



**SHERPA**  
Rural Science-Society-Policy  
Interfaces

**TIMETABLE OF EU NEGOTIATIONS  
& POLICY DEVELOPMENTS:  
AN OVERVIEW OF THE RURAL  
POLICY FRAMEWORK POST-2020**

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## TIMETABLE OF EU NEGOTIATIONS AND POLICY DEVELOPMENTS: AN OVERVIEW OF THE RURAL POLICY FRAMEWORK POST-2020

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## **Introduction**

The aim of this deliverable, D3.1, is to monitor the development of policies affecting rural areas and rural dwellers in the start of the 2020-2027 period. It provides an overview of the main negotiations and development of the rural policy framework at the EU level to the various stakeholders who will take part in the SHERPA Multi-Actor Platforms (MAPs).

The objective that underpins this calendar overview is to identify opportunities for contributing to EU level discussions and negotiations, and national implementation.

EU interventions for rural areas are not only covered by the Common Agricultural Policy under its second pillar for rural development. New and upcoming strategies will encompass the rural areas during the 2021-2027 period and several policy sectors will cover the rural dimension.

The preparation of the next policy framework relevant to rural areas is already underway at the EU level and at national levels. In its first version, this deliverable D3.1 covers only the negotiations and developments at the EU level. In due course, it will be updated to include relevant information about national policy developments.

Regarding the Partnership Agreements, the Operational programmes (Cohesion and Regional policy) and the CAP Strategic Plans, an in-depth analysis is expected from the scientists, policymakers and stakeholders involved in the SHERPA MAPs.

The last section of this deliverable relates to the stages of the EU policy cycle at the Member State level and introduces the first opportunities for the SHERPA MAPs to take part in the discussions regarding the new rural policy framework, either through the Cohesion/regional policy or through the CAP Strategic Plans.



## 1. Overview of the EU policy frameworks relevant for rural areas

Multiple negotiations affecting the future rural policy framework are taking place in 2020 between the European co-legislators and the Member States (the European Parliament and the Council). The most important ones for rural areas are introduced below. In the next section, details on the process with a timeline of the negotiations will be given for the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)-related policies for rural areas: the CAP, the ERDF, the cohesion funds and Horizon Europe.

### 1.1. The Multi-annual financial framework (MFF)

The MFF is the long-term budget of the European Union for 2021–2027. This will determine the overall level of funding for the ESIF funds, the CAP and Horizon 2020, among other instruments. The budget was €959.51 billion in commitments and €908.40 billion in payments (2011 prices) for the 2014-2020 programming period. During the last semester of 2019, the Finnish presidency proposed a total expenditure for the EU27 of €1,087 billion for the new programming period. Final negotiations on the MFF are likely happen during the Croatian presidency in the first semester of 2020, a first special European Council on MFF being expected on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2020<sup>1</sup>.

### 1.2. The European Green Deal: strive to make Europe climate-neutral

The European Green Deal was announced on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2019 by the president of the European Commission (EC)<sup>2</sup>, Ursula von der Leyen, who vowed to deliver it within the Commission's first 100 days in office. Its aim is to achieve carbon neutrality at the EU level by 2050. Under the leadership of Deputy Commission President Frans Timmermans, a 50% to 55% cut in greenhouse gas emissions is envisaged. The European Green Deal commitments cover seven policy areas: clean energy, sustainable industry, building and renovating, sustainable mobility, biodiversity, farm-to-fork and eliminating pollution. The 'Just Transition Fund' announced on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2020 is aimed at supporting regions which are the most affected by the energy transition.

### 1.3. Horizon Europe: the next innovation and research framework programme 2021-2027

The EC proposal for Horizon Europe 2021-2027<sup>3</sup> is structured around three pillars: i) scientific excellence, ii) global challenges and European industrial competitiveness, iii) innovative Europe. A fourth component relates to "Widening participation and strengthening the European research area". The proposed budget is €100 billion, of which 52.7% goes to the second pillar on global challenges. Among these challenges, there are 7 intervention areas: environmental observation; biodiversity and natural capital; agriculture, forestry and rural areas; sea and oceans; food systems; bio-based innovation systems, and circular systems.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/fr/meetings/european-council/2020/02/20/>

<sup>2</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/communication-european-green-deal\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/communication-european-green-deal_en)

<sup>3</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/horizon-europe-next-research-and-innovation-framework-programme\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/horizon-europe-next-research-and-innovation-framework-programme_en)



#### 1.4. The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

According to the legislative proposals COM (2018) 392<sup>4</sup>, the future CAP will be based upon a new delivery model with a result-based approach in which Member States need to prepare a Strategic Plan (SP). This is an innovation for the next period under which Member States will be required to use both Pillar 1 funding (Direct Payments) and Pillar 2 (Rural Development) strategically (see the detailed process below). With the advent of the CAP Strategic Plans, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) will cease to be covered by the Partnership Agreement. The preparation of SPs includes various steps (see Section 2) amongst which is a public consultation so stakeholders can be involved in its preparation. As the implementation of the CAP SPs is expected to start on January 2022 at the earliest, 2021 will be a transition year. Many participants in the negotiations currently (January 2020) expect that the plans will not come into operation until 2023. A regulation on this yearly transition is under discussion between the co-legislators. The Croatian presidency has planned to reach an agreement on CAP legislative proposals by the Council by the end of June 2020.

