



## SHERPA News



### SHERPA's long-term vision for rural areas

Currently the project is developing discussion papers and methodological guidelines for the Multi-Actor Platforms (MAPs) to engage into a dialogue regarding the topic of a long-term vision for rural areas. These will feed into a SHERPA Position Paper on the topic.

The European Commission's President, Ursula von der Leyen, had expressed her wish to develop an long-term vision for rural areas in the [mission letter](#) to EU Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Janusz Wojciechowski. SHERPA's contribution, through input from the Multi-Actor Platforms set up across Europe, can be significant in this important step for the EU.



### SHERPA Consortium meeting

The SHERPA Consortium meeting hosted online on 27 April 2020, provided updates on the progress on the work packages of the project. During the first 7 months of the project, more than 15 deliverables have been finalised, such as a [Framework for defining rural areas](#), [Methodology for the setting-up of MAPs](#) or the [Online stakeholder engagement tool](#).

On the MAPs side, these are looking to start discussions on the long-term vision for their rural areas up to 2040. Their input will be crucial for the development of the SHERPA Position Paper that can contribute to the ongoing work of the European Commission on the same topic. Read the full [Press Release](#).



### Defining rural areas in Europe

The definition of rural and rurality is a longstanding issue which has been the subject of debates in the scientific literature for a while. To date, rural was not properly defined through its own characteristics, features and patterns, but was rather defined as the opposite of urban. A literature review conducted within SHERPA, shows different types of EU strategies dealing with rural areas. These lead to an attempt to map out a definition for rural areas.

It is important to note that an EU long-term vision for rural areas should be based upon the overarching objective of well-being in

## MAPs in focus

### MAPs adapting to current situation

Real life interaction is the foundation for effective engagement through the Multi-Actor Platforms (MAPs), however the evolving situation of Covid-19 has greatly affected the process. No physical meetings are a serious drawback for the MAP development, and this has a greater impact on the newly established platforms. Even for those MAPs quite advanced in their development, the challenge is how ensure continuous commitment of their members. To add up to these challenges, some MAPs are finding it difficult to move their activities online as many operate or cover rural areas with less connectivity or knowledge to use digital tools.

Nevertheless, some lessons can be drawn from all these challenges. We need to slow down the process, use any available tool to engage smaller groups in the discussions, and this will provide the opportunity to involve all groups equally. MAP teams are definitely committed to find their way forward and achieve their objectives. Follow their activities online [#SHERPA2020](#).

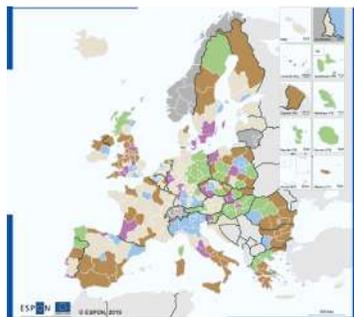
### Rural multi-actor platforms for sustainable engagement

One of the strengths of the Sustainable Hub to Engage in Rural Policies with Actors (SHERPA) is the inclusion of three societal actor groups in rural multi-actor platforms: science, society and policy.

Such science-society-policy interfaces are expressions of a changed understanding of governance in the 21st century. Throughout Europe and the world, there are numerous examples of different multi-actor platform constellations, topics and aims. This implies a real trend towards inclusive, community-based approaches to governance. These interfaces can contribute to, among others, strengthened resilience and economic competitiveness for rural areas. How can we ensure a sustainable engagement within SHERPA?

Read more on the [SHERPA blog](#) and access the [full document](#).

## EU News



### Europe's challenges call for more territorial cooperation

In a recent article, ESPON is calling for a shared vision for Europe to respond effectively to the current challenges. Europe's changing economic geography is accompanied by an increasing fragmentation of society and places. Based on the findings of the ESPON project, [European Territorial Reference Framework](#), and relevant studies, the [draft of the New Territorial Agenda](#) emphasised the quality of life as one of the fields where action is needed.

[Read more...](#)

### Towards a sustainable food system

An independent expert [report](#) by the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors, presents recommendations on how to achieve a sustainable food system for Europe. The document, published by the European Commission, draws evidence from social science on how to deliver an inclusive, fair and timely transition towards a sustainable food system in Europe. The document will inform the Commission's forthcoming Farm to Fork Strategy for Sustainable

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### Rural responses to Covid-19

As we see the world affected by the spread of Covid-19, it is important to highlight the way communities, and particularly, rural areas, are adapting in responding to the pandemic. Several organisations are centralising online examples of good practices from local responses. The [European Network for Rural Development](#) has published initiatives from rural areas. The association [Rurality-Environment-Development](#) is collecting and promoting inspiring initiatives from rural areas. [ESPON](#) is also collecting examples of local responses at regional, urban and rural levels. An interesting [blog post](#) by professors Bettina Bock and Jessica Duncan is exploring how Covid-19 is impacting rural-urban relations.

### Forums - Join the conversation

The [SmartAgriHubs](#) project has set-up a special Covid-19 task force to take action by addressing and finding solutions to issues raised by the current situation in the Agri-Food and ICT systems community. The network has opened a call for contributions and stakeholders to join their Challenge & Solution Canvas. Find more information [here](#).

The Horizon 2020 project, [DESIRA](#) is inviting all interested stakeholders and individuals to share their thoughts, ideas and potential digital solutions, on the [Rural Digitisation Forum](#).

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## EVENTS

[DESIRA webinar on Precision Farming: comparing experiences and perspectives for responsible innovation](#)

8 May 2020 | Online

[Swedish Rural Parliament](#) - Postponed to 23-25 April 2021

8-10 May 2020 | Jönköping, Sweden

[DESIRA General Assembly](#)

12-14 May 2020 | Online

[ENRD Steering Group meeting](#)

26 May 2020 | Brussels, Belgium

[ENRD Thematic Group meeting on Smart Villages](#)

2 June 2020 | Online

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24-25 September 2020 | Paris, France

[Finnish Rural Parliament - Postponed to 2021](#)

1-3 October 2020 | Kurikka, Finland

SHERPA Annual Conference - **Save the Date!**

1-2 December 2020 | Brussels, Belgium



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