SHERPA Meeting: December 2, 2021
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POLIRURAL

Contribution of POLIRURAL to
Development of Rural Regions...

Key questions...

- **How to link actor engagement to appropriate levels of policy-making?**
- **How to maximize influence and impact in feeding policy processes?**

POLIRURAL involves the application of FORESIGHT in 12 rural regions and provides a platform for experimentation with new techniques such as Text Mining (TM) and System Dynamic Modelling (SDM) applied to Foresight. A main concern was that to make sure that our "experimentation" does not jeopardize the basic Regional Foresight exercise and that each would have a significant impact on regional policy.

RESPONSE 1 to Key Questions: Provision of GUARD RAILS on PROCESS and CONTENT
to make sure that the FORESIGHT process does not reduce to a "report on a shelf"

Traditionally the Foresight method puts a lot of emphasis on the **SOCIAL PROCESS** of stakeholder engagement. It makes provision for consultation, the inclusion of communities that might otherwise be overlooked, as well as the co-design of solutions...

For effective stakeholder engagement, **INCLUSION** is not enough, the process **MUST** include
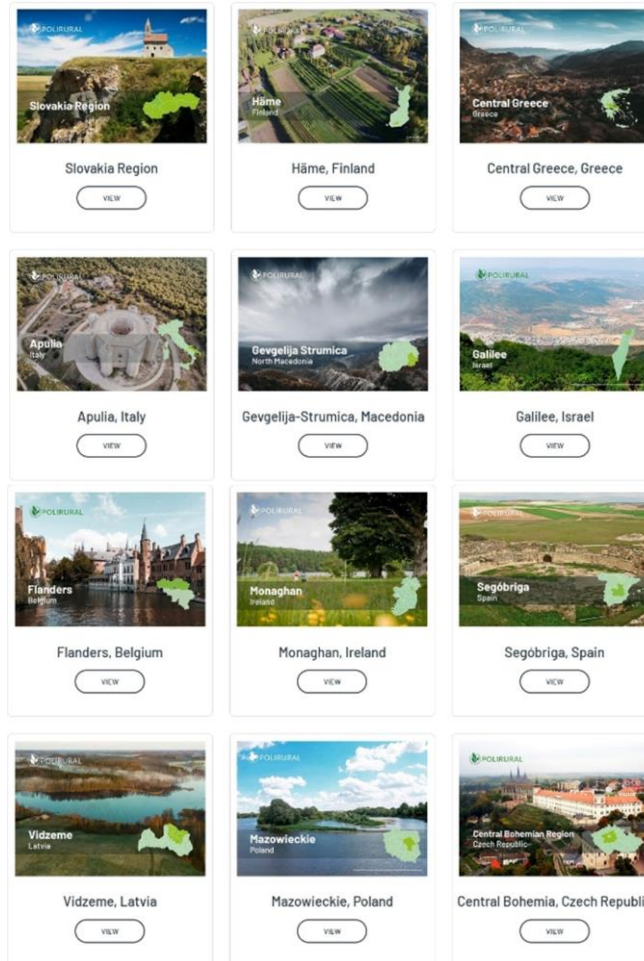- Both **BOTTOM-UP** and a **TOP-DOWN** dynamics
- Timely and adequate **CONTENT** to support both of these dynamics

The Foresight process **MUST** produce a standard "package" containing...
- **VISION**, and the challenges to be addressed to achieve that vision
- **ACTION PLAN,** the list of policy measures (a 'mix' of measures) to address those challenges
- **ROADMAP** describing the sequencing, funding and assignment of responsibility

It **MUST** also include a PROCESS to ensure...
- **ENDORSEMENT** of vision and action plan by BENEFICIARIES
- **ADOPTION** of the package by the ACTORS (public administration)
- Inclusion of monitoring and evaluation actions in the action plan and the appointment of **MONITORING COMMITTEE** as part of the adoption process

Slovakia Region — VIEW
Häme, Finland — VIEW
Central Greece, Greece — VIEW
Apulia, Italy — VIEW
Gevgelija-Strumica, Macedonia — VIEW
Galilee, Israel — VIEW
Flanders, Belgium — VIEW
Monaghan, Ireland — VIEW
Segóbriga, Spain — VIEW
Vidzeme, Latvia — VIEW
Mazowieckie, Poland — VIEW
Central Bohemia, Czech Republic — VIEW

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CHALLENGE: The need for timely CONTENT CURATION

The Coming WAVES of DISRUPTION
- **COVID:** Wave 1, 2, 3, 4... 5 ?
- **ECONOMIC RECESSION:** Food systems, energy, tourism, travel...
- **CLIMATE CHANGE:** Renewable energy, circular (bio)-economy,
- decarbonisation of farming, eco-system services, carbon sequestration...
- **BIODIVERSITY COLLAPSE:** Puts rural region at the centre of the sustainable economies, and highlights the need for new models of the economy based on SDGs, ESG, Natural Capital(s), accounting, the role of CDP, small farmers under pressure from large food companies to decarbonize their activities...