#### 1.5. The Farm-to-fork strategy

A farm to fork strategy was announced in December as part of the European Green Deal and is due to be published in Spring 2020. It will aim at promoting healthy and safe food in Europe and for more sustainability along the food value chain. This strategy will encompass the ongoing CAP reform based on the strategic plans to be designed by Member States, which are expected to deliver a 'high environmental and climate ambition'. However, this strategy is expected to cover broader aspects than the CAP. The topics of food and agriculture will be treated with a focus on developing 'a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food system'. It is meant to cover all steps of the food supply chain.

#### 1.6. A long-term vision for rural areas

As stated in the European Green Deal, the EC has planned to issue a statement about a long-term vision for rural areas in the EU. This process will be coordinated by the Vice-President of the EC for democracy and demography Dubravka Suica, with the contribution of Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms Elisa Ferreira. In its letter mission to VP Suica, President von der Leyen indicated that "*We need to enable [rural areas] to make the most of their potential and support them in facing up to their own unique set of issues, from demographic change to connectivity, the risk of poverty and limited access to services. This should be done in close consultation with people living in rural areas, as well as local and regional authorities*". This communication is likely to be published at the beginning of 2021 at the earliest.

#### 1.7. The ERDF and the Cohesion fund

The EU Structural and Investment Funds (ESI Funds) are made up of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund. Funding instruments in each of the first three funds are used to address specific subjects and issues in the EU. In the future, the EAFRD will be used by Member States to respond to nine new objectives laid down in the CAP. In the next sections we will cover the ERDF and the Cohesion fund, which are the most relevant ESIF for rural areas. Further details of the European structural and investment funds are provided in Annex 1.

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<sup>4</sup>[https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy/future-cap\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy/future-cap_en)



## 2. The CAP reform

The CAP supports the agricultural sector in Europe and is divided into two pillars. Financial mechanisms are covered by the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) for the first pillar and by the European Agriculture Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) for the second pillar. From 2022 (or perhaps 2023), each Member State will be required to establish a CAP Strategic Plan for its entire territory, covering both Pillars and both funds.

### 2.1. Steps to access EU rural funding: CAP Strategic Plan

The new CAP has three general objectives and nine specific ones, as shown in Table 1 and Figure 1. The purpose of the strategic plans is for Member States to set out how they propose to meet these objectives in their own territories, using a suite of interventions that are available in both Pillars. Steps in their preparation are described in Table 2. Most of these are optional but Member States must provide basic direct payments and offer a new eco-scheme payment within Pillar 1 and spend 30% of Pillar 2 funding (as now) on the environment. Similar to the Partnership Agreement, Member States must set targets and prepare implementation plans.

Table 1: The general objectives of the CAP

#### The Future of the Common Agricultural Policy

The next CAP (2021-2027) is currently under negotiation, based on legislative proposals presented by the Commission in June 2018. The proposal sets CAP objectives which must be pursued by Member States in the CAP strategic plan.

##### CAP general objectives:

- a) Foster a smart, resilient and diversified agriculture ensuring food security
- b) Bolster environmental care and climate action and contribute to the environmental and climate related objectives of the Union
- c) Strengthen the socio-economic fabric of rural areas



Figure 1: The nine specific objectives of the CAP (Source: European Commission)



Table 2: The steps for preparing CAP Strategic Plans

### What needs to be prepared for the CAP strategic plan?

1. Assessment of needs (including SWOT)
2. Intervention strategy
3. Description of elements common to several interventions
4. Description of the direct payments, sectoral and rural development interventions
5. Target and financial plans
6. Description of governance and coordination system
7. Description of elements that ensure modernisation of the CAP – Commission proposal *'Modernising & Simplifying the CAP – targeted, flexible and effective'*. The modernisation policy shifts emphasis to results and performance, rather than rules and compliance. Elements include a more flexible system, a greater emphasis on climate and environment, smart agriculture and a greater role for advice and knowledge.
8. Description of elements related to simplification and reduced administrative burden for financial beneficiaries
9. Annex: ex-ante evaluation and strategic environmental assessment and the complete SWOT analysis

## 2.2. CAP Strategic Plan – timeline

Negotiations for the new CAP are taking longer than expected, being tied to the complex negotiations of the long-term EU budget 2021-2027. The timeline for the CAP reform is provided in the calendar (Annex 2), Figure 2 and Table 3.

Initially, the European Parliament and the European Commission expected a draft of the strategic plan for each Member State to be submitted by 1 January 2020, to which the Commission would respond within 3 months. However, with negotiations still in process the timeline was adapted and a regulation for a transitional period is under discussion for 2021. The new CAP is expected to come into operation on 1 January

### D3.1 | Timetable of EU negotiations & policy developments: an overview of the new rural policy framework

2022 or 2023 (to be confirmed), depending on the progress made by the co-legislators in 2020 and on their willingness to extend the transitional period.

Figure 2: Timeline for development of the CAP Strategic Plans.

