

**Interreg
Europe**



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Down to Earth



Tackling **depopulation** challenges to improve **environmental resilience** in rural areas

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Environmental risks, depopulation & ageing

Depopulation & ageing lead to **abandoned of agricultural land**, with direct environmental consequences:

- Rural areas become more susceptible to...
 - environmental degradation and lost of biodiversity
 - soil erosión
 - degradation of tradicional lanscapes

All these make rural areas particulary **exposed to natural disasters**, aggravated by climate change



Wildfires



Biodiversity loss



Weather changes



Landslides



Sea level rising



Soil degradation



Drought



Floodings



Heatwaves

Contribution Interreg “Down to Earth”

Overall Objective

Improve policy instruments 6 regions, identifying and promoting solutions **manage natural capital** to reduce the Risk & Impact environmental disasters, **while we identify economic & social opportunities** to attract population

How are we going to achieve our objective?

Facilitating exchange of Best Practices among regions, all of them facing similar challenges, to enhance their institutional capacities to design and manage regional development policies with reinforced effectiveness.

Three main topics covered by DOWN TO EARTH

- Environmental risks related with depopulation and aging population in rural areas (2023)
- Access barriers to young farmers in depopulated rural areas (2024)
- Policy instruments foster role farmers - land managers fighting environmental risks (2025)

In year 1

Over
100
proposals

12
Good
practices

Our key recommendations

- ✓ **Basic services** in rural areas require coordinated strategic planning – not always a given!
 - Public participation more demanded
 - Services adapted to rural areas
- ✓ Encourage new initiatives linked to **primary productive sectors** – crucial for sustainable territorial management
 - But other approaches needed add: renewable energy, energy efficiency, carbon capture, eco-production
- ✓ **Multifunctionality** “key word” both for environmental and economic purposes



Our key recommendations

- ✓ **Ecosystem services** provided by nature need to be considered in the decision-making process
- ✓ **Cultural and leisure initiatives** should be considered
 - Contribute to strengthening of rural communities
- ✓ **Training and knowledge transfer** are crucial for more efficient public policies (farmers, New entrants, etc.)



Where to look further... ?



• **Technology**

- Opportunity to develop solutions (e.g. precision farming)



• **Entrepreneurship and youth**

- Interesting for effective territorial management and attract population



• **Urban-rural links**

- Potential synergies should be explored



• **Population flows and integration of migrants**

- A way to address demographic challenges

Thank you!

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