



**EUROPEAN[®]
RURAL YOUTH
OBSERVATORY**

Generational renewal and business continuity in rural economies trends and opportunities

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The European Rural Youth Observatory (EURYO) is a research-oriented association led by researchers and composed of scholars, third sector representatives, public services providers, youth workers, and rural young people across Europe committed to move rural youth forward through multistakeholders cooperation and knowledge development.

www.euryo.org

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MISSION

EURYO is committed to move rural youth forward through multistakeholders cooperation and knowledge development.

GOALS

- To establish and support a network of relevant **multi-stakeholder representation of different countries** engaged in rural youth issues.
- To **foster knowledge, skills, and best practice exchange** to integrate scientific and technical advances in the area.
- To represent an **open-access synthesizer to store and share several sources of information** concerning rural European rural young people.
- To **inform multiple stakeholders (policy-makers at all levels, NGOs, youth workers) as well as decision-making and practices** based on the most up-to-date scientific knowledge.



**The right to stay, the right to move:
Young people's views on the future
of im/mobility in rural areas**

Frida Jonsson
Adriano M. Ellena
Fatma Handan Giray
Marta Rodrigues
Emre Erdogan
Pinar Uyan Semerci
Elena Marta
Isabel Roque
Maria Fernandes-Jesus

September 2025

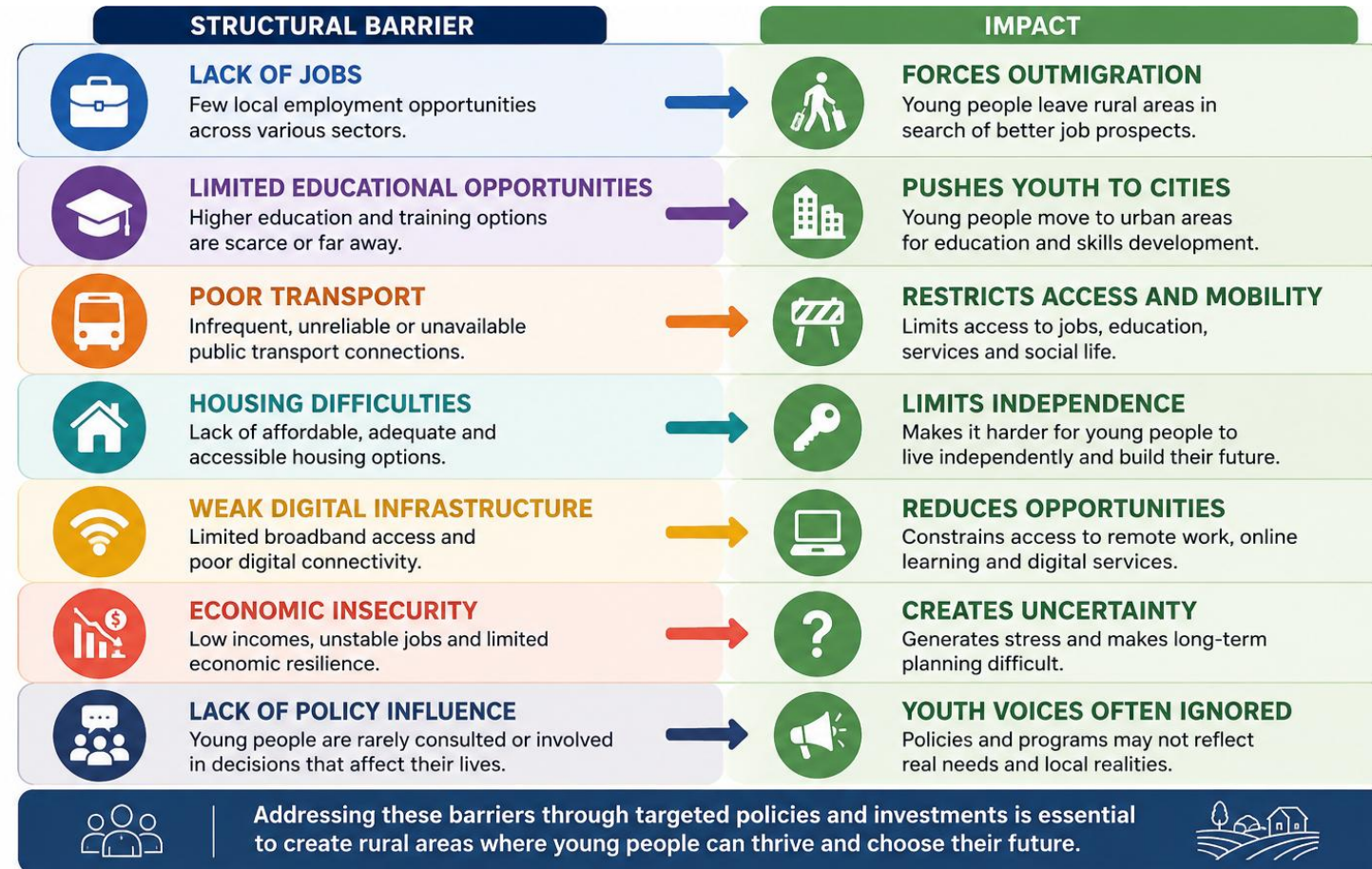
Im/mobility as a dynamic process rather than static states

Young people see mobility as a **continuum**:

- ✓ Leaving to study, work, or gain experience.
- ✓ Maintaining connections with their communities.
- ✓ Returning later with new knowledge, skills, and resources.
- ✓ Having the freedom to move back and forth throughout life.