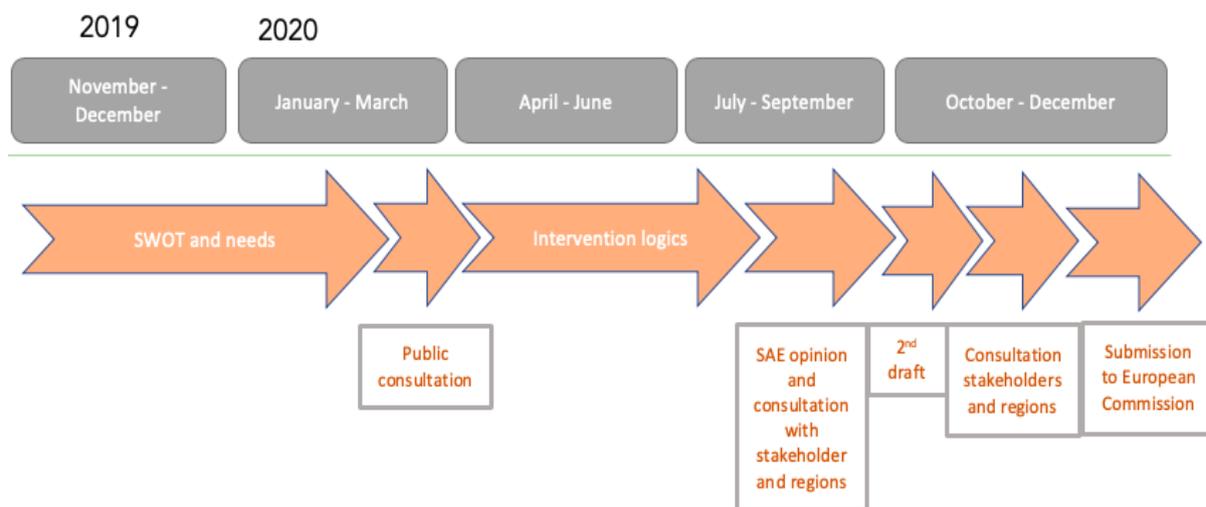


Table 3: Four important steps in the CAP Strategic Plans timeline

<p><b>SWOT and needs</b></p> <p><b>[expected February/March 2020]</b></p> <p>Preparation of an assessment of strength, weakness, opportunities and threats, building a basis for the needs assessment.</p> <p>(explanation can be found in Annex 2)</p>	<p><b>Defining intervention logics</b></p> <p><b>[April –August 2020]</b></p> <p>Outlining the particular interventions necessary to address the development needs identified before.</p>
<p><b>Consultations</b></p> <p>Several consultations are planned in the process of drafting the CAP Strategic Plans.</p>	<p><b>Submission</b></p> <p>Final submission to the European Commission should be completed by the end of January 2021.</p>



## 3. The ERDF and the Cohesion fund

### 3.1. Partnership Agreements – process

The Partnership Agreements (PAs) set out the national authorities' plans on how to use funding from the European structural and investment funds for the period of 2021-2027. The **ERDF, ESF and the Cohesion fund require this step**. Agreements are made between the European Commission and individual Member States. The PAs should 'translate the elements set out in the Common Strategic Framework into the national context'. The content of the agreements should ensure alignment with the EU strategy of 'smart, sustainable and inclusive growth' and the specific missions of the funds.

Implementation of the PA is carried out via programmes which define priorities of regions for delivering the funds. Member States must conclude **OPs** within 3 months of submission of the PAs.

For the Partnership Agreement and each programme, the Member States are required to organise **partnerships with competent regional and local authorities**. The partners should include urban and other public authorities, economic and social partners, and bodies representing civil society (NGO, environmental, social inclusion, gender equality, non-discrimination).

The analysis and preparation during the very first months of process require input from experts, scientists and stakeholders in Member States. Linkages between the funds and Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe, the research and innovation programme, should be explored in the process. With these steps, the funding priorities of each Member State can be identified. The steps in preparation of the Partnership Agreements are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: The steps for preparing the Partnership Agreement

#### What needs to be prepared for the Partnership Agreement?

- i. **Analysis of disparities, development needs and growth potential**
- ii. These should be linked to the thematic objectives of the fund, including those addressed by the relevant country specific recommendations. The information is compiled in a SWOT and needs assessment, prepared separately for each fund (explained in box below).
- iii. Summaries of ex-ante conditionalities of programmes.
- iv. A checklist of criteria must be covered by Member States in the preparation and conclusions should be summarised at national level (explained in box below). Member States must also include ex-ante evaluations of the Partnership Agreement.
- v. Selection of the **thematic objectives**, the **indicative allocations** of the ESI funds and their main **expected results**.
- vi. This requires an explanation why these have been chosen based on development needs and funding priorities.
- vii. List of **programmes and mechanisms at national and regional level**.
- viii. This step ensures coordination with other EU and national funding instruments and with the European Investment Bank.
- ix. Arrangements which must be made to ensure an **integrated approach for territorial development** (urban, rural coastal, fisheries areas and areas with particular territorial features).
- x. Arrangements which must be made to ensure an integrated approach to address **specific needs** of geographical areas most affected by poverty, discrimination or exclusion, with special attention paid to marginalised communities.



### 3.2. Partnership Agreement - timeline

The process for the new funding period started in December 2019 with the XIII International Evaluation Conference for Cohesion Policy. The topic for the meeting was 'Innovation, social inclusion and territorial cohesion – preparing for 2021-2027'. The new programming period will begin in January 2021. The timeline is shown in Figure 3 and Table 5.

