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RURAL PR FING

Ruralizing the policies that affect rural areas:
National and international experiences



Rural Proofing



Rural Proofing arose as a methodology to foment the **review of regulations and policies from a rural perspective**.

This tool is not only focused on analyzing the potential impact of public policies and legislation in place. It ensures that all national, regional and local regulations are adapted to the different rural needs and demands, whether environmental, cultural, social or economic. Rural Proofing thus refers to the design of new programs and strategies that **incorporate the needs and perspectives of rural communities and recognize the potential of the territory** to provide solutions that are innovative, inclusive and sustainable.

As such, **territorial sensitive policies** are those designed and executed from a **bottom-up perspective**, in which the inhabitants have a voice and vote, and that enable the depopulation trend to be reversed, placing the rural population as the main actor (REDR 2023).

With this publication from the REDR, the Spanish Rural Network, we seek to highlight the experience of countries that have implemented the Rural Proofing methodology in their territory, as well as the Autonomous Regional Communities at the national level that have joined this trend. Finally, we would like to make other initiatives, strategies and projects known, which are also aimed at fomenting the Rural Proofing Mechanism.

Finally, through this compilation of good practices we wish not only to make Rural Proofing known, but also to encourage and facilitate its implementation in public entities.



The international level

Canada



Geographically speaking, Canada is a vast country with a relatively small population. Of its 39 million inhabitants, approximately **18 % of the population resides in rural areas** (communities with fewer than 10,000 inhabitants).

Canada's rural localities are usually very far from the large urban centers, which, together with their low population density, leads to a deficit of infrastructures and services in the country's rural areas. This issue was behind the creation of the **"Rural Secretariat"** in 1996, part of the Department of Agriculture and Agri-food. This body was responsible for assessing the different governmental departments in the ruralization of its policies. That is, it provided assistance and recommendations so that the

ministries took into account the impact on rural and remote areas when designing new public policies. Along these lines, Canada became **one of the pioneer countries in applying Rural Proofing**.

Until 2013, the date when it was discontinued, the Rural Secretariat undertook different programs and initiatives aimed at narrowing the gap between urban and rural areas, enhancing the economic attractiveness of rural areas and fomenting repopulation of these areas. One of these actions was the creation in 1998 of the **"Rural Lens"** program, a tool for dialogue between the government and rural world, directed and implemented by the Rural Secretariat. The Rural Lens consisted of

a communication mechanism between the General Administration, the Local Administration, and the Regional one, as well as representatives from rural areas. This tool was implemented **through a checklist**, designed to assess the effect of new policies and regulations on rural areas. In addition, in 2001 a Guide was published to facilitate and promote application of the Rural Lens in governing bodies.

Consult the Guide to using the Rural Lens of Canada [here](#).

Since the disappearance of the Rural Secretariat in 2013, no formal mechanism has been put in place to ensure a rural perspective in decision-making policies in Canada. However, at the provincial



level, there are several ministries and departments with a body that ensures inclusion of rural areas in the design of regulations and programs.

An example is **Ontario**, where 75% of its municipalities are rural. In 2006, the Municipal Association of Rural Ontario (ROMA) created the “**Rural and Northern Lens**”, a Rural Proofing Mechanism later revised in 2011 and 2015. This Rural Lens consists of a set of questions through the checklist method that guides municipal governments in developing new policies and legislation. It is a **flexible tool** that local governments can opt to use.

Consult the “Rural and Northern Lens” of Ontario [here](#).

On the other hand, in the Canadian province of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Division of Public Engagement and Planning has made the use of the “Rural Lens” of mandatory compliance for the different departments and public agencies who wish to pass new policies. This is a questionnaire with three items that must be given to each Division.

Consult the “Rural Lens” of Newfoundland and Labrador [here](#).

(Picón Arranz 2023; Newfoundland & Labrador 2019; ROMA 2015; Gaugitsch et al. 2022; Parnell y Lynch 2023).

The international level

England

Rural Proofing was introduced in England in 2000 through the “**2000 Rural White Paper**”, by which the country **formally committed to ruralizing all of its policies**, given that 85% of the English territory is composed of rural areas where **one-fifth of the population resides**. With this objective, the Commission for Rural Communities (CRC) was created, an independent government agency in charge of implementing the Rural Proofing Mechanism. In 2013, the functions of this entity were transferred to the **Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)**, currently in force.

Defra analyzes the economic, social and demographic reality as well as the needs of rural communities and **regularly publishes reports** on the situation of Rural Proofing in the country, the first of them in 2006 (by the CRC) and the last in 2022.

With this information Defra publishes guides, last revised in 2017, based on the **checklist method**. This mechanism consists of four stages, through which the public agencies and organisms must check to see how new policies and regulations can affect the rural areas, and review if the current ones have taken into account the rural perspective in their implementation. In addition, public entities must **involve local administrations and rural stakeholders** in the design and development of these policies.

Consult the Defra Guides and most recent ones [here](#).

Did you know that?

In 2015, Wales passed the **Well-being of Future Generations Act** aimed at improving the social, cultural and environmental well-being of the population. This law seeks to ensure, at a minimum, the same life quality as now for future generations. For that purpose, one of its pillars is its commitment to territorial and social cohesion. The Commission for Future Generations is in charge of advising public administrations on the long-term effects that policies, regulations and legislation could have. Consult further information [here](#).



(Picón Arranz 2023; Gaugitsch et al. 2022; DEFRA 2022; Parnell y Lynch 2023; Atterton, Rural Policy Centre, y SRUC 2022).

The international level

Northern Ireland



From 2002 until 2015, Northern Ireland, with **one-third of its population living** in rural areas, **closely followed the steps of England** in its approach to Rural Proofing. In 2016, at the initiative of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, it passed the **“Rural Needs Act”**. Northern Ireland became the first country or region in the world to incorporate Rural Proofing in its legislation.

This law, which began to be implemented in 2017, established a **paradigm shift** that distanced it from the earlier approach. The regulation dictates three areas of responsibility that the public authorities must have due regard for:

- **Consideration of the needs** of rural areas.
- **Monitoring and reporting** on fulfillment of their obligations.
- **Cooperation and transparency** regarding information obtained with other public bodies.

In accordance with the legislation, the current **Ministry of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Development (DAERA)** is in charge of regularly

supervising compliance with these guidelines by the public bodies, in addition to publishing an annual report on implementing the mechanism. DAERA must at the same time provide guides and information on how to proceed to implement Rural Proofing, and facilitate cooperation and exchange of information between public entities.

The Guide, last updated in 2018, recalls the obligation of the authorities to take into account rural needs in the design, development, implementation and revision of policies, strategies and public services. It also includes an extensive description of how to carry out the **‘Rural Impact Assessment’**, as well as a **checklist**.

Consult the “Rural Needs Act” Guide [here](#).

Despite being mandatory by law, the entities that fail in their obligation to implement the Rural Proofing Mechanism are not subject to any sanction. However, they can face a judicial process to reverse the decision. Although the rural perspective is not always considered in Northern

Ireland’s public policies, thanks to the transparency provided by the DAERA annual report, **the authorities are increasingly aware** of the role they must play.