STRUCTURAL BARRIERS FACED BY RURAL YOUTH

Key challenges limiting opportunities and shaping the decision to stay, leave or return



Young people want the freedom to choose where and when they live.

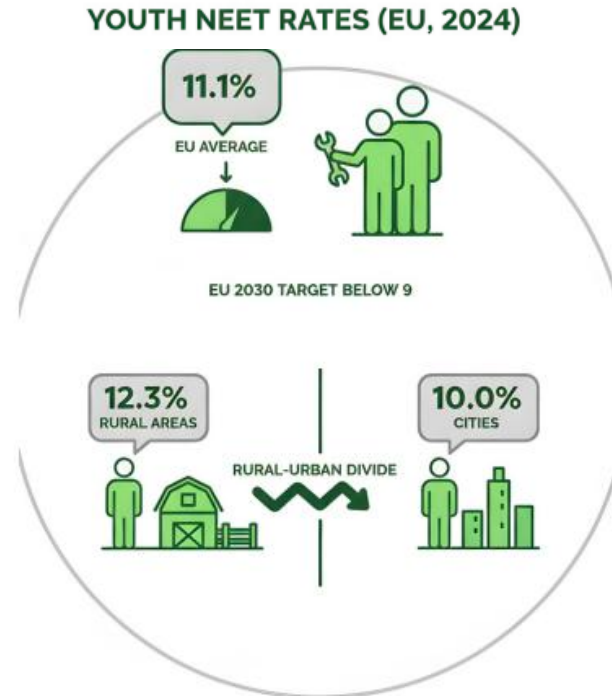
Future employment opportunities and changes in rural youth labour markets

Antonella Rocca
Claudia Petrescu
Leonor Bettencourt
Luca Koltai
Kinga Toth
Ruta Braziene
Bianca Buligescu
Oscar Prieto-Flores
Mateusz Smoter
Tatiana Ferreira
Mariano Soler-Porta



February 2026

Rural youth remain at a disadvantage across Europe



Key Challenges

- ✓ Higher risk of becoming NEET
- ✓ Limited access to education and training opportunities;
- ✓ Restricted mobility and transport options;
- ✓ Lower job diversity and poorer job quality;
- ✓ Increased risk of social exclusion and rural depopulation

Key Barriers Identified by Rural Young People Across Europe (FYI-R Workshops)



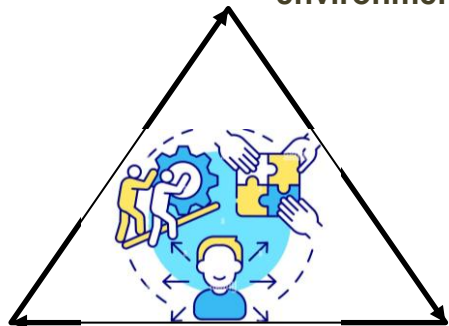
AI and Green Transitions can become major opportunities for rural youth

Emerging jobs & skills in rural areas (EU)



Preliminary findings – three key insights

Supportive institutional
environment



Personal meaning
and local impact

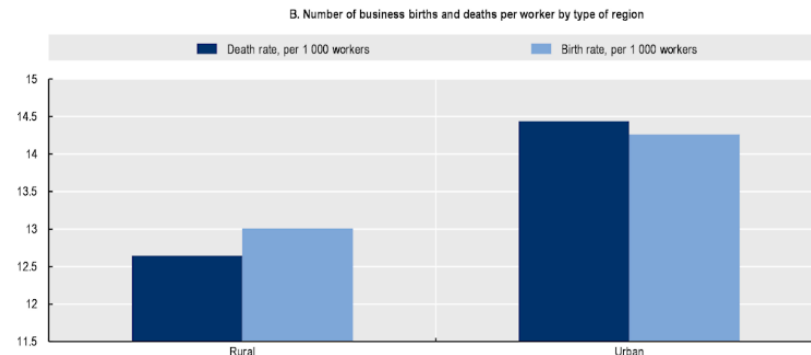
Access to
resources

(EURYO, in press, October 2026)

„Rural areas are the fabric of our society and the heartbeat of our economy...“ Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission (July 2019)

Myth or Reality?

- Young start-up entrepreneurs in rural areas: **25% fewer**
- Young people (25-29) are **8.6% less likely** to start a firm if they live in rural areas
- Young entrepreneurs (25-29) declined by **20% in rural areas** (2011–2019) vs stable/slight growth in cities
- Total entrepreneur decline in rural areas: rural lost **5× more**



OECD. (2022). *Unlocking rural innovation*. OECD Publishing.