Figure 3: Timeline for preparing Partnership Agreements

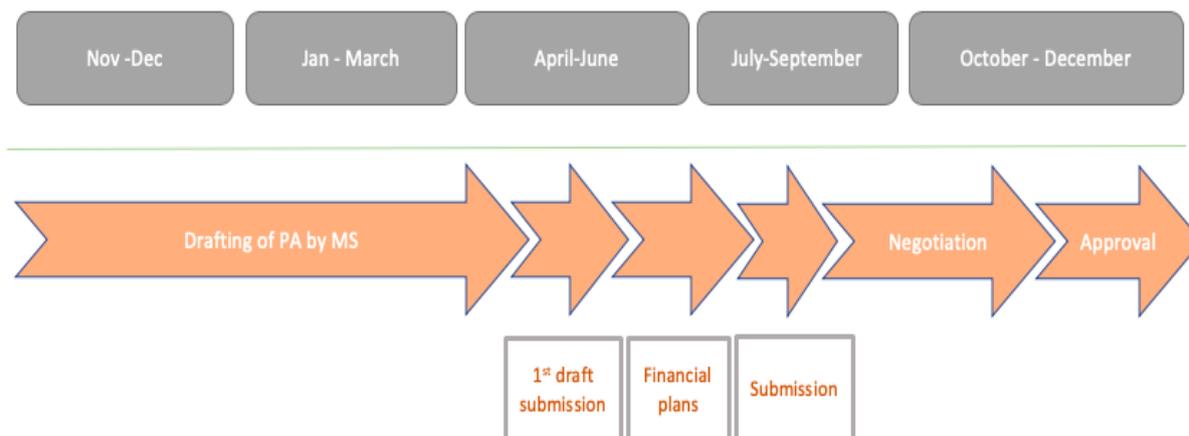


Table 5: Three important steps in the Partnership Agreement timeline

<p><b>Drafting the Partnership Agreement</b></p> <p>With the requirements stated above, Member States shall draft the Partnership Agreement for the period from 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2027.</p>	<p><b>1<sup>st</sup> draft submission to EC</b></p> <p><b>[30 April 2020]</b></p> <p>In the last programming period, submissions of the PA were made between April and October months. Therefore, the timeline can change.</p>
<p><b>Financial plans</b></p> <p><b>[June-July 2020]</b></p> <p>Member States plan financial details of the Partnership Agreements.</p>	<p><b>Negotiation process</b></p> <p><b>[September-November 2020]</b></p> <p>Members States negotiate with the European Commission to achieve an approval.</p>



The timelines for preparing the Operational Programmes are shown in Figure 4 and Table 6.

Figure 4: Timeline for preparing Operational Programmes

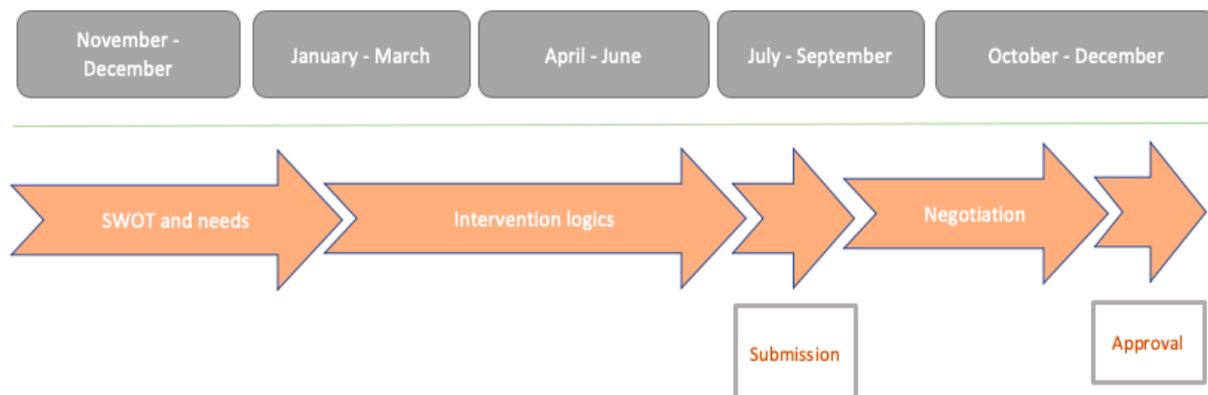


Table 6: Four important steps in the Operational Programmes timeline

<p><b>SWOT and needs assessment</b></p> <p><b>[- end January 2020]</b></p> <p>Assessment of strength, weakness, opportunity and threat, is the basis for the needs assessment.</p>	<p><b>Defining intervention logics</b></p> <p><b>[February -July 2020]</b></p> <p>Outlining the interventions necessary to address the development needs identified previously.</p>	<p><b>Submission and negotiation</b></p> <p><b>[July 2020]</b></p> <p>Operational programmes must be submitted no later than three months after the submission of the PA 1<sup>st</sup> draft (April 2020). The Commission makes observations in the three following months [September-November]. Member States then review the programme, considering these observations.</p>	<p><b>Approval by European Commission</b></p> <p>The implementing act, which approves the OP, should be concluded no later than 6 months after the submission.</p>
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Once the Partnership Agreement has been approved and the Operational Programme is up and running, there is a series of regular review points for monitoring and evaluation as shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Monitoring, review and evaluation of the Operational Programme.

#### After approval: monitoring

The Member State shall set up a committee to monitor the implementation of the programme ('monitoring committee') within three months of the programme being approved. The monitoring committee shall meet at least once a year and review all issues that affect the programme's progress towards achieving its objectives. An annual review meeting shall be organised between the Commission and each Member State to examine the performance of each programme.

#### Review and evaluation

- End of 2024: Member States must carry out mid-term reviews
- 31 March 2025: Option to request amendment of each programme
- 20 June 2029: The managing authority shall carry out an evaluation for each programme to assess its impact.
- 15 February 2031: Final performance report
- 31 December 2031: Retrospective evaluation

### 3.3. Priorities of the ERDF and the Cohesion fund

The proposal for a regulation (2018/0197) for ERDF and the Cohesion fund after 2020 suggests five specific objectives<sup>5</sup>:

- a) **'A smarter Europe by promoting innovative and smart economic transformation'** ('PO 1') by:
  - (i) enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies;
  - (ii) reaping the benefits of digitisation for citizens, companies and governments;
  - (iii) enhancing growth and competitiveness of SMEs;
  - (iv) developing skills for smart specialisation, industrial transition and entrepreneurship;
- b) **'A greener, low-carbon Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate adaptation and risk prevention and management'** ('PO 2') by:
  - (i) promoting energy efficiency measures;
  - (ii) promoting renewable energy;
  - (iii) developing smart energy systems, grids and storage at local levels;
  - (iv) promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience;
  - (v) promoting sustainable water management;
  - (vi) promoting the transition to a circular economy;
  - (vii) enhancing biodiversity, green infrastructure in the urban environment, and reducing pollution.