Parnell y Lynch 2023; DAERA 2022

The international level

Scotland

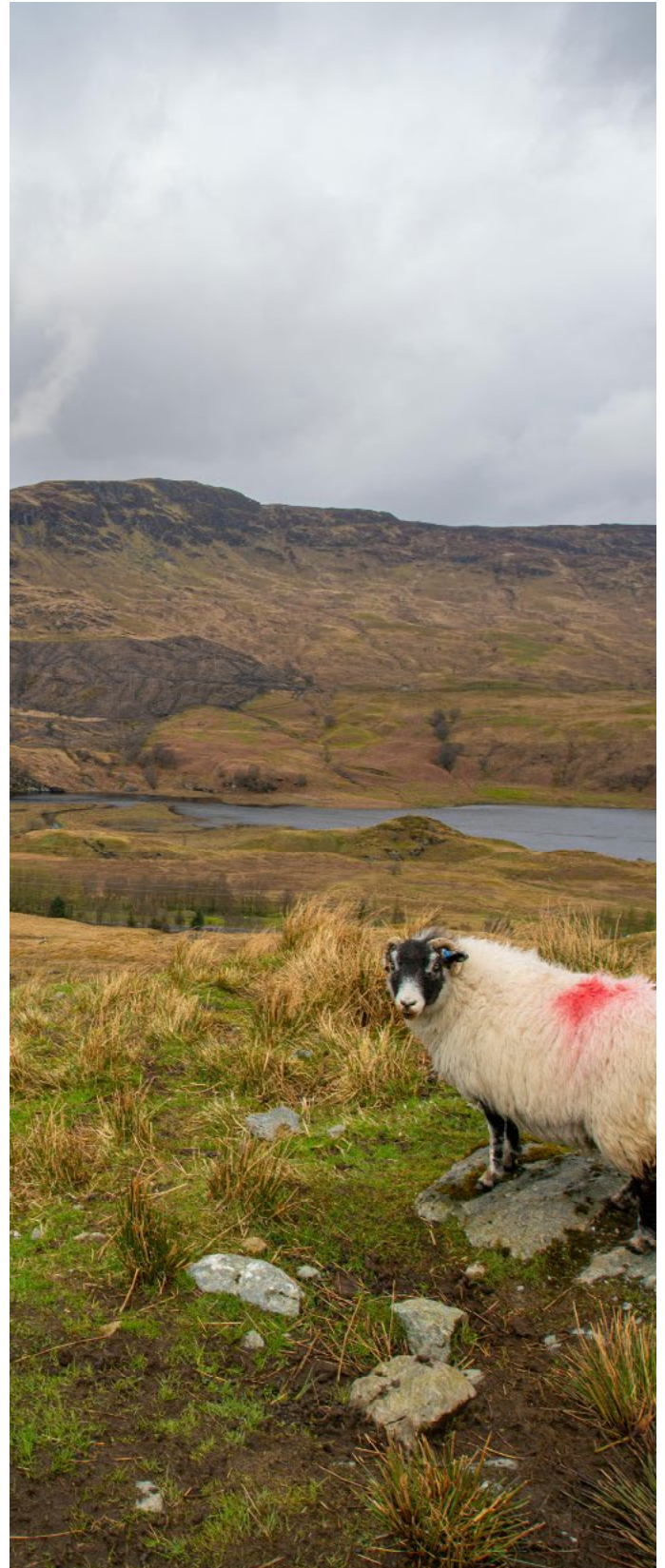
In Scotland the strategy that has been followed in this regard differs somewhat from the other United Kingdom countries. It consists of including the needs of the rural population in the design of all of the policies in a transversal way, the so-called **“rural mainstreaming”**. For the mechanism to be truly effective, the rural voices themselves must be taken into account in the decision-making processes from the start and not once the measures have already been designed.

To put this vision into practice, in 2014 the **Scottish Rural Parliament was created** (since 2023 it also includes the islands), an entity that every two years **gathers political authorities and rural associations to engage in dialogue** about the future of public policies from a rural perspective.

In addition to the Scottish Rural and Islands Parliament, there is a **National Council of Rural Advisors**, an independent advisory body responsible for advising and giving recommendations on rural policy to the Scottish government, and which also makes reports and assessments about rural impact.

Furthermore, in 2018 the Scottish Parliament passed the **“Islands Act”**, a law that establishes the basis for National Island Plan, and that imposes the duties of public administrations with respect to the Island communities. One of these obligations is for the authorities to carry out an **“Island Communities Impact Assessment”**, that is, an evaluation of the effect that the policy could have on an island community and how to mitigate these impacts. However, this evaluation is only to be done when the authorities in charge of this policy consider that it affects the island communities in some way, so that this “Island Proofing” is not carried out transversally for all policies.

(Picón Arranz 2023; Gaugitsch et al. 2022; DEFRA 2022; Parnell y Lynch 2023; Atterton, Rural Policy Centre, y SRUC 2022).



The international level

Finland



Since **95% of the territory of Finland is rural**, accounting for **28% of the population**, work began on a Rural Proofing Strategy in 2007 based on previous international experiences. Since then the country has been further developing its Rural Proofing Mechanism.

Rural Proofing was included the first time as a measure in the **National Rural Policy Programme 2009 – 2013**, and to date it continues to be one of the lines of action on which said Program is built (2021-2027), designed by the **Rural Policy Council**.

The Rural Policy Council is an organism pertaining to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, and is responsible for coordinating and promoting Rural Proofing in the country, as well as providing the necessary tools and assistance for its proper implementation. It is composed of members of **public, private and third sector entities, at the national, regional and local level**.

The main tool of the Council for application of Rural Proofing is a **checklist** through which the authorities

can ensure how future regulations and policies can affect rural communities. Depending on the results obtained in this initial analysis, that is, if the policy proposal has an impact on rural areas, a **more exhaustive assessment** of this impact is carried out. This assessment is done through **work groups, data analysis (geospatial data), questionnaires ...** all in a **participative way** and with the involvement of civil society, public administrations and businesses located in rural areas.

This review of policies, although not as common at the national levels, is in fact normally **implemented at the regional and local level, where these methods are much more developed** and include a large number of public and private agents.

However, a big leap forward at the national level was the inclusion of Rural Proofing in the **Guidance for Impact Assessment of Government Legislative Proposals since 2022**, which replaced that of 2007. The next step that Finland wishes to take, and which it is now working toward, is to include the Rural Proofing Mechanism

in legislation to make its application mandatory.

Consult the checklist provided by the Ministry of Justice in this Guide (p. 104). Consult more detailed guides on how to implement Rural Proofing provided by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry here (In Finnish).

Another aspect to highlight regarding the Finnish Rural Proofing mechanism is **municipal reorganization**. By merging small municipalities, new larger ones have been created divided into two geographic areas: that of urban areas and that including rural ones. This measure seeks to foment the homogeneous development of municipalities.

(Picón Arranz 2023; Husberg 2022; OECD 2018; Finnish Government 2023).

The international level

Sweden

The approach to Rural Proofing in Sweden began in 2016 with a report from the **Agency for Economic and Regional Growth** (Tillväxtanalys) that presented implementation strategies of this mechanism in other countries such as England, Canada and Finland. Stemming from this report, in 2017 the Committee for Rural Areas, the corresponding body in matters of rural development, launched a proposal for **Sustainable Rural Development** in Sweden highlighting the role of Rural Proofing.

As a result of this proposal the Government in 2018 passed the **Law of Coherent Rural Policy** through which long-term sustainable rural development is guaranteed in the country, committing to **equal opportunities** for business, work, housing and well-being in rural areas. And although the law recognizes the need to integrate the rural perspective in all public policies, it continues to be optional.

The way in which the Rural Proofing Mechanism is carried out in Sweden, rather than through a national strategy, is through the tools and support provided by the Economic and Regional Growth Agency to foment rural development and the ruralization of sectoral policies. For this purpose, the Tillväxtanalys provides **assistance, guidelines and checklists directed at public administrations as well as organizations and businesses** for incorporating the rural perspective in their respective entities and in decision-making. In addition, the Agency publishes reports in which it analyzes the state of Rural Proofing and encourages authorities to **“look through a geographic lens”** in policymaking design and implementation.

Consult the different guides and checklists placed at the disposal of authorities, organizations and businesses by Tillväxtanalys [here](#).

(Picón Arranz 2023; Parnell y Lynch 2023).



The international level

Estonia



In Estonia, **a third of the population** lives in rural areas, although this percentage is decreasing every year. To ensure equal opportunities for development in rural and urban areas, the **Ministry of Rural Affairs and Agriculture** has been fomenting a set of measures in recent years.

In this context, the greatest achievement to date has been to **incorporate Rural Proofing into a regulation**, transversally applying it in all new policies.

Since 2012, impact assessment of legislation is regulated by HÕNTE, the "Rule of Good Legislative Practice and Technical Regulations". This rule provides a framework **for impact assessment of new regulations**, and makes it obligatory to carry out an exhaustive analysis of the positive and negative effects and consequences that the proposed regulation can have on a series of ambits, such as the social, economic, or environmental sphere. Since 2021, HÕNTE has also incorporated **regional development** as one of these themes. In this way, any proposed legislation, regulation or strategy by

public organisms must be accompanied by an **analysis on the impact on the rural areas**. In addition, in mapping and study of the effects of the new policies on rural life, public administrations must collaborate with local stakeholders and entities and engage the public, leading to **inclusive governance** in which the population participates in the decision-making.

For proper implementation of this Rural Proofing Mechanism, HÕNTE has been supplemented with a **Guide for the Application of Rural Proofing and a checklist** to follow during impact assessment, which includes a section on regional development and rural areas.

Consult them on the Ministry of Rural Affairs and Agriculture webpage here.

