting in Kyiv, 7.12.2019

Recognising that:

- Rural areas, in which more than 50% of EU citizens reside, are facing a disruptive loss of young population. Many European countries are coping with the drastic impacts of demographic changes which manifest themselves in declining birth rates, aging population and which are further aggravated by migration from rural areas.
- The economic crisis, globalization and the digital revolution had the biggest impact on young people in rural areas. Many young people, especially highly educated individuals and young families have left rural areas. The lack of quality opportunities in education and employment weakens the economic independence of young people. This situation surpasses the national level and has a clear European dimension.
- Existing discrepancies in the level of economic and social development of rural and urban areas contribute to further depopulation of rural areas. Due to limited access to services, underdeveloped transport and digital infrastructure, as well as a higher risk of poverty, many young people choose to work and live in urban areas instead.
- Limited economic activity and lack of well-paid and quality jobs decrease in investments, high unemployment rates, limited health care, lower quality of life, along with a fewer number of children which leads to the closure of kindergartens and schools, are factors which cause the dying away of rural areas. According to Eurostat: 'over one quarter of the rural population (25,5%) is at risk of poverty or social exclusion'.



- One of the greatest achievements of the Union is freedom of movement which helped many young people to study, live and work in other Member States, who used the opportunity for intra-EU mobility to gain experience abroad. At the same time, brain-drain has serious economic and social consequences that heavily impact rural areas.
- Besides protecting the freedom of movement, Member States need to foster the return to rural areas, through the achievement of comparable quality of life and the enhancement of the brain circulation model which helps the rural development through the application of knowledge and experience gained in urban areas and abroad.
- Islands, mountainous, cross-border and agricultural areas require a tailor-made approach to ensure that geographic, development and human capital potentials are used for achieving better living standard and the enabling business environment.
- The youth in rural areas who besides geographic also experience health, educational, economic or social difficulties, need to be better informed about existing possibilities which could enable them to achieve a quality living standard in rural areas and contribute to the local community.

Acknowledging that:

- The Lisbon Treaty highlighted the Union's dedication to the promotion of overall harmonious development and economic, social and territorial cohesion, giving special attention to rural areas which include 'areas affected by industrial transition, and regions which suffer from severe and permanent natural or demographic handicaps'.



- The Strategic Agenda of the Union 2019-2024 recognized the need to 'renew the basis for long-term sustainable and inclusive growth and strengthen cohesion in the EU', while addressing the demographic challenges.
- The EU Youth Strategy adopted in November 2018 identified the goal of "Moving Rural Youth Forward", through ensuring the equal access to high quality education, establishing a positive image of rural areas and the achievement of high-quality jobs.
- The EU Youth Dialogue includes the topic on creating opportunities for young people in rural areas with the aim to address their needs and contribute to their fulfilment.
- The YEPP Election Manifesto highlighted that 'it is vital to develop ways to advance inclusion, stronger social cohesion mechanisms and to create more equal opportunities for young Europeans, both in urban and rural areas'.
- The European Parliament, in its Resolutions of 13 June and 14 November 2017 and of 17 April 2018 on cohesion policy, demanded the optimal deployment of the European Structural and Investment (ESI) and Innovation Funds, and the mobilization of InvestEU and Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) to create economic opportunities and improve accessibility in regions coping with demographic changes.
- As part of the European Network for Rural Development, LEADER is a local development method to link the rural economy and development and is already covering 54% of the rural population in the EU.



- The Economic and Social Committee has demanded the European Investment Bank to develop support programmes for rural businesses, private and social enterprises and young farmers.
- The creation of a portfolio for democracy and demography in the newly formed EU-Commission will be a framework for developing a strategy for sustainable rural development based on a mapping exercise which should identify how to support rural areas, as well as for a discussion on the future of Europe which will include the perspective of young people living in rural areas of Europe.

YEPP calls on:

- The EU-Commission's Vice President for democracy and demography to develop the long-term strategy for rural areas in dialogue with young people who live in these areas and are essential for their revival. The strategy needs to contribute to the promotion of the economic potential of these areas, including quality and healthy products, innovative projects, youth start up initiatives, cultural and linguistic heritage.
- The Multiannual Financial Framework to be a development instrument for investments in education, innovation and the competitiveness of the EU. It should meet the needs of all European citizens, ensure a sustainable and inclusive growth and help achieve upward convergence in living standard across the EU, including in rural and remote areas.
- The EU and the Member States to give special attention to youth with fewer opportunities, gender equality, the inclusion of young people with disabilities and the reduction of poverty and social exclusion in rural areas.



- The EU to use its full potential of creative and cultural industries in the further development of programmes such as Creative Europe and Digital Europe which boost employability and generate growth.
- The EU and Member States to invest in rural areas – in youth employment policies, youth associations, private and social enterprises and farms, especially those owned by young people.
- The EU Member States to invest in vocational schools and training, student standard, infrastructure and scholarships to develop human capital.
- The Member States to support young families through the development of infrastructure which would allow young parents to stay in rural areas, such as access to health services, effective and affordable childcare facilities for better work-life balance, educational institutions and developed transport infrastructure. Special focus should be given to young parents who are students, especially women, to help them complete their education.
- The new EU-Commission to put emphasis on digital connectivity in rural areas to enable remote working, online learning, access to health care and the dissemination of information. The programmes such as WiFi4EU should be further supported.
- The EU institutions to include the youth perspective in twinning successful innovative and cohesive rural village and small-town communities to strengthen their role as the economic backbone of rural areas.
- The EU should promote rural life through the generational renewal of agriculture, fisheries and the support to rural traditions.