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<sup>5</sup>[https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:8d2f7140-6375-11e8-ab9c-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC\\_1&format=PDF](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:8d2f7140-6375-11e8-ab9c-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC_1&format=PDF)



- c) **'A more connected Europe by enhancing mobility and regional ICT connectivity'** ('PO 3') by:
  - (i) enhancing digital connectivity;
  - (ii) developing a sustainable, climate resilient, intelligent, secure and intermodal Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T);
  - (iii) developing sustainable, climate resilient, intelligent and intermodal national, regional and local mobility, including improved access to TEN-T and cross-border mobility;
  - (iv) promoting sustainable multimodal urban mobility.
- d) **'A more social Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights'** ('PO 4') by:
  - (i) enhancing the effectiveness of labour markets and access to quality employment through developing social innovation and infrastructure;
  - (ii) improving access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and life-long learning through developing infrastructure;
  - (iii) increasing the socio-economic integration of marginalised communities, migrants and disadvantaged groups, through integrated measures including housing and social services;
  - (iv) ensuring equal access to health care through developing infrastructure, including primary care;
- e) **'Europe closer to citizens by fostering the sustainable and integrated development of urban, rural and coastal areas and local initiatives'** ('PO 5') by:
  - (i) fostering the integrated social, economic and environmental development, cultural heritage and security in urban areas;
  - (ii) fostering the integrated social, economic and environmental local development, cultural heritage and security, including for rural and coastal areas also through community-led local development.

As proposed above, rural areas are present in the sub-items of objective (e). The boundary with the EAFRD will be clarified in the online update of this timetable.

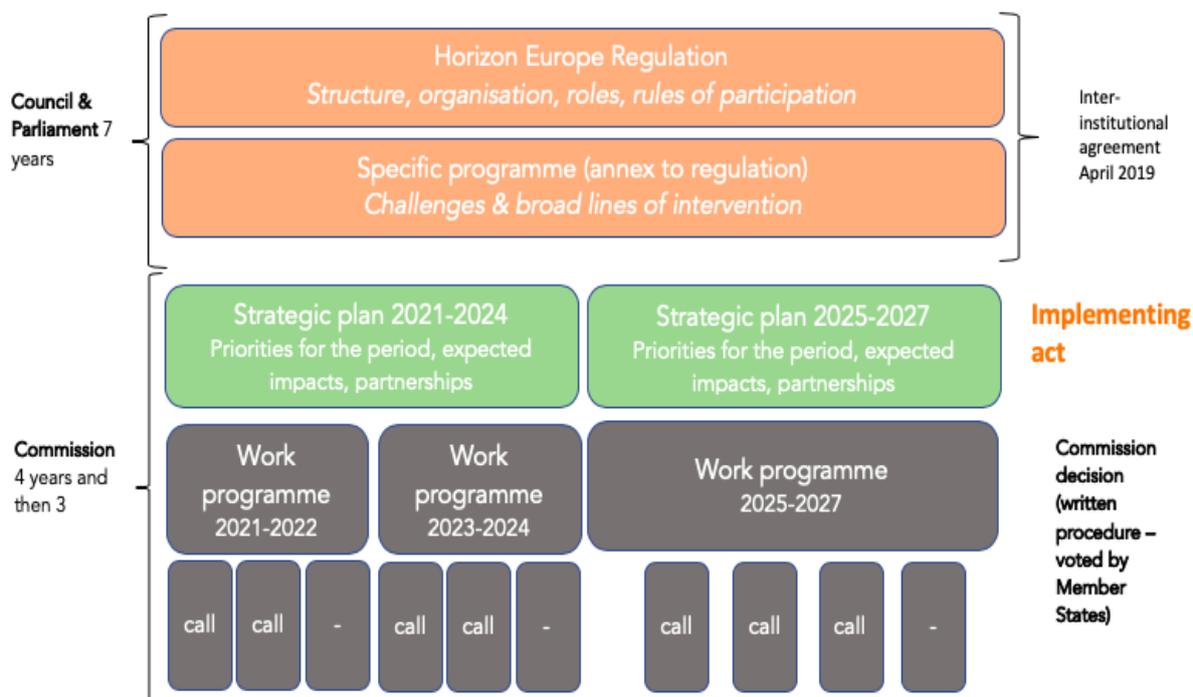
## 4. Horizon Europe

Horizon Europe is the new EU research and innovation policy framework, following Horizon 2020. According to the EC proposal for regulation COM 2018/735, the architecture of Horizon Europe, specific programmes covering challenges and broad lines of intervention are expected to be annexed to the regulation. Its overall architecture is shown in Figure 5.

A first strategic plan covering the 2021-2024 period will set the research and innovation priorities. Then the EC will draft bi-annual work programmes, the first one covering 2021-2022 (Figure 5).

