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Put on your rural lens!

Guide to Rural Proofing for the evaluation of the rural perspective in laws, policies, plans and strategies



Do you work in a public administration or in an entity with an impact on your municipality or region? Do you live in a rural environment and want to evaluate the suitability of a law, plan or strategy for your territory?

If you develop new laws, policies and strategies or want to know if a certain rule or law has a negative impact on your territory, put on your rural lens and apply this checklist to avoid and/or mitigate adverse effects.

From the very first steps of policy development, policymakers should consider the potential impact of their regulations, plans, programs, strategies or public services on rural areas. For these policies to have a successful outcome in rural areas, different implementation strategies might be required in order to adapt to the rural reality and the needs of local communities.

Based on the different international experiences gathered in our publication Good Practices in the implementation of Rural Proofing, REDR has designed this guide to **assist public authorities in integrating the rural perspective** into the policy making process. This guide also enables the impact of existing regulations and plans to be assessed.

Our Rural Proofing Guide consists of 6 stages or steps through which to evaluate the effect a policy might have on rural communities and how to address these impacts. It also includes a checklist or questionnaire to consider when conducting a Rural Impact Assessment.

 **If you are going to develop new legislation, you can start in Phase 1. Pag 2**

 **Si vas a evaluar legislación existente, comienza en la FASE 2. Pág 3**

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PHASES 1. Concept

Define the policy, regulation, initiative, plan or program. Include all basic information to provide context and justification.

- **Identify the problem** to be addressed and provide evidence of its magnitude and the consequences of not acting upon it.
- **Establish the purpose** of the initiative and the objectives it seeks to achieve.
- **Describe the individuals, communities, businesses, and organizations** affected by the issue, as well as those that will be impacted by the proposed regulation.
- **Explain the legal framework** surrounding it, including previous initiatives and projects on the topic. Incorporate as well any other measures that have attempted to address the issue, if applicable.

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Checklist 

STAGE 2. Impact assessment

Identify potential negative and positive impacts, both direct and indirect, on rural people. Use surveys and questionnaires, examine existing studies and statistics, or consult experts in the field and local communities to analyse how the policy fits in rural areas.

Consider the following checklist or list of questions to guide you in this **Rural Impact Assessment**.

- How is this initiative **relevant to rural** regions?
- Could it have a disproportional effect on **smaller and remote rural areas** as compared to larger ones?
- Could it affect differently **distinct population demographics and social groups** in rural areas (men, women, youth, senior, ethnic minorities, disabled people, vulnerable groups...)?
- Does it ensure that rural areas receive equitable **treatment, opportunities, and service** provision compared to urban areas?

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Checklist

- Is it possible for the solution to have a **different outcome** in rural areas (due, for instance, to greater geographical dispersion or lower population densities)?
- What are the potential **economic, social, cultural and environmental impacts** (positive and negative) on citizens, communities and/or stakeholders in rural areas?
- Could it have an effect on **service delivery and access to infrastructure** (healthcare, education, transport, childcare, internet connection, sports facilities, libraries...)?
- Is the **infrastructure available** in remote and rural areas suitable to access the services considered in your initiative?
- Could the **cost of development and/or delivery** be higher in rural areas? Who would bear these additional costs? Could this lead to the exclusion of rural users?
- Could there be an impact on the **labour market**, employment choice or professional development opportunities in rural areas?
- Would it affect rural **companies' competitiveness** or **business opportunities**?
- What are the potential impacts on **living conditions** and **socioeconomic status** of people in different regions (nature and environmental conditions, security, living expenses, income, availability of social services, etc.)?

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- Is it likely for the solution to cause an impact on the **natural and cultural landscape and/or heritage**?
- Are specific regions targeted under the proposal or would it influence **local communities' development** (conservation of natural resources, development of traditional activities, strengthening of regional identity, etc.)?
- Could it have an impact on **connectivity or mobility** between regions or within them (road condition, transport timetables...)?
- Are the necessary **tools, resources and knowledge** available to local administration in order to implement the proposed policy in rural areas (especially in those in risk of depopulation)?
- How can these effects on rural regions be **measured or quantified**?
- Were local communities, regional development associations and citizens' **voices, petitions and recommendations** taken into account for this proposal?

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STAGE 3. Consultation and validation

According to the potential impacts that have been identified, consider who should be consulted in order to **asses the scale** of these effects on rural areas.

Engage with rural stakeholders to gather evidence and test the proposal. Involve civil society, rural stakeholders, local communities, organizations, NGOs and experts on different topics.

STAGE 4. Reevaluate and adapt

Considering the *feedback* receive from the consultation, reassess the implications of the policy on rural areas.

- Has any potential **impact** been missed?
- Does any section of the initiative need to be **changed** or **redone**?
- What evidence have you gathered to prove that these changes are necessary to **minimize impact** on rural communities?

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STAGE 5. Mitigation measures

Tailor the proposal and refine the details of the initiative taking rural stakeholder engagement into account as well as the results of the impact assessment to meet the needs of rural people. Consider and include opportunities and mitigation measures to tackle possible negative impacts on rural areas.

- Is there **another way** to achieve your objectives that does not involve a policy change?
- Is there an **alternative way** of developing your initiative without negatively affecting rural areas?
- What is the most realistic and **practical solution** to face and reduce each negative impact on rural people?

Regarding **public services**:

- Could a model for service provision be implemented that **better adapts to rural needs and conditions** (mobile, itinerant, door-to-door, virtual services, etc.)?
- Is there a possibility to **collaborate with local authorities or rural stakeholders** to increase service efficiency or make costs more affordable (shared services)?

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- Are there **already available facilities** that can be used (cultural centres, libraries, rural schools, post offices, etc.)?
- Can some kind of incentive system be implemented (tax deductions, free services, etc.)?
- Would the delivery of the service or initiative rely on public transportation schedules? If so, would it be possible to **align the service** with the available transport offerings?

STAGE 6. Monitoring and indicators

Design a **monitoring plan** and include **indicators** that quantify the progress of the objectives, as well as the effect that the measures have had on rural areas and communities.

Remember!

- Avoid a one-size-fits-all approach.
- Consider alternative solutions that adapt to the characteristics of rural areas.
- Involve rural communities and stakeholders, as well as Local Action Groups.
- Identify best practices and apply them to your territory.

For further information about Rural Proofing, visit our [website](#)