As further actions, the ministry publishes annual reports on the **General panorama for agriculture, fisheries and the food industry**, in which updated data is provided regarding the socio-economic development situation in the rural areas of the country. Furthermore, as a tool to improve the competitiveness and sustainable development in rural

areas, since 2021 the PõKa 2030 or the **Agriculture and Fisheries Strategy 2030** has been in effect.

(Kasemets y Kurvits 2022; Kaugia y Narits 2022; Ministerio de Asuntos Regionales y Agricultura, s. f.-a; s. f.-b; Riigi Teataja 2012).

The international level

Czech Republic

In the case of the Czech Republic, the approach to Rural Proofing has been implemented differently. In 2022 the Ministry of Regional Development announced the **National Rural Pact**, an initiative based on the European Rural Pact, which formed part of the Long-term Vision for EU Rural Areas (LTVRA).

The objective of this Pact is to achieve **territorial cohesion** in the country through a **holistic approach** where differences in development between urban and rural areas are eliminated. The path proposed by the Czech government is transversal application of a Rural Proofing Mechanism together with territorial impact assessment of policies and legislation. This system seeks to be financed and carried out through **European investment funds and tools** such as **Community-Led Local Development (CLLD)**.

Thus, the Czech Republic has committed to rural development and Rural Proofing through a **multi-fund and bottom-up approach**, using **Community-Led Local Development or CLLD to maximize resources in the rural environment**.

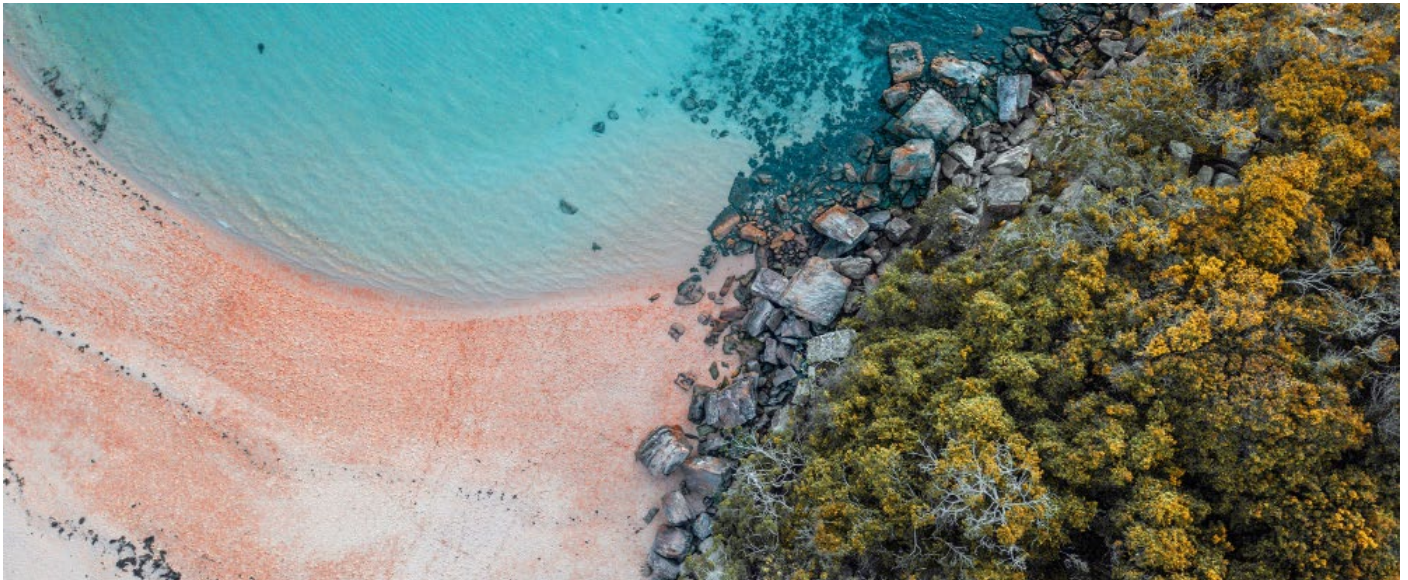
For 30 years, LEADER has been the main funding tool for financing rural development projects in the European Union, based on the FEADER funds. It is characterized by a **bottom-up approach**, where the community itself and local stakeholders, through the **Local Action Groups (LAGs)**, foment development of their territory through their active engagement. However, since 2014, this **LEADER method** has been extended to three structural investment funds, so that now the Member States can use four different funding mechanisms together (FEADER, FEMP, FEDER and FSE). This is the so-called **multi-funded tool**.

In this context, the majority of the LAGs continue making use of one type of funding for each development project (FEADER), while only **five countries employ the multi-funded approach in a generalized way**, the Czech Republic being one of them.



The international level

Australia



Since 2020 in Australia, it has been mandatory to undertake an **“Impact Analysis”** for all policy proposals or actions by government agencies and departments. **The Office of Impact Analysis** (OIA), encompassed within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet is exclusively in charge of providing the necessary guidelines, material and support for the proper implementation of Impact Analysis. In 2023, the OIA updated the **“Australian Government Guide to Policy Impact Analysis”**, a guide on how to assess the possible effects that a policy could have on the population, the community organizations, and businesses **from all possible angles** to thus be able to choose the best path to achieving their implementation. Access the Guide here.

The Impact Analysis process consists of **seven key questions** or stages:

1. What is the problem to be solved and what data is available?
2. What are the objectives? Why is government intervention necessary to achieve them and how will success be measured?
3. What policy options are being considered?

4. What are the likely net benefits of each option?
5. Who has been consulted and how has their feedback been incorporated?
6. What is the best option from all of those considered and how is it going to be implemented?
7. How will the chosen option be evaluated and against the success metrics and then monitored?

As part of the fourth question, it's necessary to consider **the possible effects of the proposed policy on the affected communities and groups of people**, taking into account their **needs and particularities** (age, culture, location...), thereby assessing how their quality of life, employment or economy could be affected.

Besides being able to consult and receive support from the OIA throughout the entire process, the latter carries out two exhaustive formal reviews of Impact Analysis, one after completing the first four questions, and another after finishing all of them.

A large part of the Australian territory, apart from the large metropolitan areas (such as Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne) are considered regional areas, where **more than one-third of the population** (9 million people) reside. For that reason, the Department of Infrastructures, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and Art (DITRDCA) have additionally developed a guide to designing policies that have some impact on **Regional Australia**. While compliance is not mandatory, the DITRDCA recommends making **“Regional Australia Impact Statements”** (RAIS) for all government policy proposals that are going to be carried out in Regional Australia, or if they are going to be applied in regional and metropolitan areas, their impact or effective differs. This regional impact assessment consists in the **checklist method**. Access the RAIS Guide here.

The international level

Australia



Did you know?

In Australia, each state has designed its own Impact Analysis that is mandatorily applied in the design of state policies.

- **South Australia** has been a pioneering state in developing and implementing its own **Rural Proofing Mechanism**, or in this case **Regional Proofing**, given that since 2003, it has implemented the **"Regional Impact Assessment Statement"** (RIAS). The RIAS consists in transversally applying a **checklist** to the design and review of all policies to consider the regional and rural areas perspective. Last updated in 2022, the Government of South Australia provides a **manual and guides** for the proper development of the RIAS.

In the case of having a significant impact on regional communities, business or organizations, it is also mandatory to present a **"Regulatory Impact Statement"** (RIS), which consists of responding to and thoroughly documenting the same seven questions included in the OIA Impact Analysis.

In regard to the other states, none of them have a Rural Proofing Mechanism as such, although they must carry out an analysis assessing the possible economic, social and environmental impacts of a new regulation. With the area of these impacts being more general, depending on each case, the legislative body may choose whether to take into account the rural or remote areas in the analysis.

In any case, at the country as well as

the state level, the governments have opted to follow a **transparent model in developing its policies**, facilitating access to all the documents submitted regarding the impact of the proposed policies. These impact analyses, require in addition, **the participation not only of advisors and experts, but also civil society and local entities**.

- In **New South Wales**, the economic, social and environmental impacts of the proposed policy are analyzed through the **"Better Regulation Statement"**. In addition, for those state projects of greater importance, it is also mandatory to present a **Social Impact Assessment**, in which the **regional context is considered**. Consult these respective guides here and here.