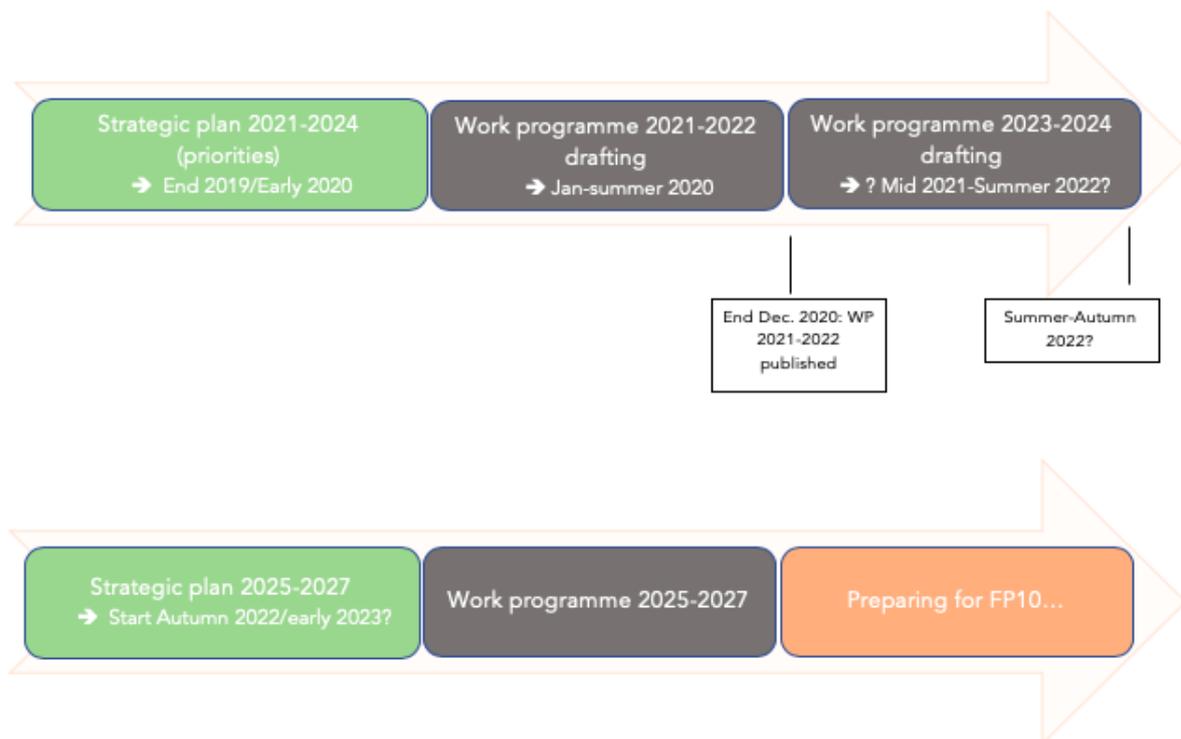


Figure 5: Architecture of Horizon Europe



As shown in the diagram below, the first Horizon Europe strategic plan is expected in early 2020. Then the first work programme 2020-2021 is expected during the first 2020 semester (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Timeline of Horizon Europe Work Programmes.



## 5. Opportunities for SHERPA MAPs to contribute to discussions on the new rural policy framework

### 5.1. Reminder of the EU policy cycle

Through the policy cycle as shown in Figure 7, there are stages where stakeholders and SHERPA MAPs can potentially interact and contribute to co-define the new EU rural policy framework.

Depending on its strategy and related activities, possible contributions of SHERPA MAPs to the rural-oriented policy cycle suppose:

- an alignment of the SHERPA MAP to the administrative layer (managing authority, i.e. either at national or at regional level);
- a policy-driven interest/focus of the SHERPA MAP to contribute to the co-construction of the new rural policy framework through a science-policy-society approach when the managing authority has expressed such an interest.

In some cases, the strategy of SHERPA MAPs will contribute to co-defining of the rural policy-driven agenda, and so to make specific contributions at points in the policy cycle. Such contributions can happen during the preparation of the assessment, SWOT, needs and impact assessment for the national CAP Strategic Plans (further details provided in Annex 3). In that respect, some MAPs may be directly invited by the national or regional authority at any stage to contribute to the formulation of inputs and proposals on needs and on policy interventions.

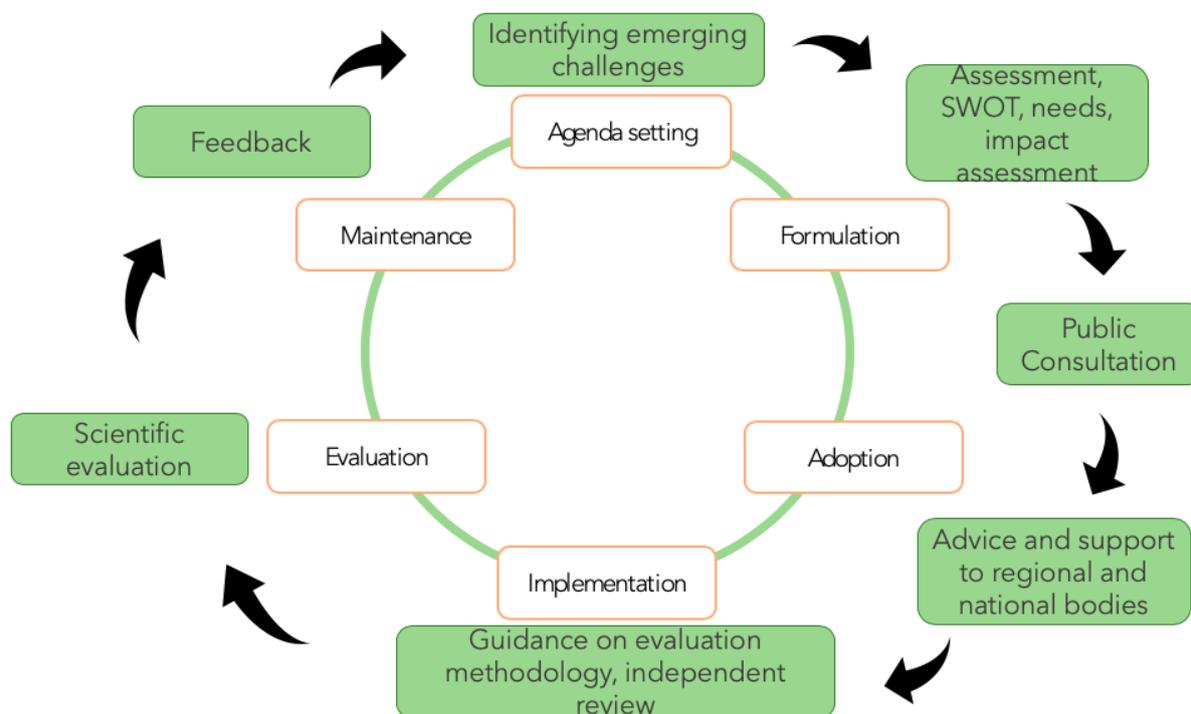
In the following stage 'Public consultation', Member States will organise a consultation on the SWOT and needs assessment for their CAP Strategic Plans. Although this is a very specific process related to the objectives of the next CAP, there is a clear opportunity for SHERPA MAPs to be involved in contributing to the SWOT analysis, and helping to establish the resulting needs through a written contribution on the rural dimensions of the national strategy, depending on the methodology and the ways the consultations are organised.