- **Access to finance and start-up support:** limited capital, weak access to affordable credit, and bureaucratic grant systems are major obstacles; when funding is transparent, simple, and reachable, young people are more willing to act.
- **Mentorship and practical guidance:** mentoring, consultation services, and networks with experienced entrepreneurs reduce fear and make entrepreneurship feel more realistic.
- **Education and skills:** youth are more open to entrepreneurship when education includes practical, project-based learning, digital skills, and entrepreneurial training.
- **Trust in institutions;** where public institutions are seen as fair, transparent, and responsive, young people are more likely to believe that starting or taking over a business is achievable.
- **Digital access and infrastructure:** internet connectivity, transport, and modern workspaces matter because they reduce the practical barriers to launching and running a rural business.
- **Community recognition and belonging:** young people are more likely to see rural entrepreneurship as realistic when it is connected to local identity, family support, peer inspiration, and a sense of contributing to the community.
- **Psychological confidence:** fear of failure, low self-confidence, and a “dependency mindset” reduce willingness to try.

Different (more innovative) approaches in tackling such complex (cross-connected) issues are needed.

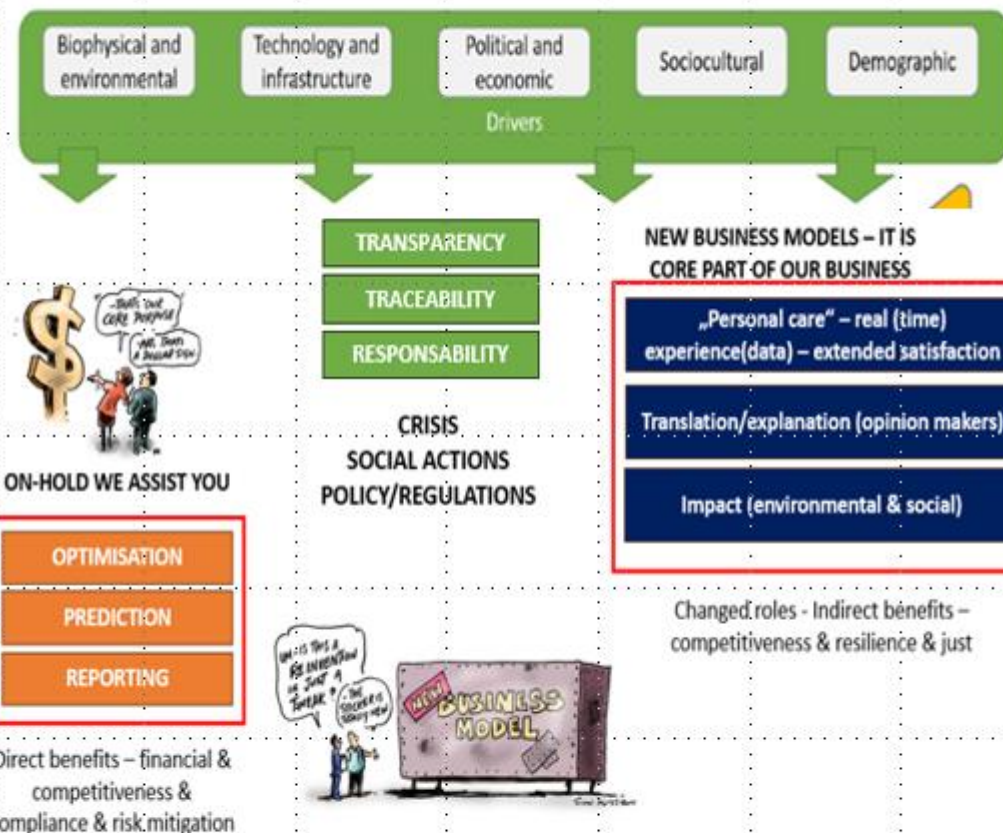
Rural tourism/services/smart villages
Care farms
„Pick your own fruit“
Organics – high value added products
Circular economy products/services

New Business Opportunities in Rural Areas – myth or reality?

EMERGING TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY 4.0 + NEW BUSINESS MODELS

- ❑ has transformative potential for transforming the challenges into opportunities (Lioutasa & Charatsari, 2020), providing potential for future development of the agrifood system by decreasing different types of uncertainty and limiting opportunistic behavior (Leng et al., 2020).
- ❑ Up-to-date technological advances prove to be environmentally sustainable, but also socially sustainable from the workforce point of view (Bianco, 2016).
- ❑ increases connectivity and trust among people and institutions “unlocking” capacity to address very complex challenges by strengthening sustainability through the development of attractive jobs.
- ❑ new business models - radical changes, reshaping structure, role, business and social context, values and means of production.

SOLUTION?



FROM LABOR-INTENSIVE TO TECHNOLOGY NATIVE SYSTEM
(CHARANIA & LI, 2020).



EUROPEAN RURAL YOUTH OBSERVATORY

INSPIRING THE FUTURE OF EUROPEAN RURAL YOUNG PEOPLE



<https://rnyobservatory.eu/web/>

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