- In **Queensland**, a process was introduced in 2023 to ensure the proper design and implementation of state policies called the **"Better Regulation Policy"**. As part of the process, an impact analysis, the **"Regulatory Impact Analysis"**, must be completed, which consists of five steps. The most important of the five is preparation of a statement of the possible impact of the proposed policy on different ambits: the **"Impact Analysis Statement"** (IAS). Through the checklist method, the IAS must consider, among other factors, the **development of regional areas**. Consult the Queensland strategy here.
- **Tasmania**, in 2023, updated the **Government Manual**, an extensive document that includes guidelines to be followed for any state government process. The Manual includes a section that refers to impact statements, one of which is the **"Social/Community Impact Statement"**. This statement is mandatory for new policies along with review of the existing one, and involves analyzing the effect on the well-being of certain groups, such as **remote or isolated communities**. Access the Manual here.
- In **Victoria**, there is a Guide regulating the design of policies (**"Victorian Guide to Regulation"**) that is made up of the seven key questions established by the OIA in its Impact Analysis. The Guide includes the requirement of preparing an **"Impact Assessment"**, where the perspective of Regional Victoria or the rural and remote areas are usually taken into account. Consult the Guide here.
- Lastly, In **Western Australia**, the **"Better Regulation Program"** (BRP) is in place, a program that guides the development, design and implementation of the state legislative proposals. Although the BRP focuses above all on all the possible impacts on the economy, one of the six mandatory steps detailed in the manual is carrying out an impact analysis that is not only economic but social and environmental, including effects on certain groups, communities and regions. Consult the BRP here.

The international level

New Zealand

Although only 16% of the population of New Zealand lives in rural areas, the Ministry for Primary Industries has made it **one of its priorities to support rural communities**, so that they continuously undertake reports, studies, statistics and programs on the different aspects in rural areas (connectivity, rural schools, health, research, etc.)

New Zealand published its first **Rural Proofing Guide** in 2008, later formally renewing its commitment to the development of this mechanism in 2018. Since then, the **Ministry of Primary Industries** has revised and updated this guide, which, although recommended, is not of mandatory compliance.

Currently, the Rural Proofing Mechanism is presented through a **15-minute-interactive module** which describes what Rural Proofing consists of, and explains the process to follow to incorporate the rural perspective in policy-making decisions.

The module, aimed at public agencies and authorities, follows the **same methodology as the Australian model**, implemented **through the seven steps**. In addition, this tool is accompanied by a **checklist** as a guide through these seven steps.

Discover the New Zealand Rural Proofing Mechanism [here](#).

(Parnell y Lynch 2023).



The international level

South Korea



During the 20th century in Korea, industrialization brought about a **marked exodus to the cities**, especially to Seoul and its surroundings. Today rural communities continue to suffer from **population loss and the aging** of its inhabitants, since young talent continues to tend to migrate towards urban centers. In fact, **60% of people employed in agriculture and livestock-farming are older than 65**, an age expected to rise in coming years.

For this reason, in an effort to revitalize rural areas and end the existing disparities with urban areas, one of the government priorities is inclusion of rural areas in the development agenda. At this point in the century, the country has **experienced a paradigm shift**, in which it has chosen as its Rural Proofing strategy a **decentralization and inter-ministerial, multi-sectoral and bottom-up approach**.

The rural development policy in Korea is focused on two aspects: **economic development and the well-being of rural communities**. Both lines of action are coordinated by inter-ministerial committees. The **Committee for**

Balanced National Development is in charge of fostering the economic development of rural areas, while the **Committee for Improving Quality of Life of Farmers and Fishermen and Rural Development** are in charge of making services reach these communities and ensuring their well-being. The work of the committees is based on **active collaboration** between the different ministries, as well as the members of civil society, rural stakeholders and organizations, from a multi-sectoral perspective.

Every five years, the Committee for National Development, headed by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport (MOLIT) publishes a **Regional Development Plan**, while the Committee for Improving Quality of Life, headed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (MAFRA) launches a **Plan for Improving Quality of Life**.

Rural Proofing in Korea has essentially been implemented through the **"Quality of Rural Life Policy"** which is enforced through the different Improving Quality of Life Plans (the 4th Plan for the period 2020-2024 is currently in effect), and

whose legal framework is the **Law of Quality of Rural Life from 2004**. The reach of this policy has been extended since the first Plan was implemented in 2004, beginning with access to basic services to covering diverse sectors, such as culture, leisure activities, safety, landscapes and the environment in rural areas.

The first mention of Rural Proofing appeared during the 2nd Improving Quality of Life Plan, with the creation of the **Rural Services Standards (RSS)**, which establishes the bases for the minimum public services that residents of rural areas must have access to. The RSS were included in the Law of Quality of Rural Life.

The **Korea Rural Economic Research Institute (KREI)** in cooperation with local authorities and provincial institutes, is in charge of supervising implementation of the RSS, which have proven to be quite effective thanks to a monitoring mechanism, incentives and citizen engagement.

Consult the interview with Jung Moon Soo, researcher at the Korea Rural

The international level

South Korea



Economic Institute, carried out by the Spanish Rural Network here.

Rural Proofing began to be implemented in an institutionalized way in 2020, with the coming into force of the **MAFRA Rural Impact Assessment Guides 2020**. This regulation stated that every year the Committee for Quality of Life must choose at least two subject areas encompassed in the RSS to which the **Rural Proofing Mechanism** is to be applied. For example, in 2021, the two themes selected for the application of Rural Proofing were the “Urban and rural transport system” and “Commuting conditions for rural students”.

Thus, each year, rural organizations and stakeholders, together with experts in these issues, must prepare a plan that establishes the guidelines to assess the impact on rural areas, and which must be reviewed and approved by

the committee. In accordance with this plan, all of the policies and projects in the subject matter selected are analyzed from a rural perspective. Following the assessment, a report or improvement plan is published that is directed to the authorities in charge of the projects and policies, who must then implement the measures and improvements included in the report.

Every three years as of 2021, MAFRA must revise and update the Guides, and new changes have to be approved by the Committee for Quality of Life.

At the same time, since passing of the first National Development Plan in 2004, under the Law of Balanced National Development of 2003, the Government has sought to foment economic development in other regions beyond Seoul through a **decentralized model**. For that purpose, the Committee

for Balanced National Development selected a location to construct a new **administrative complex** to relocate government offices from Seoul. This was how construction began in the **new city of Sejong**, 130 kilometers from Seoul. Sejong was inaugurated in 2012, and since then it has functioned as the **administrative capital of the country**. By 2020, the city already had 20,000 government employees, representing 16% of people working in the city. Furthermore, in 2005 **the Committee selected 10 other locations throughout the country to construct the so-called Innovation Cities, to relocate not only public agencies there from the Seoul area, but also main actors, private companies and universities**.

Consult the National Atlas of Korea III 2021 here to learn more about Sejong and the Innovation Cities.



The decentralization process in Korea has not only consisted in the physical relocation of offices, it has also brought about **the transfer of administrative competencies and functions** from the central government to regional and local governments. In this way, regional autonomy has been increased, encouraging regions to follow their own roadmap to development according to local priorities and values. This strategy, which began at the end of 1980s, has only expanded since that time, under an increasingly robust legal framework. Today the process is coordinated by the **Inter-ministerial Committee on Autonomy and Decentralization**, which also includes representation from civil society and local associations.

Thus, the role of local governments has gone from implementing the policies and programs developed by the central government to being the

ones in charge of their design. At the same time, the Committee for Balanced National Development is responsible for reviewing those projects carried out in rural areas and assessing the level of satisfaction among the population through questionnaires, and accordingly cut funding to inefficient projects or provide incentives to outstanding ones.

Nevertheless, there is still substantial economic disparity between urban and rural areas in Korea, for which the Governmental likewise seeks to **decentralize fiscal functions**. In this way, **local governments would have greater financial capacity to undertake their new functions**, given that local administrations currently receive 60% of their resources from the central government.

Thus, the Korean Rural Proofing method is a **decentralized model**

based on **vertical coordination and cooperation** between public administrators, local agents and **citizen participation** applying a **territorial approach** that allows policies to be developed according to the geography.

OECD 2021; MAFRA 2020; NGII 2021; KREI 2019; Jung 2021

The international level

Chile



In Chile, **83% of its territory** is considered rural, **where 25.5% of the country's population resides**. The people who live in rural comunas (municipalities) face a series of **common challenges**, such as remoteness from basic services, an exodus to the cities, a low level of economic diversification, and failure to sufficiently value and safeguard cultural and natural heritage.

For decades, public and private efforts had been concentrated in large cities, bringing about a **disparity in access to goods, services and opportunities** between the rural and urban worlds. In an effort to reverse this situation and **eliminate the gap between urban and rural**, in 2012, the Government proposed making a change in the rural

paradigm, backed by the OECD.