Once the SWOT and needs assessment have been prepared, Member States must design interventions and proposals for allocating their budget to meet those needs. There is scope for MAPs to be involved. For example, a MAP may possess expertise, based on research carried out by its members or disseminated through the SHERPA process, in designing interventions best suited to particular needs. MAP members may wish to study the emerging SWOT and needs assessments for their Member State to identify any such opportunities.

Designing the evaluation programme for the CAP Strategic Plan is an important task in which MAPs are likely to want to engage. At the subsequent stage, 'Advice and support to regional bodies', there is also a potential space for SHERPA MAPs to operate. Once the European Commission has validated Operation Programmes and CAP Strategic Plans, national and regional managing authorities may welcome innovative insights from the MAPs on the way to guide calls for proposals on rural dimensions of both the ERDF and EARDF.



Figure 7: Policy Cycle Process in EU Decision Making



## 5.2. How SHERPA MAPs can contribute to the new EU rural policy framework

In some case at national or regional level, the operational and territorial boundaries of SHERPA MAPs can match those of the managing authority (e.g. the ministry of agriculture and rural affairs, the regional Council). From 2020, the preparation of the EU rural policy framework at these levels is a tangible opportunity to improve the science-society-policy interface, so SHERPA MAPs can interact with managing authorities, discuss the needs of rural areas, and contribute to formulating policy recommendations.

As noted above, the timetable for the production of the **CAP Strategic Plans** is uncertain due to the willingness of co-legislators to extend the length of a transition period. Whilst a few Member States are known to have started their SWOT and needs analysis, it is by no means certain that the remaining plan stages will be completed by all Member States during 2020. The paragraphs below provide some suggestions for how MAPs which are able to participate in a SWOT and needs assessment may wish to focus their efforts.

If it is still possible to contribute to defining the needs in relation to the 9 specific CAP objectives (SO), MAPs are advised to focus on those relating to the rural dimensions, for example on SO 'Vibrant rural areas', and possibly those of SO 'Generation renewal' and SO 'Protect food and health quality'.

These 'rural' SOs might offer room for rural actors to engage in the policy discussions. This is a timely opportunity for SHERPA MAPs to contribute to rural policies through the CAP Strategic Plans.

On **Partnership Agreements and Operation Programmes**, there might be opportunity for MAPs established either at national or regional levels, to liaise and interact with managing authorities about the future direction of the objective E/PO 5 "a Europe closer to citizens by fostering the sustainable and integrated development of urban, rural and coastal areas and local initiatives' by fostering the integrated social, economic and environmental local development, cultural heritage and security, including for rural and coastal areas also through community-led local development".



Depending on the opportunities at national or regional level, SHERPA MAPs will have flexibility to articulate their activities with the EU calendar on the rural policy framework so they can:

- contribute to the public consultations to be organised by Member States on CAP Strategic Plans, especially on the objectives which are most specifically relating to rural area (i.e. “Vibrant rural areas”);
- liaise with managing authorities to know better the priorities, directions, and rural interventions under the ERDF and the cohesion fund (Objective E/PO 5);
- provide insights to managing authorities on needs, topics and issues (including successful and less successful interventions, and monitoring) for future EAFRD and ERDF calls for proposals related to rural areas.

There may be also opportunities for contributions from SHERPA **MAPs regarding the long-term vision for rural areas** to be prepared by the EC. However, the few details available are insufficient for identifying the forms such contributions could take in the coming months.



## Conclusion

This document will be updated once further information (for example on the content of the Farm to Fork Strategy, and the outcome of discussions on the regulations and the process for contributing to the Long-term vision for rural areas) becomes available during 2020 and in subsequent years. Such a follow-up will concentrate on CAP Strategic Plans, ESIF as well as the Horizon Europe Work Programmes that delimit and surround the rural landscape of SHERPA at the EU level.

The next update will also introduce a first feedback on knowledge gaps in the decision-making related to rural policy frameworks once clear information is received from MAPs and the official representations of Member States in the first semester of 2020.

