

Rural Pact Coordination Group Declaration: *Turning Words into Action – or Just Another Rural Wishlist that Will Be Left Behind?*

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Smart Village Network Services, 28 May 2025



Framing of today's session

- We are representing the **Smart Village Network Services (E4o Europe)** that is also member of the RPCG
- We all care about how future rural development policies are shaped – especially making the voices of **rural communities** heard
- We would like to share information on the RPCG Declaration: **presentation**
- We would like to critically reflect on where we are in policymaking and what we can achieve for a better rural development policy: **perspectives & discussion**
- We would like to **plan next steps** with you



Did you know
about the
Declaration
before?



5

Did you know about the Declaration before receiving this email?

24 out of 24 people answered this question

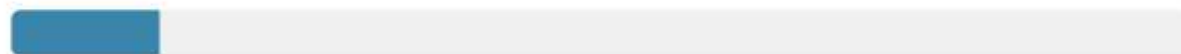
Yes

21 resp. 87.5%



No

3 resp. 12.5%



Have you read
it?



Have you already read the Declaration?

24 out of 24 people answered this question

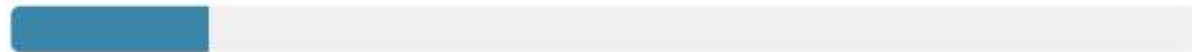
Yes

20 resp. 83.3%



No

4 resp. 16.7%



Agree with
statements?



Do you overall agree with the statements in the RPCG Declaration?

20 out of 24 people answered this question

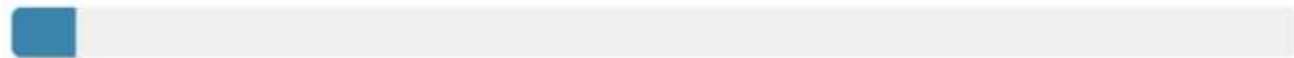
Yes fully

19 resp. 95%



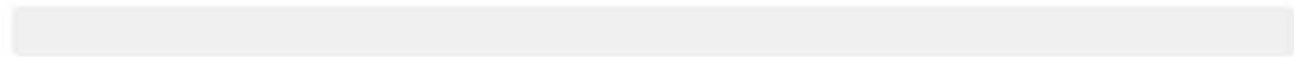
Only partly

1 resp. 5%



Not really

0 resp. 0%



The Rural Pact Coordination Group



- Established by the European Commission (2022) as a special group to further develop the Rural Pact and steer its process
- **Members:** European non-governmental organisations (*inc. the Smart Village Network Services*), civil society organisations, business organisations and public authority organisations, representatives of academia and research, ERP (ELARD, ERCA, PREPARE), European Parliament/ MEPs, CoR, EESC, Trio of EU presidencies
- **Request by the Commission** to develop a Declaration in response to the 9 questions of the LTVRA Report

Strong participatory process to develop the Declaration within the RPCG



- Starting in the Summer of 2024.
- Developing draft Declaration based on members' inputs (Oct 2024) - survey on questions in the LTVRA
- Discussing draft declaration with members: two rounds of discussions & refinements (Nov 2024) – 76% of members participated in the consultation (either in person or writing)
- Adoption of the Declaration: 12 Dec 2024

Structure of the Declaration



Preamble

1. The future of rural areas is a concern of our whole society
2. Rural challenges need urgent responses
3. The future rural development policy must take the needs of rural areas more seriously
4. Turning the long-term rural vision into a concrete strategy and realising the Rural Pact model
5. Building local capacity and creating local ownership
6. Improving monitoring of EU spending on rural areas

The current situation

- Rural areas are not just places of challenges but also **places of opportunities**.
- The future of rural areas is not just the concern of rural people but our **whole society**.
- Rural areas and communities face **capacity constraints** and lack of access to funds.
- **CLLD approaches are underfunded** and not used to their full potential.
- Future rural development policy **must take the needs of rural areas seriously**.