For eight years, with the participation of the **public and private sectors and civil society** at the local, regional and national level, the **National Rural Development Policy (NRDP)** was created. This Policy seeks to improve quality of life and enhance opportunities for the population residing in rural territories. It proposes achieving **territorial balance** through a framework of common guidelines that facilitate **coordination between the agents and variables** that influence development in rural areas and small municipalities.

The NRDP establishes a series of frameworks and objectives that serve as a **road map for generating changes**

that are more concrete and permanent, carried out gradually through new laws, regulations, and public planning and programs. The Policy is built around four ambits from which four central concepts and objectives are taken: **social welfare, economic opportunities, environmental sustainability and culture and identity**.

At the local level, implementing the guidelines of the NRDP is the competency of each comuna, which must incorporate Policy objectives into its Communal Development Plan. For its proper execution, municipalities must create workshops for public-private collaboration.



At the regional level, the regional governments are in charge of integrating the NRDP into the strategic instruments for territorial planning, regulation and management, such as the Regional Development Strategy. For that purpose, they are supported by the Division of Regional Planning and Development and must foment participation of civil society and the private and public sectors.

At the **national level**, responsibility for its implementation falls on the **Inter-ministerial Commission for City, Housing and Territory** (COMICIVYT), which monitors progress and compliance with NRDP objectives through the **System of Quality of Rural Life Indicators** (SICVIR). The

SICVIR is a platform that provides updated information on the state of the four ambits of action of the Policy in the **263 rural and mixed comunas** of the country through a **set of indicators** that enable the territory quality of life to be measured and assessed. Consult the progress of the NRDP in each comuna [here](#).

Furthermore, the Republic's presidency since 2023 has been advised by the **National Council for Territorial Development** for proper implementation of the rural perspective in public policies. The council includes representatives from public sectors, civil society, academia and professional groups.

(Undurraga y Romero 2020).

At the national and regional level

Spain is one of the European Union countries at **greatest risk of depopulation**. In fact, **8 out of 10 towns with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants** have declined in population in the last decade, a figure that increases as the size of the town's population decreases.

This **demographic and territorial phenomenon** is caused by the exodus from rural areas to the cities by a predominantly young population in search of work opportunities and access to services and resources (REDR 2023).

Within this context, the Government of Spain developed a **National Strategy to Tackle the Demographic Challenge** (which was put into effect in 2021 through the Plan of 130 Actions).

Hence, **Spain has set a precedent at the European level** by incorporating Rural Proofing into Law 27/2022, of December 20, which institutionalizes policies in the General Administration of the State.

This **Law of Assessment of Public Policies** sets out in its sixth additional provision the creation of a Rural Proofing Mechanism. It also adds that this mechanism "shall assess effects on the territory and the rural areas and society of public policies", and "take into account the principles, recommendations and tools proposed by the European Union in this ambit"(BOE 2022b).

Since then, several Autonomous Regional Communities have created their own Rural Proofing Strategy and have incorporated it into their **autonomous legislation**, becoming of mandatory compliance. The approach followed by these Regional Autonomous Communities has been to make **analyses or reports on demographic or territorial impact** compulsory in procedures for drawing up legislative, regulatory and sectoral projects.

In February, 2024 the Senate passed a motion proposing creation of a **Rural Observatory** in Spain. This motion represents a step forward in the creation of public policies from a rural perspective, adapted to the specific needs of the territory. The Rural Observatory is seen as a **key instrument to improve data gathering and analysis**, basing public policies on rigorous, empirical and systematic research (REDR 2024).



At the national and regional level

Galicia

With the coming into effect of **Law 5/2021, of February 2, regarding Galicia Demographic Revitalization**, this Regional Community incorporated the demographic perspective into enacting legislation and in the creation, execution and monitoring of all policies and actions carried out by the autonomous administration.

As stipulated by this Law of Demographic Revitalization, the Galician Rural Proofing Mechanism is put into practice through a **demographic impact analysis in policy-making processes**. The administrative entity with competencies in matters of demographic revitalization is responsible for providing the **guidelines for execution** of this analysis, and will be responsible for their posterior revision.

Additionally, the Law establishes publication of an **annual report** on the demographic situation of Galicia that the **Galician Observatory for Demographic Revitalization** must make. Consult the reports published in 2022 and 2023 [here](#).

Thus, Observatory is appointed to define a **set of indicators** that orient public administration policies in Galicia in matters of demographic revitalization. Access the system of indicators [here](#).

(Pérez Gabaldón 2022; DOG 2021).



At the national and regional level

Castilla-La Mancha

Law 2/2021, of May 7, regarding economic, social and fiscal measures for tackling depopulation and for developing rural areas in Castilla-La Mancha highlights as one of its priorities implementation of the demographic perspective in autonomous government actions, as well as monitoring and assessing their effectiveness.

To achieve this objective, the Law of Rural Development stipulates that a compulsory **report on the demographic impact** in drafting procedures for legislative and regulatory projects be made, as well as in plan and program design carried out by the Regional Administration. This document must analyze the possible effects on rural areas with problems of depopulation and establish measures to **adjust the proposed policy to the rural area reality**.

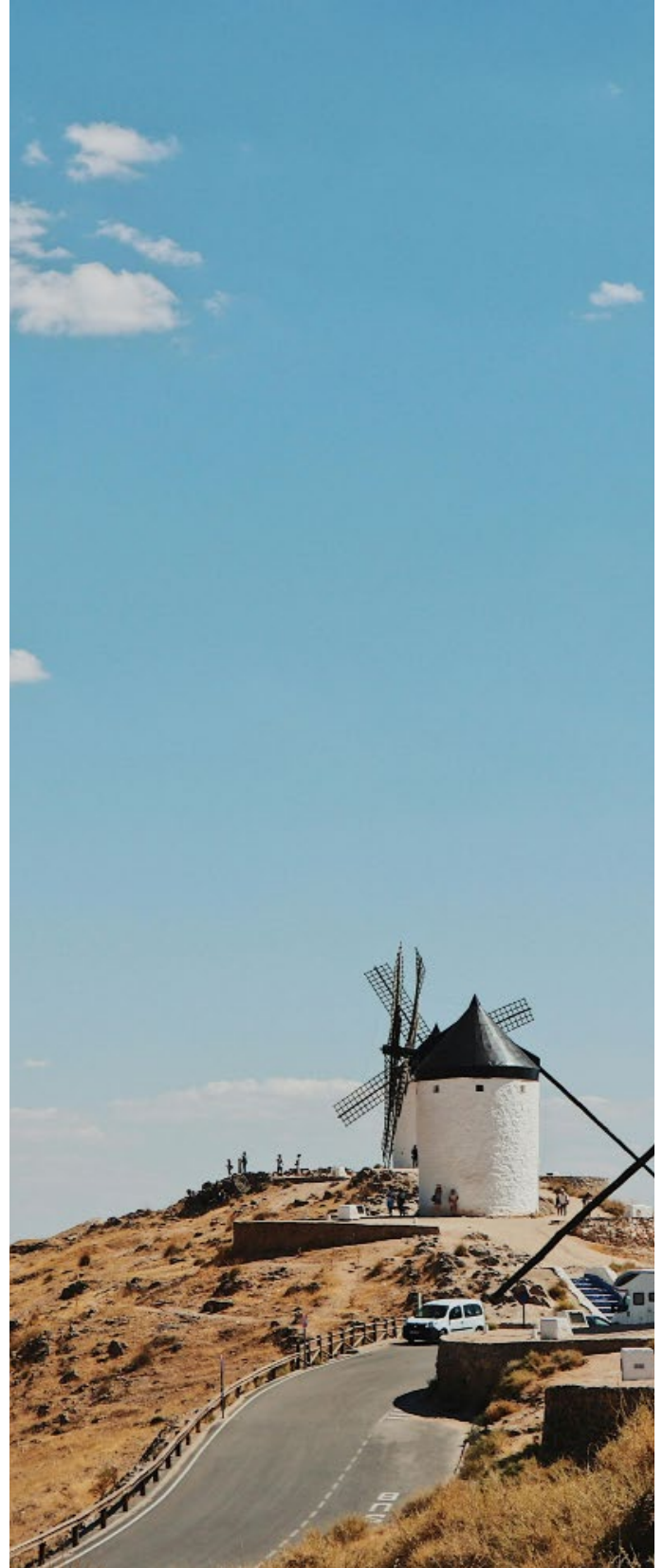
Once again, it corresponds to the body with competence in matters of demographic challenge to provide the **guidelines, criteria and methodology** to facilitate the making of the report. Furthermore, in preparing regional budgets, **indicators** must be taken into account that enable the demographic impact to be integrated into the budgetary policies.