The content of this deliverable will be used to create a specific section on the project website [www.rural-interfaces.eu](http://www.rural-interfaces.eu). The online version will include regular updates of the EU policy developments and a follow-up of Partnership Agreements, Operational Programmes (Cohesion and Regional policy) and the CAP Strategic Plans developed at Member State and managing authority levels.



## ANNEX 1: The European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF)

### European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)

Strengthening economic and social cohesion + address environmental issues - decreasing imbalances with a focus on sustainable urban development.

Naturally disadvantaged areas (remote, mountainous, sparsely populated) & outermost areas receive special treatment.

**Key investment areas:** innovation, small businesses, digital technologies & industrial modernization

**Fund management:** Partnership Agreement & Operational Plan

**Total budget 2014-2020:** €278 793 468 992

### Cohesion Fund

Aimed at MS with a Gross National Income (GNI) per inhabitant being less than 90% of the EU average.

**Areas of investment:** economic and social disparities, sustainable development

**Fund management:** Partnership Agreement & Operational Plan

**Budget 2014-2020:** €74 818 734 999

### European Social Fund (ESF)

Improving employment and education opportunities as well as improving the situation of the most vulnerable people at risk of poverty

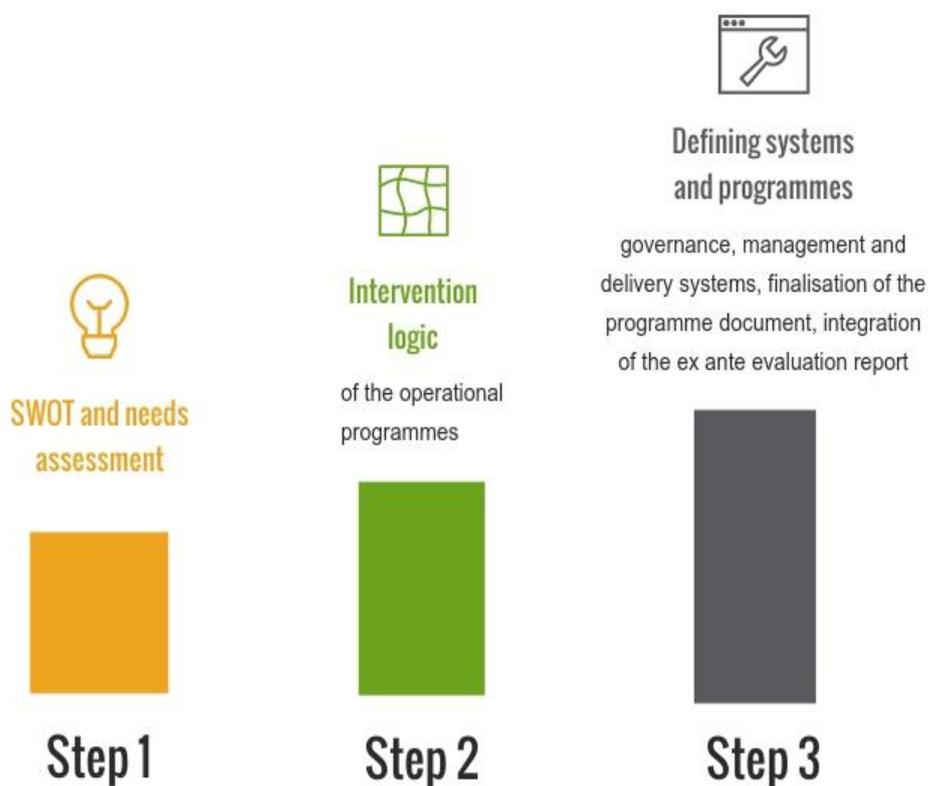
**Fund management:** Partnership Agreement & Operational Plan

**Budget 2014-2020:** €120 690 973 122



## ANNEX 2: The steps of the CAP policy design

# Three steps of CAP Strategic Plan Design



## ANNEX 3: SWOT, needs assessment of ex-ante conditionality

### Explained: SWOT and needs assessment

SWOT = Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

The strategy analysis tool can be used to study the strengths and weaknesses of an organization, geographical area or a sector. Internal and external factors are considered, to maximize strengths and opportunities and minimize threats and weaknesses.

	Positive aspect	Negative aspect
Internal factors	Strengths	Weaknesses
External factors	Opportunities	Threats

The SWOT analysis is the basis for the assessment of needs, which are in turn the basis for the intervention strategy.

### Explained: ex-ante conditionality

The Common Provisions Regulation defines ex-ante conditionality as follows:

*'applicable ex ante conditionality' means a concrete and precisely pre-defined critical factor, which is a prerequisite for and has a direct and genuine link to, and direct impact on, the effective and efficient achievement of a specific objective for an investment priority or a Union priority;*

Find details of thematic and general ex-ante conditionalities, including the thematic objectives, investment priorities, ex-ante conditionality and criteria for fulfilment, in Annex XI of the [Common Provisions Regulation 1303/3013](#).

For the programming period of 2014-2020, Member States are expected to cover the details in this 'checklist'. For example, Member States must ensure administrative capacity to implement European Union law and regulations related to gender, anti-discrimination and the environment.



## **Glossary**

CAP: Common Agricultural Policy

CLLD: Community-Led Local Development

EAFRD: European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development

EAGF: European Agricultural Guarantee Fund

ERDF: European Regional Development Fund

ESF: European Social Fund

ESIF: European Structural and Investment Funds

GNI: Gross National Income

MAP: Multi-Actor Platform

MFF: Multi-Financial Framework

MS: Member State

OP: Operational Programme

PA: Partnership Agreement

SO: Specific Objective

SP: Strategic Plan

SWOT: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats





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