



SHERPA  
Rural Science-Society-Policy  
Interfaces

## GOVERNANCE IN RURAL AREAS



### MAP SUOMI, FINLAND

MAP Suomi Finland operates at the national level and includes civil society groups, NGOs, rural and agricultural organisations, research institutes, local and central government.

Finland is among the most rural countries in the EU (95% of its land area is classified as rural). A generally well-integrated system of governance has been created at the national, regional, and local policy level. Finland has developed a "broad rural policy" that acknowledges rural areas' needs in all spheres of national policy-making and a "narrow rural policy" encompassing practical development tools (e.g. LEADER groups).



### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Future rural policy

- Encourage policymakers and decision-makers to establish a holistic and cross-sectoral understanding of rural areas.
- Overcome sector silos, and integrate place-basedness and rural proofing (including rural proofing indicators) into policies at all levels.
- The EU could stimulate better coordination of policies, place-basedness and rural proofing.
- The EU could fund rural attractiveness and well-being projects and increase LEADER and Community-Led Local Development funding.

#### Future rural research

- Research the consistency and validity of policies from the rural perspective.
- Set up a responsible actor to gather, store, maintain, and share knowledge resources on rural development.
- Ensure sufficient funding for research on rural areas and free access to data on rural policies.
- Explore the impact of current governance on whether it is generating its goals.
- Territorial typologies need to take into account local specificities, especially when used in funding decisions.

## KEY STRENGTHS

- Long traditions of rural policy in Finland have resulted in well-established institutional structures.
- Well-functioning coordination and interaction between key national, regional, and local actors.
- Citizens and other stakeholders are enabled to participate.
- Network-based working methods and an open and mutually respectful dialogue between rural actors are foundational.
- Genuine efforts to knowledge-based decision making. Knowledge, data, and methods such as impact assessments are utilised to target policy measures and new tools and indicators are developed.

## KEY NEEDS

- Bolster the capacity of civil society and the structures on which different organisations operate.
- Strengthen cooperation between organisations, the public, and private sectors.
- Keep improving the different roles and address the siloes of the central government and different ministries.
- Integrate a rural lens in different sectors, and solidify linkages between rural and urban policy, including strengthening urban-rural interaction.
- Support and increase the coherence of research on rural areas.
- Utilise tools, instruments and data to support place-based policies.
- Address fragmentation of and access to data which keeps knowledge bases up to date.



## EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE

### LEADER in Finland

All rural regions are part of LEADER groups, which became the main instrument of rural development funding since Finland joined the EU. The 53 LEADER groups are successful examples of place-based and inclusive programme development, with a democratic selection process & two phases of evaluation and feedback loops. Co-learning and co-creation, feedback workshops and transparent evaluation criteria make it relevant to the local needs (e.g. participation of young people).

