Summary of the
ERCA Web-Event on the EU Long Term Vision for the Rural Areas, the Rural Pact and the Rural Funding Toolkit, November 22-2023

(further info at Rural Pact Community Platform)

Tom Jones, President of ERCA, welcomed 72 participants to the Web-Event on the Long Term Vision for the Rural Areas (LTVRA), in the morning of November 22. The European Rural Community Alliance (ERCA) with 16 national members, is aimed at making the rural voice heard in Europe.

To better support its members, ERCA conducted a survey about the knowledge of the Rural Pact. Ben van Essen, Vice-President of ERCA, presented the results. Twelve members completed the questionnaire. Only four of them were well informed about the Rural Pact. Although members have some collaborations around the Rural Pact, there was a great demand for more knowledge. The respondents made all kinds of suggestions how to do so. Today's Web-Event is one of the ways to share knowledge.

Tom Jones introduced Alexia Rouby, Policy Coordinator of the EU Rural Vision, DG Agriculture and Rural Development (European Commission) for her introduction to the Long Term Vision for Rural Areas (LTVRA) and the Rural Pact. Alexia explained how the preparation for the LTVRA was undertaken, in which ERCA played an active role. After the launch of the LTVRA in June 2021, a broad range of actions have been taken to make the rural areas stronger, connected, prosperous and resilient by 2040. The Rural Action Plan contains 9 flagship initiatives, with 24 thematic actions. In addition, there are 6 horizontal actions such as a Rural Observatory, Rural Proofing and the Rural Pact.

The Rural Pact is a formal space and framework to boost cooperation between national, regional and local governments, civil society organisations, businesses, academics and citizens to act towards the shared goals of the Rural Vision. By November 2023 there are 2150 Rural Pact community members.

Where do we stand with the implementation of the LTVRA? The European Union Council on November 20 approved conclusions on the Long-Term Vision for the EU's rural areas, which is an important milestone. Our task is now to build further on this. Alexia invites all of us to become members of the Rural Pact Community (Become member) and to follow the Rural Pact Community Platform. People from non-EU countries can register on the Rural Pact platform, provided they register “as an organisation” and not as an individual (for reasons related to data protection). The summary of the ERCA Web-Event, including the presentations and recording, is published on the Rural Pact Community Platform (click here).

Tom thanked Alexia for her clear and inspiring presentation and introduced Giulia Testori and Eleftherios (Terry) Stavropoulos, both from the Joint Research Centre. Giulia introduced some JRC-projects potentially relevant for ERCA members, such as the STRAT Board Database (online mapping tool to visualize strategies supported by the Cohesion Policy), the Handbook of Territorial Development Strategies, and a Self-Assessment Tool for Territorial and Local Development Strategies. Terry then looked in more depth at the Rural Observatory (a platform for better data about rural areas), the European Startup Village Forum and last but not least the Rural Funding Toolkit (online dashboard of funding opportunities for rural development), which will be launched in February 2024. The presentations of Giulia and Terry can also be found on the event-page of the Rural Pact Community Platform.

Tom closed the Web Event with a word of thanks to the speakers and with the promise that ERCA will continue to strengthen the three objectives of the Rural Pact: amplifying the voice of rural areas and bringing them up in policy agendas, networking, collaboration & mutual learning and commitments to act. Anyone can contact the ERCA email address ruralerca@gmail.com for questions or proposals.

ERCA Board
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