Smart Villages within CLLD

- **CLLD** within the CAP now includes both LEADER (micro-regional level) and Smart Villages (local community level)
- **Innovation is place-based** (RP Webinar on Rural Innovation)
- **Local communities** need to take the lead
- *"Smart Villages aim to strengthen the resilience of rural communities by fostering technological and social innovation at the local rural community level, following the CLLD principles."* (RPCG Declaration)

Implications for future policy



- Reinforce multi-policy and multi-funding support, including rural proofing
- Interest-representation of rural communities need to be strengthened (*"We don't have tractors."*)
- Mandate MSs to allocate a compulsory minimum share of funds to rural development of all funds - 30%
- Reinforce LEADER/ CLLD and Smart Villages – make a higher minimum allocation (at least 10% of funds)
- (Alternatively) consider a dedicated rural development programme & fund (European Rural Development Fund – ERUDF).
- Flexibility for Member States on design/ priorities.

Implementation



- Rural Development Strategies at all levels
- **The Rural Pact implementation model** (RPSO: 'Making the Rural Pact Happen'): coordination, designated government members on RP, compulsory inter-ministerial coordination groups for rural proofing – as **conditions** for accessing RD funds
- Capacity building for MAs in rural development and rural proofing

Build capacity at the local level



- Strengthen capacity at the local level through **dedicated funding** and technical support
- Allow **flexibility** in the application processes for local beneficiaries (SCOs, etc.)
- Provide **seed funding** for the preparation and idea development
- Support in **innovation & international exchange**

Improve monitoring

- Monitor spending according to sectors and types of territory
- Better understanding on how far money goes to rural areas is the basis of further improvements



Next on the agenda:

