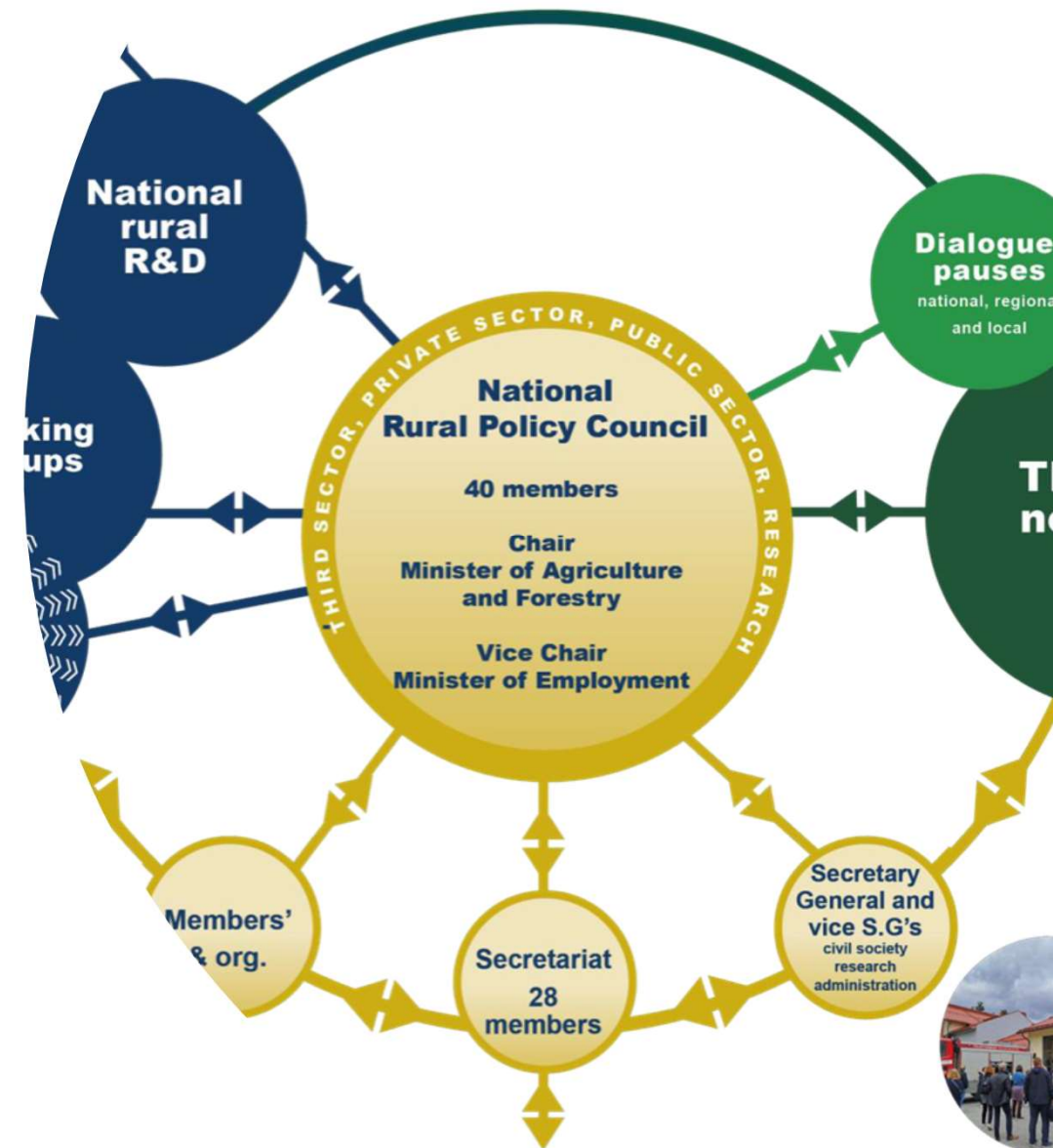


The Finnish multi-level governance system for integrated rural policy: the Rural Policy Council

Hilkka Vihinen
Rural Policy Council /
Natural Resources Institute Finland, Luke

Rural Pact in Latvia
9 June 2026



Governance system conditions for integrated rural policy



-1-

- Engage a diversity of stakeholder voices
- Implement a whole-of-government approach
- Engage with all sectors and levels of government to integrate national policies
- Provide accessible data that is easy to use
- Promote inclusive engagement in the design and implementation of rural policy