Most actors and beneficiaries are overwhelmed by the pace of recent change, mis-information, dis-information... The problem get worse with time, aided and abetted by social media. As a result, it is very easy to over-estimate what and how-much people actually know. Foresight team need to work with that reality, which applies equally to citizens and professionals working in public administration. The challenge has never been greater due to the fact that we live in an age of multiple and serial disruption... See UNILEVER's response to COVID in terms of its resilience strategy...

This is reflected in recent efforts by DG REGIO to support public administration with programs to provide technical assistance. The "City Facility" being one and the "Smart City Market Place" being another.

This need was emphasised by the EC and the EP during the recent "EU week of the Cities and Regions." In my view there is a need for more ostensible TA programs for rural regions, along these lines of the "City Facility" being one and the "Smart City Market Place."

RESPONSE 2 to Key Questions: The CURATION of timely content provided to the regional Foresight teams in the form of CRLs (curated reading lists) compiled into Inventories, guides and compendia...
- **INVENTORIES of:**
  - **Drivers of Change:** 64 CRLs based on the STEEPV mnemonic..
  - **Financing Mechanisms:** 40+ mechanisms for financing rural development...
  - **Policy Options:** About 100 examples of initiatives tried elsewhere...
- **GUIDES to DEEP DIVES:**
  - **Impact of COVID:** Accelerated trends, WFH, rural broadband, e-commerce ...
  - **CAP Reform:** Focus on improving farm incomes, diversifying rural economies...
  - **Green Deal:** Focus on energy and climate measures, renovation, electrical vehicles...
  - **Biodiversity Strategy:** New economic models based on natural capital accounting ...
- **COMPENDIA:** A compendium of POLIRURAL regional Foresight experiences...

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CHALLENGE: MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES

GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES posed by CAP REFORM...

A large part of CAP strategy is to be decided by member states. The EU interfaces with central governments, but the action happens at regional level. Who coordinates and how?

A good case study is one small country where the central government announces ambitious goals for the climate including ambitious cuts to emissions from the farming sector, and raises the spectre of a significant reduction to the national beef and dairy herd, while key institutions announce that they will help the dairy sector double its output , many farmers want to be part of the carbon economy and see this as an opportunity, while large food companies demand that farmers reduce their carbon footprint, and almost nothing is done to measure the overall carbon footprint of individual farms ...

The other CAP calling is that the budget for CAP measures not longer comes from the EU, but is hared between the EC, the member state and regional governments. How will this be decided and coordinated?

GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES posed by the GREEN DEAL

The NRRPs (National Recovery and Resilience Plans) are formulated by the central governments, with limited consultation (if any) with regions, cities and sectors. But 90% of the money must be spent by cities and regions. The NRRP itself is only about one third of the overall budget needed so where will the rest of the money come from? Who will raise it, who will spend it and what role will regions play in making those decisions.

Recent events and the overall trends in policy practise and EU, member state and regional level have created a number of hard **GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES...**

RESPONSE 3 to Key Questions: More **EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT** with **ACTORS**, primarily at regional level, but with line-of sight to national and EU level...

In **STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**, we consider only two categories of stakeholder:
- **BENEFICIARIES**, made up of many and diverse groups which directly or indirectly contribute to the regional economy, whose growth and prosperity requires the complicity and assistance of the public sector when it formulates laws, policies and programs and when it establishes financial plans to achieve their policy outcomes and impacts...
- **ACTORS**, the various government departments and agencies at local and regional level that are responsible for local and regional policy formation, financing and execution, that are consulted on national and EU policies, and that have influence at higher levels of governance...

The response of the project has been in terms of...
- **DEVELOPING SITUATIONAL AWARENESS**: Helping teams understand that an a Action Plan is not a list of LEADER projects, that it contains wide range of big and small measures for feasibility, research and data gathering, pilot projects, measures for evaluation and monitoring, scale-up projects and FUND RAISING projects based on TA... The use of the Guides...
- **PROCESS:** Emphasising the need for early engagement with actors, understanding and working within their constraints, evolving from a bottom-up discovery process to top-down implementation, working towards "**endorsement**" of the vision and action plan by the beneficiaries, and "**adoption**" of the package including the **ROADMAP** by the actors...
- **CONTENT:** In particular the INVENTORIES of "**FINANCING mechanisms**" and "**policy OPTIONS**"

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