Here you will find a **form** (checklist method) for preparing the report on demographic impact published by the Junta of Castilla-La Mancha.

(Pérez Gabaldón 2022; BOE 2021).

Did you know?

Article 11 of this law establishes the different typologies for rural areas in the region to implement the adapted measures: sparsely populated areas, areas at risk from depopulation, and peri-urban rural areas.



At the national and regional level

Extremadura

With **Law 3/2022, of March 17, regarding measures for tackling the demographic and territorial challenge in Extremadura**, this regional community went on to institutionalize the demographic and territorial perspective in drawing up, executing and monitoring the policies within its competence.

The incorporation of Rural Proofing, as established by this Law, must be done through a **demographic and territorial impact analysis** in drafting procedures for legislative projects, decrees and sectoral planning policies that are carried out by the Junta de Extremadura. The administrative center initiating the proceedings is responsible for preparing this analysis.

In addition, the law stipulates that in preparing the Regional Community General Budget, **indicators** must be employed that enable the demographic and territorial perspective to be integrated into the budgeting policies. Learn more about the **Synthetic Index of Influence in population settlement** [here](#).

(Pérez Gabaldón 2022; BOE 2022a).



At the national and regional level

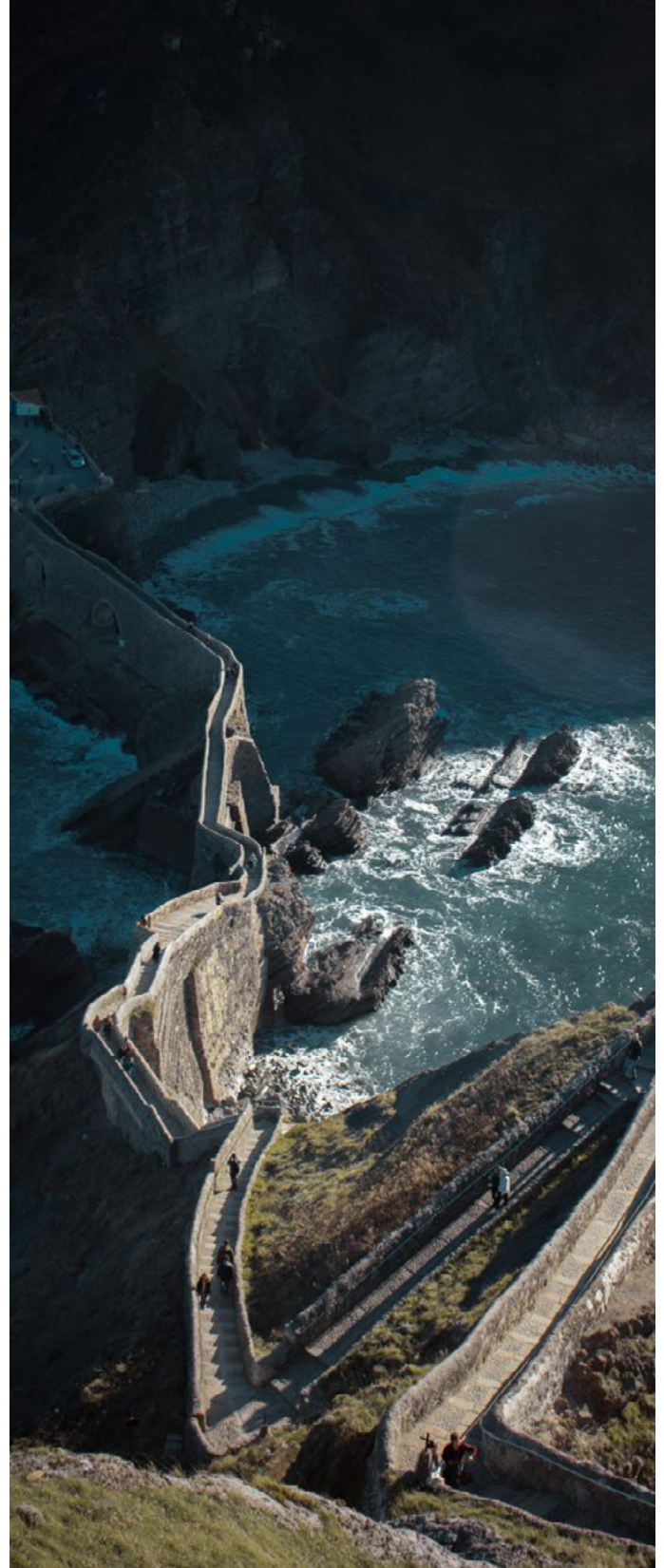
The Basque Country

In the case of the Basque Country, **Law 7/2022, of June 30, regarding Rural Development** seeks to incorporate the “rural lens” approach in its institutional and sectoral policies, adapting them to objectives and foreseen actions in rural development policies.

For that purpose, the Law establishes that institutional planning, programs and initiatives that involve rural areas must be subject to a **binding report** prior to their approval. The report must consist of **analysis of policy adequacy for the territorial ambit** of its action, evaluating if the needs, priorities, sectoral objectives and bases for action in rural areas have been taken into account. The reports must be approved by the **Commission of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development Policy** before becoming binding and transferred to the institution or departments affected.

These reports must be produced by the department in charge of matters of rural development pertaining to the instigating institution. These departments will have **technical support from Lurralde** to process the reports. Lurralde is a new management service from the **Fundación Hazi** aimed at territorial development and foreseen to soon be adopted to begin application of the Rural Proofing focus.

(BOPV 2022)



At the national and regional level

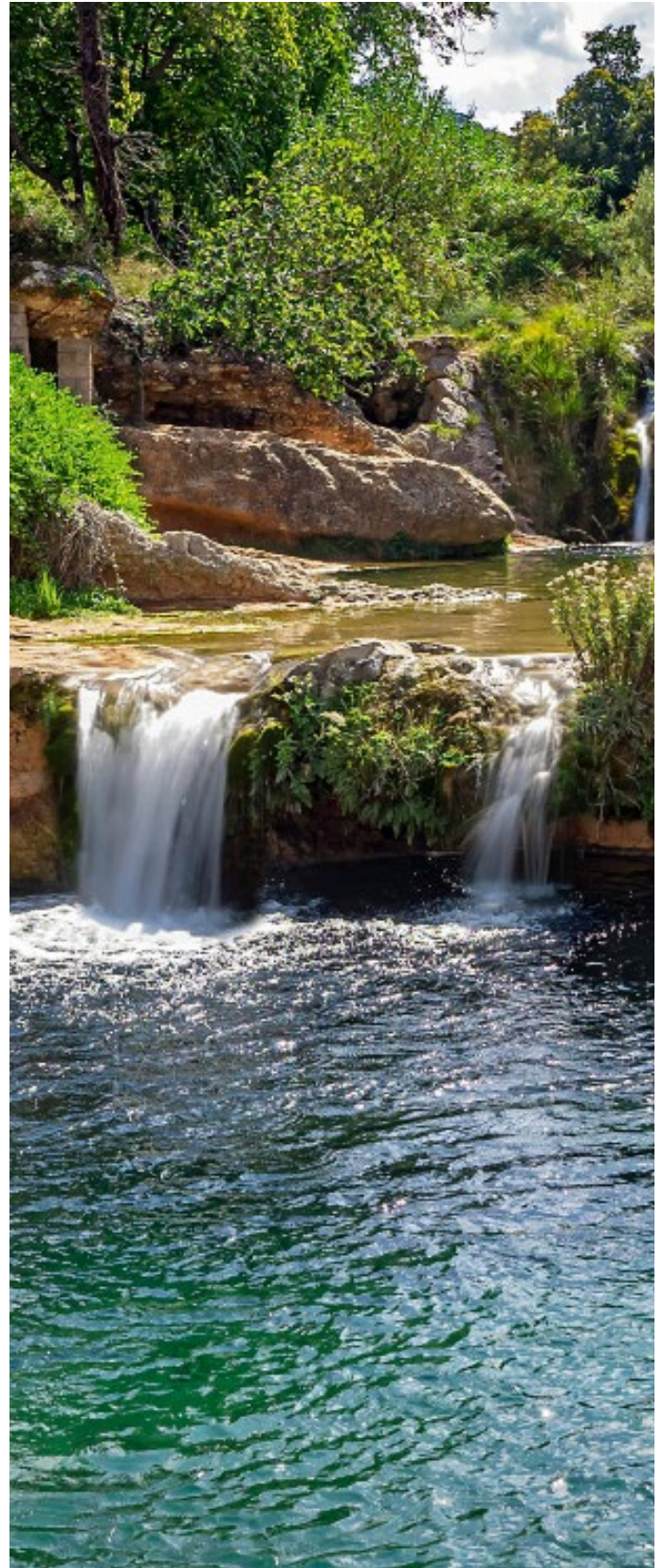
Aragon

Law 13/2023, of March 30, regarding revitalization of rural areas in Aragon has led to the creation of a Rural Proofing Mechanism with which to foment and revise all of the sectoral and socio-economic policies through the perspective of demographic change and combatting depopulation, analyzing their possible effects on rural areas.