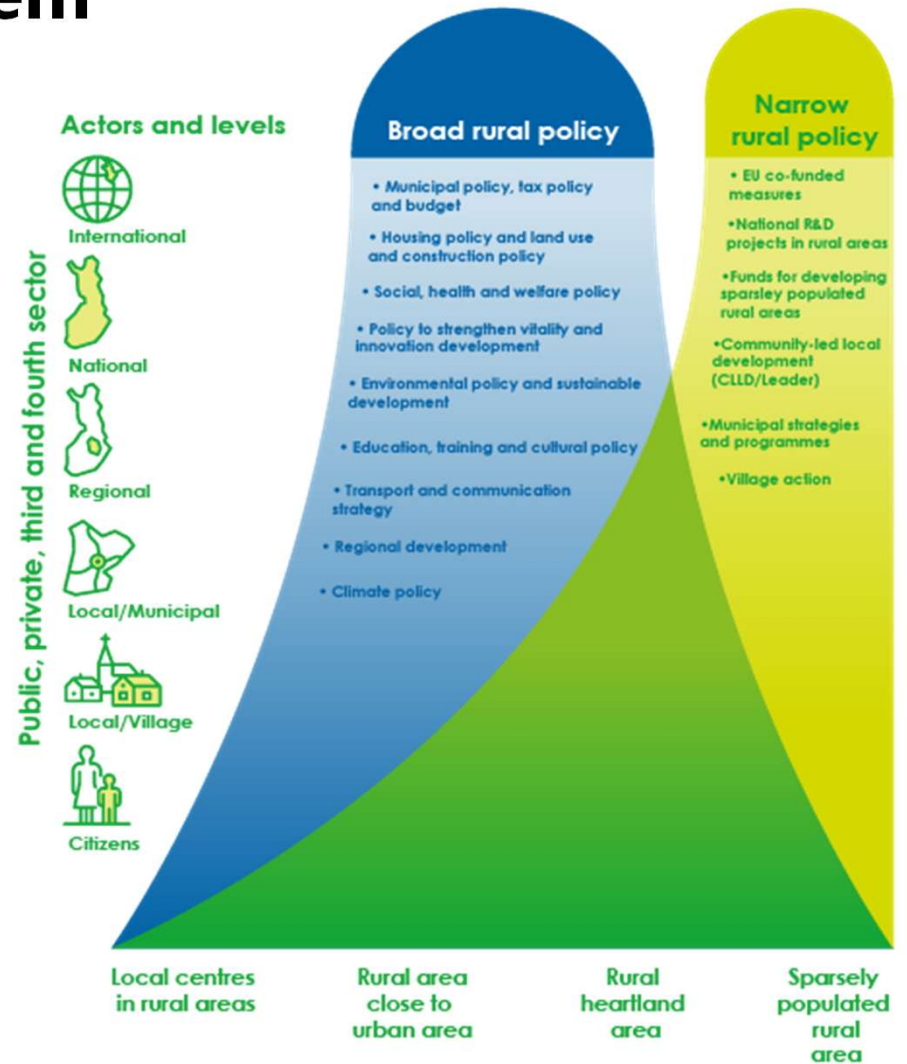
www.oecd.org/rural/

How: Finnish Rural Policy System

Multi-actor approach *engages public, private & third sectors*

Cross-sectoral approach *integrates policy sectors and implements a whole-of-government approach to policies for rural areas* (broad rural policy)

Multi-level governance from the village to the global level *engages with all sectors and levels of government to integrate national policies*