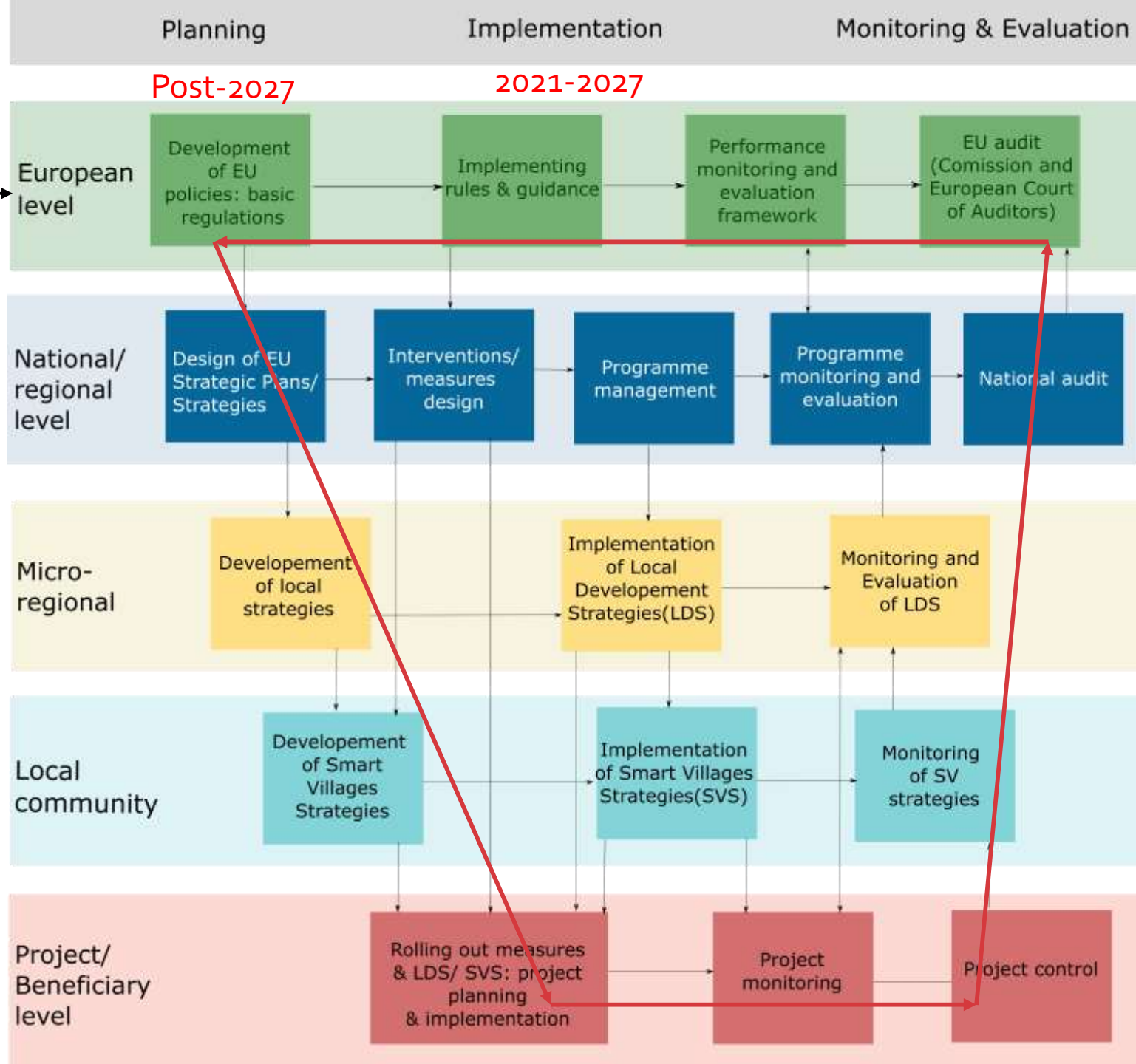
- Perspectives
- Exercise
- Discussion

PERSPECTIVES

- Hannes Lorenzen (Advisor, Forum Synergies, ARC2020)
- Ben van Essen (ERCA, NL Rural Pact)

When, where
and how to
influence the
policy cycle

Draft EU
policies & MFF
proposals



Usefulness of 'declarations'

✓ 11

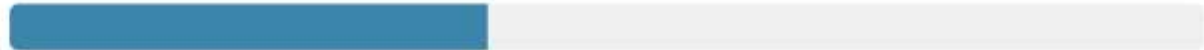
Do you think that Declarations – like that of the RPCG – can be useful in influencing policy?

20 out of 24 people answered this question

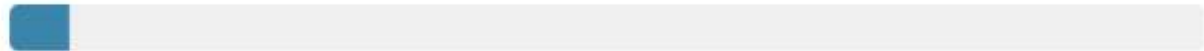
Yes 11 resp. 55%



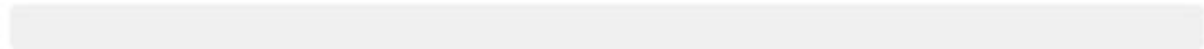
Likely 8 resp. 40%



Not really 1 resp. 5%



No 0 resp. 0%



How far it's
already been
used?



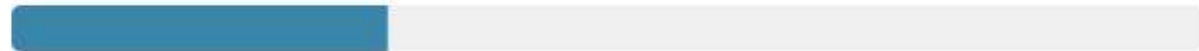
Have you or your organisation already used the RPCG Declaration to influence future rural development actions or policies?

19 out of 24 people answered this question

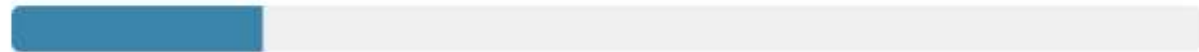
No, we have not used the Declaration 9 resp. 47.4%



No, we have not used the Declaration but carried out other 'advocacy' actions to promote similar policy changes 6 resp. 31.6%



