PRESS-RELEASE

A Compass for Local Empowerment in rural areas to bring the Rural Pact closer to citizens

With the publication of **the Long-term Vision for Rural Areas** (LTVRA 30 June 2021), the European Commission took a further step towards broadening rural policy. Drawing up a Rural Pact was part of the implementation strategy of the LTVRA. ERCA is strongly committed to the process of implementing the Rural Pact also as a member of the Rural Pact Coordination Group. Therefore, ERCA has entered three commitments in the Rural Pact. 1) Engaging our membership of national rural movements to promote the PACT at national, regional and local levels. ERCA organized a Web Event on the LTVRA and the Rural Funding Toolkit (November 22 2023), in cooperation with the European Commission and the Joint Research Centre. 76 People participated. 2) ERCA supports the Rural Pact in collaboration with our partners in the European Rural Parliament.

Commitment 3 is about amplifying the voice of rural areas to bring them higher on the political agenda. That requires strengthening participation of local communities to decision making processes, which requires community empowerment. This could be captured in a **Village Pact.** In a Village Pact inhabitants formulate their dreams for the future and how to realise that, in cooperation with local government and partners. ERCA has examined examples of Village Pacts within the overall framework of the Rural Pact. These Village Pacts are placed in a wider frame in the "**Compass for Local Empowerment in rural areas"**. This Compass is a co-production of the European Partnership for Citizen-empowerment (SBE) and the European Rural Community Alliance (ERCA).

If the LTVRA really wants to empower rural communities, we must find ways to reach to the local level: the village or neighbourhood where people's daily lives take place. In this "Compass for Local Empowerment" we look for practical ways to reach to the grassroots, bringing the Rural Pact closer to citizens. Community-led initiatives are a form of democratic practice which can help to restore trust between government and residents. Community empowerment refers to the process of enabling communities to increase control over their lives. In this Compass we describe how this works, which tools are available and which bottlenecks can appear. It shows several ways to shape vibrant local communities through local - and community empowerment, as an indispensable driving force for the implementation of the LTVRA.

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About ERCA

ERCA was established in 2009 as a network for the national and regional civil society rural movements of Europe. ERCA membership is made up of national and regional rural organisations working for strong and sustainable rural communities. ERCA's role is focused on networking and information sharing, skill development and promoting the importance of the rural areas and their people.

You can download the "Compass for local empowerment" via www.ruralcommunities.eu
If you have feedback or want more information about the "Compass", please contact us: info@ruralcommunities.eu