



Stronger

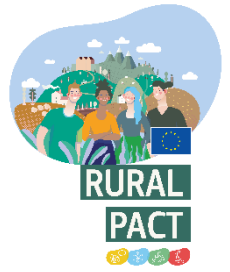


Connected



Prosperous

Rural Move: attracting people and building communities in rural Portugal



SUMMARY

Rural Move is a community of change-makers in Portugal created to dynamise rural territories and support individuals interested in living, working or investing there. Its approach involves a **digital and collaborative tool acting as a bridge** between those wishing to move and potential new local communities to accommodate them. Rural Move provides advice and motivation for both the movers and the rural communities. The initiative organises matching events, supports movers by enabling peer-to-peer assistance, offers capacity building, monitors movers' experiences, conducts interviews to assess the process, and advocates for sustainable rural development through opinion papers and events.



CONTEXT

Portuguese rural areas face the challenge of scarce job opportunities, which prompts an exodus of youth to urban hubs, exacerbating population decline and brain drain.

Additionally, inadequate access to vital services such as healthcare, education and public transport hampers the overall well-being and development of these regions. A communication gap between local authorities and rural residents leads to a lack of inclusivity and citizen involvement in decision-making processes.

Rural Move strives to address these systemic issues and foster vibrant, resilient rural communities through a multifaceted approach.



OBJECTIVES

- > Attract workers, companies, entrepreneurs and investors to rural and low-density territories;
- > Promote population retention and settlement in these territories;
- > Promote education and training of the rural population in areas such as innovation, entrepreneurship and digitalisation;
- > Raise awareness of issues related to investment in and repopulation of rural territories;
- > Promote cooperation and solidarity between local communities and stakeholders and potential visitors and residents of rural territories.

Ultimately, the goal is to boost the regeneration of Portuguese rural territories and provide more opportunities to their communities to live in dynamic rural areas.

Theme(s): Demography; Housing; Digital technologies; Entrepreneurship

Country: Portugal

Organisation: Rural Move

Start&end date: 01/2020 – ongoing

Budget: EUR 50 000

Funding sources:

- European Social Fund
- Local public funding
- Private funding

Website: www.ruralmove.org

Contact: João Almeida, Coordinator:
info@ruralmove.org





ACTIVITIES, KEY ACTORS, AND TIMELINE

The initiative has gone through different phases of development:

- > **Rural Move online platform promoting rural territories** set up in 2020 to gather information and news about rural locations, allowing movers to quickly access details about accommodation, coworking spaces, job opportunities and cultural events. The platform enables movers to engage in chat conversations with locals for further information.
- > Set-up of a **network of volunteers willing to provide support** to people wishing to move to their rural area. The network organises **matching events**, experiences in rural areas (mainly for remote workers), **local capacity building**, events and meet-ups in rural areas. Additionally, it conducts focus groups and interviews with rural movers and local communities to engage them in the process.
- > Strengthening of the network since 2023 and creation of links with local leaders to **share good practices and work on common projects**.
- > Kick-off of 1-year pilot project in January 2024 – [Rural Leaders' Academy](#) – to promote training and capacity-building opportunities for local people, community managers and rural movers in five rural municipalities.



RESULTS

By early 2024, Rural Move had become **active in over 30 local municipalities**, achieving:

- > a dedicated team of over 50 volunteers and local ambassadors;
- > collaboration through a network of more than 25 local, regional, national and international partners;
- > registration of over 700 users to the online platform, a virtual hub for those seeking information and opportunities in rural areas;
- > assistance to over 250 individuals in their journeys to relocate to rural locales;
- > organisation of more than 20 events, meet-ups and training courses, fostering empowerment and collaboration within rural communities;
- > contribution to the preparation and submission of numerous social innovation projects on local, national and international levels. These project proposals tackle critical issues such as youth unemployment, the digital divide, cultural heritage preservation and remote work in rural areas.

The project's dedication to social innovation has received **recognition in several competitions**, such as:

- > the Social Innovation Village 2023 event promoted by the Portuguese Social Innovation Fund ([Portugal Inovação Social](#)), where the initiative was a finalist;
- > [Banco Montepio Acredita](#), Portugal's acceleration programme, where it reached the semi-final;
- > a nomination for the [Rise For Impact](#) bootcamp promoted by the Social Innovation Incubator (Casa do Impacto); and
- > the [CEI-IIT 2021](#) award for 'Innovative Project in Low-Density Territories', conferred by the Centre for Iberian Studies.



SUCCESS FACTORS/LESSONS LEARNT

The idea for Rural Move was inspired by a broader view on rural areas, beyond agriculture, which helped to uncover opportunities to promote social and economic development of these areas, including remote working, green and social economies, and new perceptions about rural life.

The action framework was crucial for the success of the idea, thanks to the creation of a non-profit organisation that does not substitute local organisations, but rather serves as a dynamic hub to promote networking and capacity building between them.

As Rural Move evolves, it develops expertise in improving collaboration and reaching more municipalities through a dedicated team working directly with local actors. It strives to strike the delicate balance of creating projects from the ground up, despite uncertainties about funding and long-term strategy, which are overcome thanks to the combined efforts, strong motivation and shared vision of all parties involved.