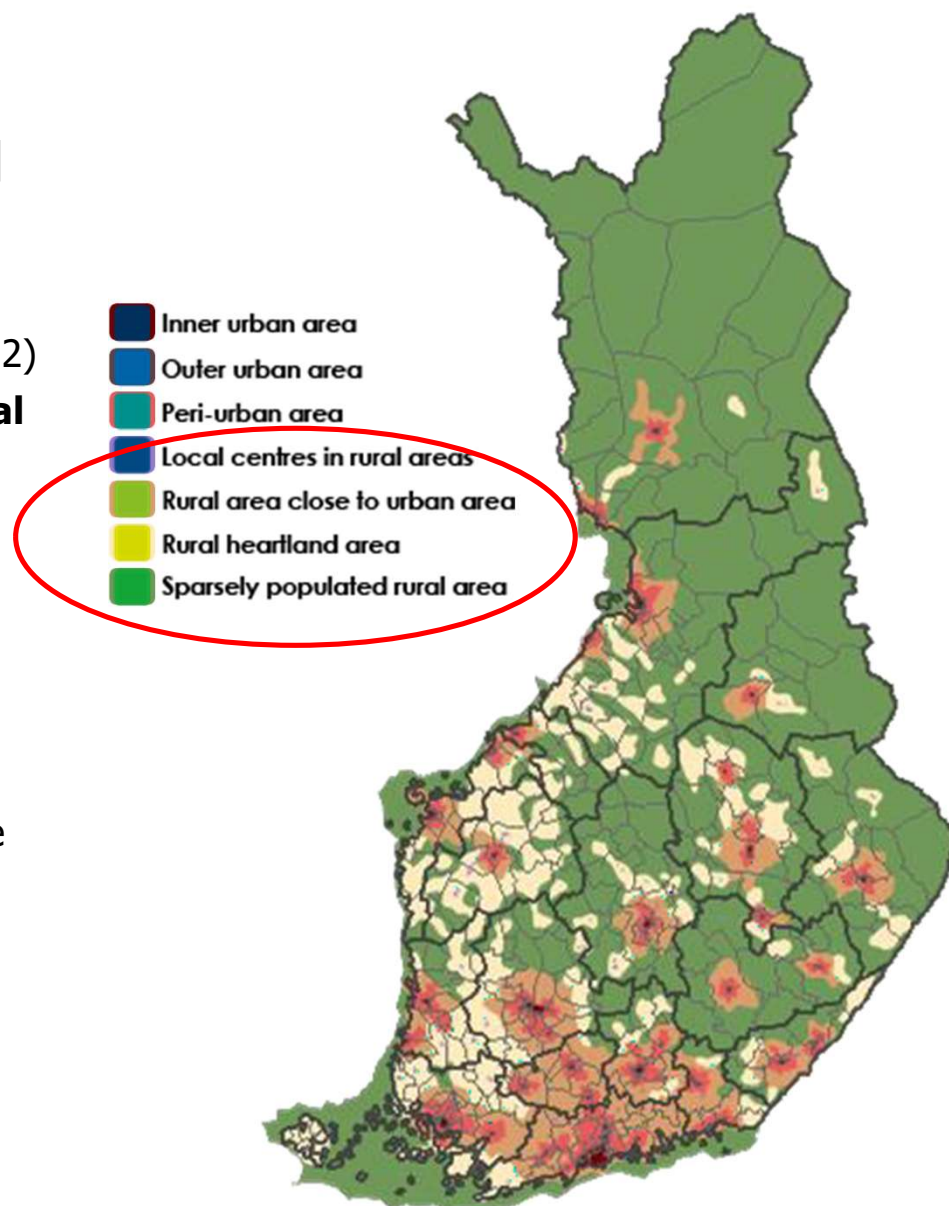


Provide accessible data that is easy to use: translate it to rural dimensions and terms

Grid-based urban-rural typology (250x250 m; smaller than LAU2)

Rural indicators and typology **combine statistics with spatial coordinates**. In use

- to allocate of EU Rural funding (EAFRD and CAP):
 - definition of the eligible rural area in CAP funding
 - as a criterion for the Leader group's area of operation
- in National Rural policy documents and rural research
- in allocating the national village shop support
- in rural proofing
- in the Land use development overview by The Ministry of the Environment
- at the Ministry of Transport and Communications to monitor transport systems and in the National Travel Survey
- in assessing the status of regional development (ERDF)



Promote inclusive engagement in the design and implementation of policy: The Rural Policy Council

- Provides strategic leadership for national rural policy, is responsible for its development
- Nominated by the Finnish government 2026-2031
- Chair: Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, Vice-Chair Minister of Employment
- Operates in a network-based manner supported by the secretariat, led by the Secretary General
- Secretariat: representatives from the member organizations & other actors; thematic networks implement tasks assigned to the council
- 40 members: **8 ministries, all key government authorities at national and regional level, association of municipalities and cities, the village organization, and national associations** for entrepreneurs, farmers, labor unions, social policy, sports, the youth, landowners, agricultural extension, nature conservation, trotting, hunting, the rescue service sector, road associations, the Leader groups, Universities and High Schools, home economics, rural researchers, rural culture, and the official consultative parliament representing the Swedish-speaking minority in Finland



Main tasks of the Rural Policy Council (MANE)

- 1. Supporting decision-makers** in cross-administrative and strategically important national rural policy issues, as well as preparing and implementing the government's rural policy guidelines.
- 2. Implementing the Rural Policy Comprehensive Program 2021–2027** and related development work in specifically defined themes, as well as monitoring the implementation.
- 3. Influencing significant legislation preparations** with rural relevance, already as they are pending or ongoing in various administrative sectors.
- 4. Developing the structures, practices, and methods of rural policy** and rural development **to support and implement place-based policy and development.**
- 5. Increasing rural research and knowledge** through research and development funding and **promoting the exchange of knowledge** both nationally and internationally.
6. Participating in the coordination of national regional development and EU rural and regional policy.
Interaction and collaboration with urban and archipelago policy actors.

MANE has some own resources but relies also on the resources of its members.

Steps forward with policy coordination, challenges in policy integration



Coordination - working efficiently together

“Government actively uses formal... networks across the different agencies within that government to coordinate the design and implementation of the range of interventions that the government’s agencies will be making in order to increase effectiveness... in achieving the desired objectives” (OECD, 2006).

The value added of integrated policy gradually learnt (e.g. rural proofing).

Younger generations of civil servants have more open mindsets.



Integration – blending into a functioning whole

“...jointly achieve integrated responses to the issues of policy development, program management and service delivery” (Ojo et. al, 2011).

Difficult when concerns simultaneously **multiple levels and sectors.**

Administrative culture - competition for resources within the government; e.g. allocation of EU funds still dealt with along sectors.

Only a fraction of civil servants actively involved in rural policy.

Not just administration's internal matter; Genuine policy integration / whole-of-government approach requires political will, too.

Thank you!

