

Contribution to the EC Public Consultation on Brain Drain

20 June 2022

[SHERPA](#) (Sustainable Hub for Engaging into Policy with Rural Actors) is a 4-year long project funded through Horizon 2020, launched in 2019. Throughout the project lifespan, several Multi-Actor Platforms have been established across Europe who are providing direct evidence and feedback to the formulation of recommendations for future rural policies. In this context, several Multi-Actor Platforms have outlined the challenges posed on the rural territories by depopulation, ageing and the loss of workforce. Some of them have identified specific recommendations on how to reverse the trend and revitalise rural areas by keeping or attracting people.

Northern Europe

For Finland and Denmark, the focus is put on educating and preparing the individuals to take on the challenges and think of sustainable solutions. Both vocational and high-education is the centre of attention.

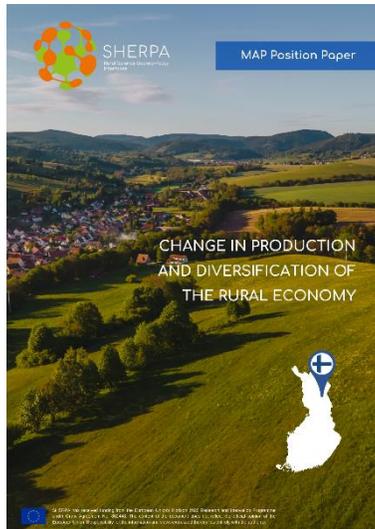
In order to attract skilled labour, Finland must find ways to secure secondary education for young people in rural areas. Some examples of actions are: use of various teaching options supported by digitalisation: blended teaching (i.e. combining both off and online teaching) or distance learning solutions; foster cooperation between schools, training centres and companies/organisations; Share good practice in training cooperation suitable for rural enterprises; support work-based learning by strengthening the resources, skills and approaches to guidance for both teachers and workplace representatives; tailor training to the specific needs of rural areas, alongside a smooth and functioning labour migration to meet work-force needs.

Similarly, Denmark is also putting its effort in decentralising the education offer which has been organised around the main four big cities and thus catering to the needs of the cities mostly. The new legislation passed in June 2021 aims to spread educational opportunities throughout the country as a way to accommodate young people who have neither the interest nor the resources to move to a major city. By establishing educational institutions outside of the four main cities will provide these young people with the opportunity to get an education closer to where they are from and thus remain in the area while fulfilling also the labour demand.

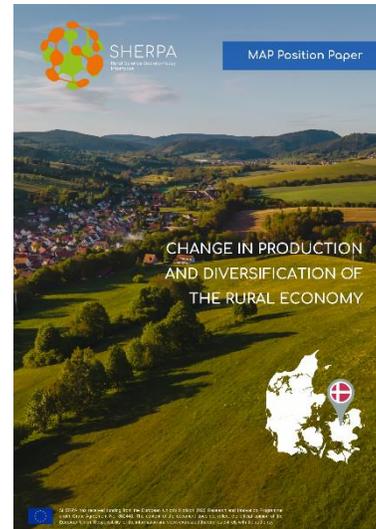
A recent Vocational Training study shows that: (1) if rural areas want to secure skilled labour, they must make sure there are apprenticeships locally, as young people from rural areas tend not to relocate from the area where they received their training, and (2) rural areas are not all the same. Rural municipalities do a good job of retaining young skilled workers; while outlying municipalities see their skilled labourers relocate, probably due to a lack of educational opportunities or apprenticeships locally (Hedetoft, Topsø Larsen & Thomas 2020).



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[Multi-Actor Platform in Finland](#)



[Multi-Actor Platform in Denmark](#)

Southern Europe

The regional Multi-Actor Platforms of Portugal and Spain outline the difficulties of labour shortage in their areas and put forward a few recommendations.

In the Centro region of Portugal, immigrants are a source of labour that can meet the demand. However, there is a need for a specific regional policy to attract them to the area. The policy should include specific measures and programmes to support both the municipalities in rolling out strategies to attract immigrants, and the regional government to establish a good coordination among competent authorities to foster integration within the local communities while matching their skills and knowledge to the labour shortages.

The region of Aragon in Spain addresses the lack of qualified workforce and professional training that is not adapted to the rural needs of the area through policy instruments. At the regional level, the government is working on legislation to prioritise family farming and specifically to facilitate access to land for new entrants, renewing the farming population. Two target groups have been identified to counter the trend of depopulation: women and youth. In this respect, regional authorities manage programmes offering economic support aimed at countering the depopulation of rural areas by supporting the generation of employment, in particular for women, and by supporting rural entrepreneurs financially. For attracting and maintaining young people in rural areas, investments are needed to increase and diversify the cultural offer.

National government is equally working on legislation to target specific needs of rural areas. It has designed a Plan of Measures for the Demographic Challenge with more than 10 000 million and 130 active policies to fight against depopulation and guarantee territorial and social cohesion.



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[Multi-Actor Platform in Centro region of Portugal](#)



[Multi-Actor Platform in Aragón region of Spain](#)

Eastern Europe

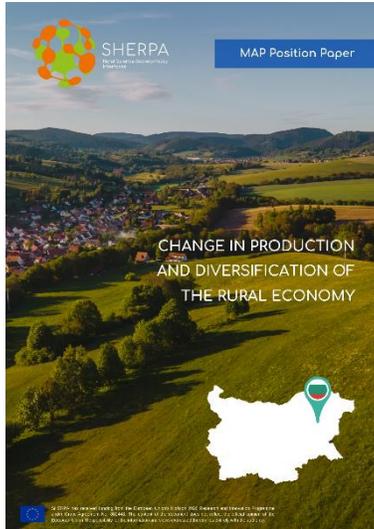
The experience of the Bulgarian and Polish Multi-Actor Platforms highlights the needs for support and training, specifically linked to the prime economic activities of rural areas.

In Bulgaria, agriculture is the most important sector in rural areas, making up for 4% of the GDP and employing 18% of the country's population. However, as the digital technologies, precision farming and bioeconomy will be driving the rural economy in the coming decades, the sector needs an upgrade, which requires an investment in upskilling population and attracting highly knowledgeable people to rural areas to fulfil the emerging jobs.

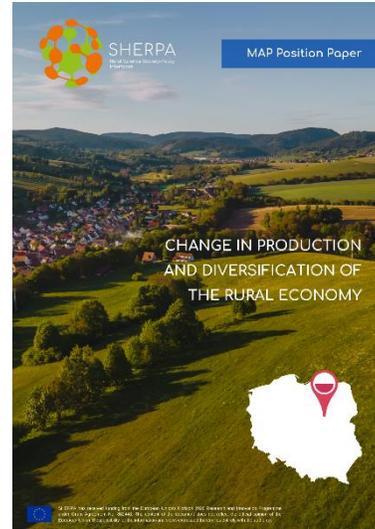
Recent statistics of in Poland show that 44% of total unemployed lived in the rural areas of Mazowieckie region. The forecasted changes in the labour market in Mazowieckie show that in the coming years the demand for well-qualified experts will significantly increase in the region, while for farmers and less qualified workers the demand will decrease. In this respect, financial support and training will be needed to boost entrepreneurship and development of innovative solutions. Upskilling and reskilling programmes could be rolled out, to be designed and implemented in line with market needs and the green transition pathway.



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Multi-Actor Platform in Bulgaria



Multi-Actor Platform in Mazowieckie region of Poland

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