This mechanism must be applied through **demographic impact analysis** whose guidelines are provided by the **Demographic and Population Revitalization Observatory**. The Observatory has been established as the consulting body of the Regional Community Public Administrations for incorporating the demographic and population perspective in global, sectoral and local policies, as well as monitoring the effects of said policies on rural areas. At the same time, the Commission **appointed by the Government for territorial policy** is the body responsible for establishing the necessary measures for incorporating the Rural Proofing Mechanism.

Furthermore, the Mechanism establishes that the strategic plans and regulatory framework for subsidies from the departments of the Aragon administration must incorporate **positive discrimination criteria** to promote actions of revitalization, development and combatting depopulation in rural areas.

(BOE 2023b).



At the national and regional level

Comunidad Valenciana

With the coming into effect of **Law 5/2023, of April 13, Comprehensive Measures against Depopulation in the Comunitat Valenciana**, legislative projects with the status of law such as the sectoral planning of the Generalitat (the Regional Government) must incorporate a **report from the rural perspective on depopulation and territorial equity**.

This report consists of **prior impact assessment of the policy** proposed in terms of demographic challenge and territorial cohesion, so that the new regulation and planning development are **adjusted to the specificities and the administrative resources** available in the municipalities. The Law further establishes that this process must include a **consultation phase** with representatives from the affected territories.

The department or administrative body that proposes the drafting of the law or the project plan or program is responsible for making the report from the rural perspective. At the same time, the entity in charge of matters of policy to combat depopulation is responsible for providing guidelines, instructions and methodologies to facilitate preparation of the report.

The text also adds that to facilitate integration of the social and sectoral impact that **budgetary policies** could have on depopulation, preparation of the autonomous regional budgets shall include a set of **indicators** in this regard.

(BOE 2023a).



At the national and regional level

Principado de Asturias

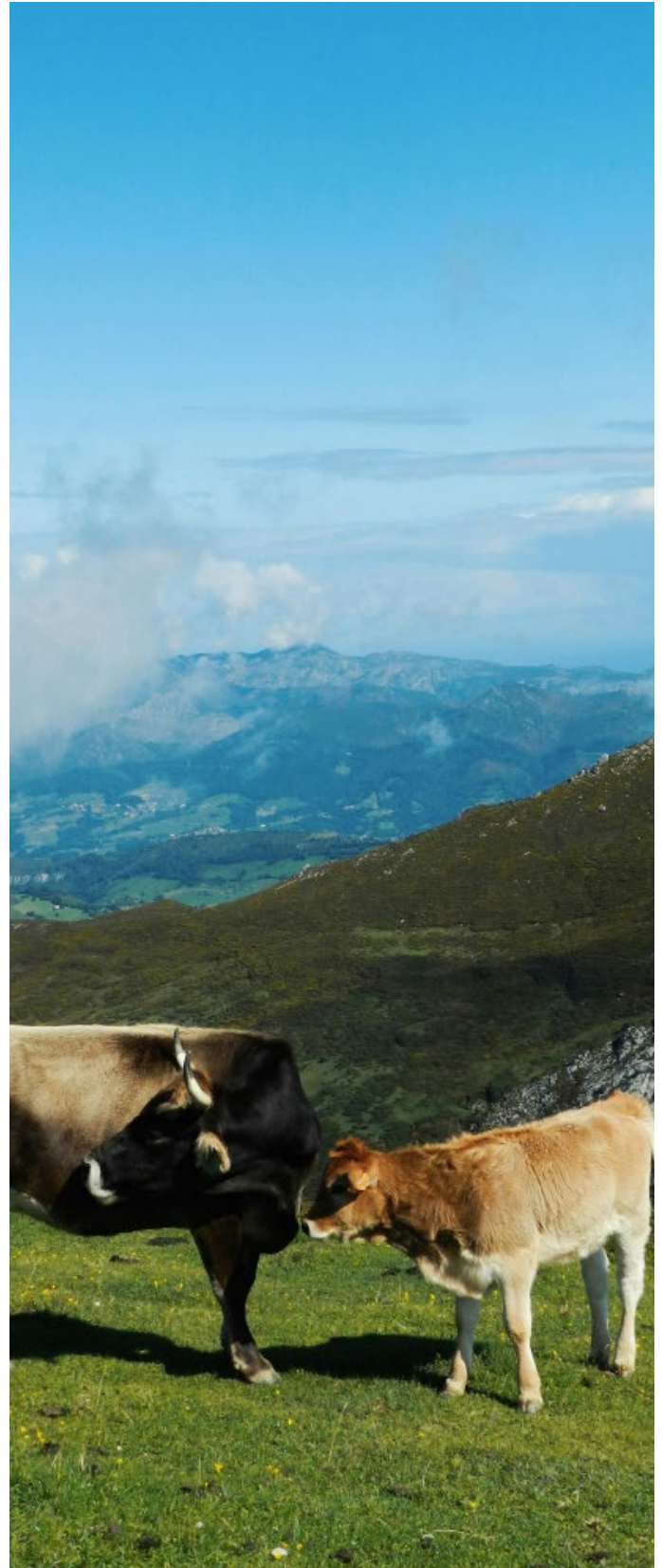
The last regional autonomous community to have added a Rural Proofing Mechanism to its legal framework is the Principado de Asturias through its **Law 2/2024, of April 30, regarding Demographic Revitalization**.

This Law, which came into force in May, 2024, and in line with the **Principado de Asturias Demographic Plan** (2017-2027), is aimed at demographic revitalization in the region, focusing special attention on **population loss, depopulation and abandonment of rural areas**. To achieve this objective, the law establishes the need for a new assessment tool: the demographic impact report.

Along these lines, it establishes that draft legislation, decrees and sectoral planning carried out by the Autonomous Administration must be accompanied by a **demographic impact report**.

At the same time, it sets out that within the six months of the law coming into effect, the Principado de Asturias Administration entity responsible for demographic matters should provide the guidelines and methodology to prepare and process this report.

(BOPA 2024).



At the national and regional level

Catalonia



Catalonia began the process to apply the Rural Proofing perspective in its commitment to drawing up the **Catalonia Rural Agenda in 2020**. After the initial design phase of the project, a process of public consultation was employed, proposals were collected, and debates held, leading to the final document, approved in May 2022 by the Generalitat, the Regional Government. The Drafting Committee for the Rural Agenda of Catalonia was made up of the **Association of Rural Initiatives of Catalonia (ARCA)**, the **Association of Micro-villages of Catalonia**, the **Catalan Association of Municipalities**, the **Advisory Council for Sustainable Development**, and a **Chair in the Rural World**.

The fundamentals on which the Catalonian Rural Agenda are based are the following:

- People, Well-being and Demographic Challenge
- Ecological Transition
- Connected Territory
- The Agri-food System
- The Forestry System
- Economic and Social Innovation and Revitalization
- Governance

In relation with Rural Proofing, this Agenda proposes creating a coordinating entity that ensures this rural perspective in policies.

Access all of the documentation for the Catalonia Rural Agenda [here](#).

Within the framework of the Catalonia Rural Agenda, the **draft of the Statute of the Rural Municipality Bill** has been drawn up, whose objective is a **new regulatory framework that adapts to the specificity of each rural municipality** and that responds to the needs and demands of its inhabitants. Within this context, the Generalitat Government recognizes the **Rural Proofing Mechanism** as an essential tool for **ensuring the integration and fomenting repopulation** of rural municipalities.