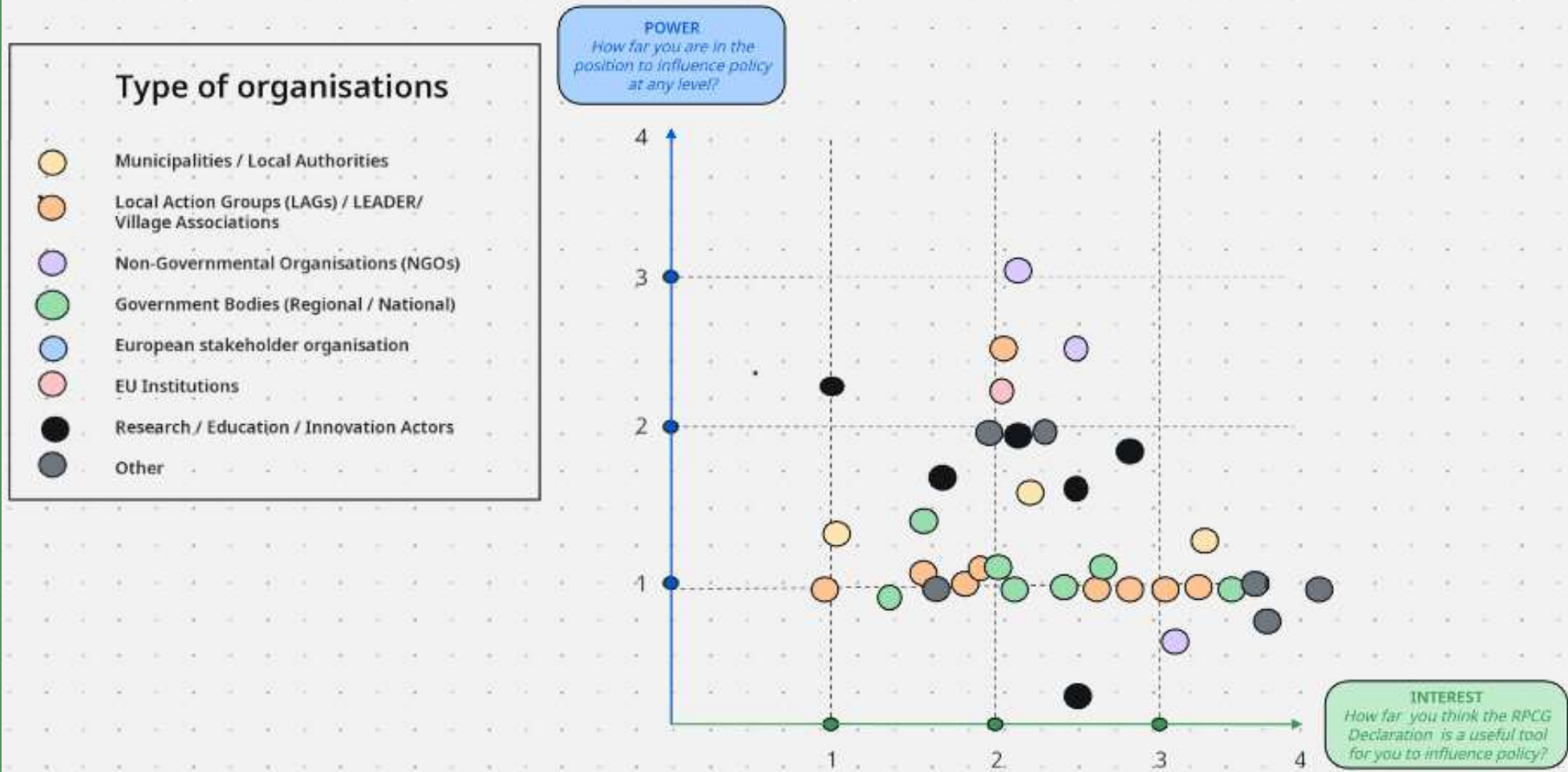
Yes, we used the Declaration 4 resp. 21.1%



Exercise

1. **INTEREST:** How far you think the RPCG Declaration is a useful tool for you to influence policy? (Not really – > Very much so)
2. **POWER:** How far you are in the position to influence policy at any levels (EU, national, regional, local)? (No influence -> Strong Influence)

Outcomes



Next steps

Feedback at RPCG meeting

- Meeting on 4th of June 2025 – dedicated session
- We will transfer messages from this session

“Fact check” event series

- How we demonstrate, communicate and discuss the relevance of the “basics”?
- Basic questions answered through simple statistics



Session 1

The role of agriculture & other rural issues in rural development

- What do you think the share of those working in 'agriculture, forestry and fishing' in predominantly rural regions in the EU is?

Process of “factcheck events”

Framework:

- Set a simple question

Preparation:

- Simple answer based on data (ref. Rural Observatory)
- Do you have other data?

Session:

Discussion on the interpretation & implications of data

What's next?

- **Common goal: To improve post-2027 EU financial framework and policies**
- **Promoting** these ideas at all levels (RPCG members and beyond): regional, national and EU
- RPCG Chair and Vice-Chair: trying to arrange a **series of discussions at the EU level** (DGs, EP, etc.)
- **How to jointly amplify rural voices** if “we don’t have the tractors”? – Interest representation of rural areas is weak compared to other interests
- **Speaking with ‘one voice’**: too many declarations/petitions, etc. might divide our efforts?



The Smart Village Network

- At the Smart Village Network we aim to **support exchanges and mutual learning** among rural communities and to amplify the voices of rural communities in policymaking.
- SVNS member of the Rural Pact (Coordination Group).

info@smart-village-network.eu

Source to RPCG Declaration: https://ruralpact.rural-vision.europa.eu/publications/rural-pact-coordination-group-rpcg-declaration-future-rural-areas-and-rural_en