Thus, the text regulates the implementation of this Mechanism,



containing the obligation for draft legislation, decrees and general provisions that involve rural municipalities, to incorporate a **mandatory rural impact report**. This analysis should consist of an assessment of the repercussion of the foreseen legislation on rural municipalities. At the same time, in the case of any incident, the necessary modifications and corrective measures should be included. Additionally, the reports drawn up from the **regulatory framework** and the adjudications of calls **for grants and subsidies** must also incorporate the perspective of possible impact on rural municipalities.

The text also establishes the **Catalan Council of Rural Municipalities** as the

entity ensuring compliance with the Law. This is a new **advisory entity** on issues affecting rural localities. The Council will be in charge of supervising that the Mechanism is properly implemented and evaluating the impact of the proposed regulations on rural municipalities.

Once the Law is passed, a **study group** will be created made up of experts and representatives from the Catalan Council of Rural Municipalities and the Interdepartmental Commission of Rural Governance, who will draw up a report on how legislation and the existing sectoral and economic policies affect rural municipalities. This report will also establish the guidelines for **drawing up future legislation from a rural perspective**.

Additionally, the proposal establishes that **the councils must provide assistance to** the rural municipalities in assessing impact of the legislation prior to its passing, as well as a review function after it comes into force. For that purpose, each council must have a **specific municipality support unit**.

(Generalitat de Catalunya 2022).

At the national and regional level

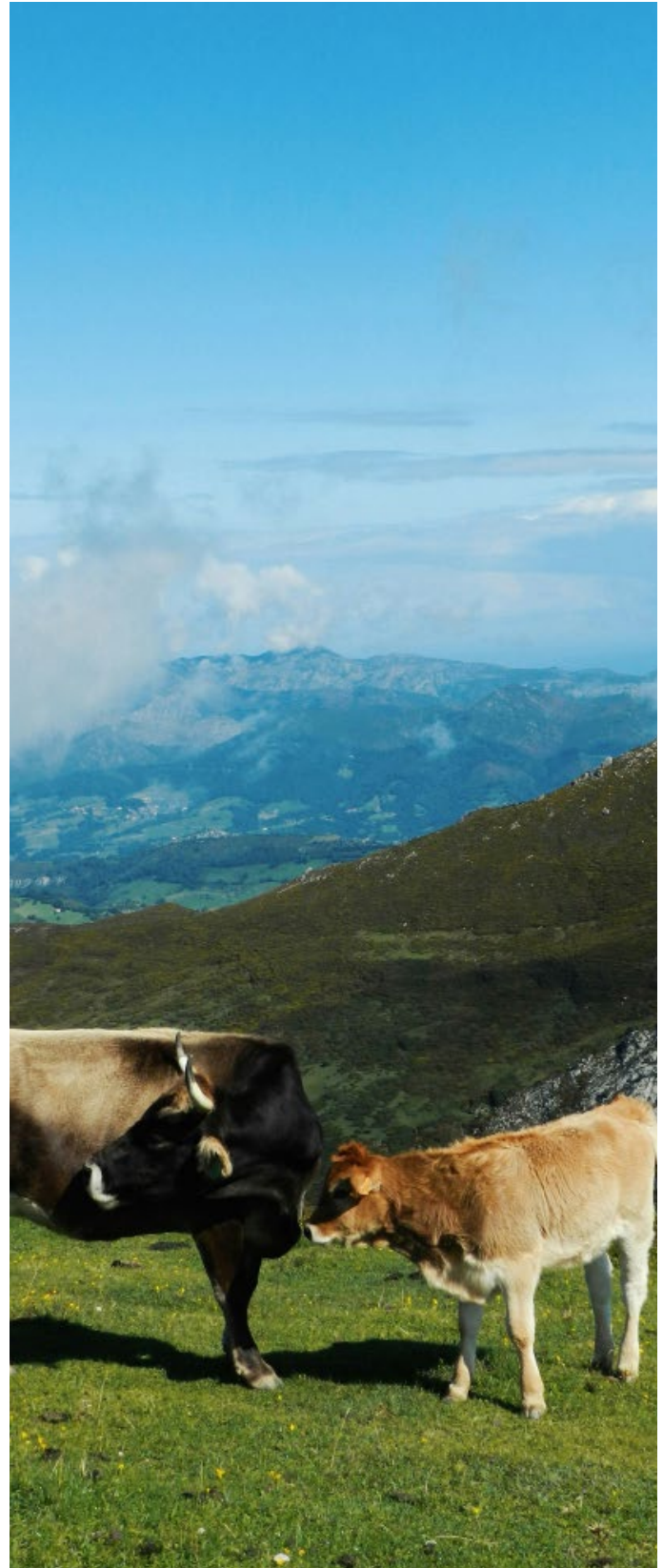
Región Foral de Navarra

Navarra is also currently in the process of including Rural Proofing in its regulations, having just closed the deadline for public consultation for **Draft of the Foral Law of Rural Development in Navarra**.

The proposal includes the obligation of the Regional Community's public administrations to incorporate an **impact on rural development report** in drafting regulations and drawing up planning, programs and budgets. This report must analyze the possible effects on rural areas.

The text also establishes that it is the Administration Department of the Foral de Navarra Regional Community responsible for matters on rural development who provides **guidelines, criteria and methodology** to facilitate preparation of the report.

(Gobierno de Navarra 2024).



Other initiatives and projects

The OECD Principles on Rural Policy

In the group of OECD countries, rural areas account for **80% of the territory**, with **30% of the population living there**. These rural lands and their inhabitants are a source of a large part of the resources that guarantee our way of life, such as fresh water, energy, wood, metal and minerals.

For this reason, the OECD has had a **rural development framework** in place for over 40 years. This tool has helped orient member states in their efforts to **increase prosperity and improve well-being in rural areas**.

This framework has evolved over the years, and was last updated in 2020 through the publication **Rural Well-Being: Geography of Opportunities**.

The new Rural Well-Being Framework establishes a rural-urban continuum in which it introduces different types of rural areas with differing features and policy needs. The OECD recognizes the need for a **broader policy approach** and one that is better geared to take into account the diversity of **rural areas**.

The OECD Rural Development Framework evolved as such from a one-dimensional perspective to a **multi-dimensional approach to rural**

policies, where not only the economic ambit is taken into account, but also social and environmental aspects. At the same time, it goes from the rural dichotomy to a **continuum perspective** that recognizes rural diversity, and from one involving only public administrations in decision-making to one fomenting **collaboration with the private sector and civil society**.

Consult the OECD Rural Well-being Framework here.

In 2019, the OECD adopted the **OECD Principles for Rural Policy** after analyzing the work carried out and the outcomes obtained in the last 20 years by the organization. These principles arose in the effort to guide **local governments, local administrations and shareholders in rural areas** to put the Rural Well-being Framework into practice.

There are 11 principles that make up the roadmap to implement Rural Proofing at all scales:

1. Maximize the potential of all rural areas.
2. Implement policies and governance at the right geographic scale.
3. Support urban and rural interdependences and cooperation.

4. Set a forward-looking vision for rural policies.
5. Leverage the potential of rural areas to benefit from globalization, trade and digitalization.
6. Support entrepreneurship to foment job creation in rural areas.
7. Align strategies to deliver public services with rural policies.
8. Strengthen the social, economic, ecological and cultural resilience of rural communities.
9. Implement a multi-sectoral and multi-level policy approach in rural areas.
10. Promote inclusive participation in the design and implementation of rural policies.
11. Foment the monitoring, assessment and accountability of policies implemented in rural areas.

See each of the OECD Principles on Rural Policy in more detail here.

(OECD 2020; 2019).

Other initiatives and projects

The Rural Proofing Mechanism in the the EU



Rural Proofing was first outlined at the European level in 2016 at the **European Conference on Rural Development Cork 2.0**. Since then, Rural Proofing has gone on to form part of policy discussions and many European agendas. Nevertheless, its implementation lacks a clause making it a requirement, so that it **depends on the will of each Member State**.

Since 2021, the European Commission has invited Member States to implement it through its **Long-term Vision for EU Rural Areas (LTVRA)**. The LTVRA defines the challenges and concerns faced by rural populations and shares the main opportunities available. During the formulation process, the European Commission consulted the population on several occasions. On one occasion,

it opened a broad **public consultation** that registered more than 2,300 contributions, of which the majority (378) came from Spain, reflecting **our country's commitment to the health and prosperity of rural areas**. In this consultation, all types of stakeholders participated, from civil society to public authorities, businesses, associations, academia, and Networks for Rural Development.

Learn more about the Long-term Vision for EU Rural Areas here.

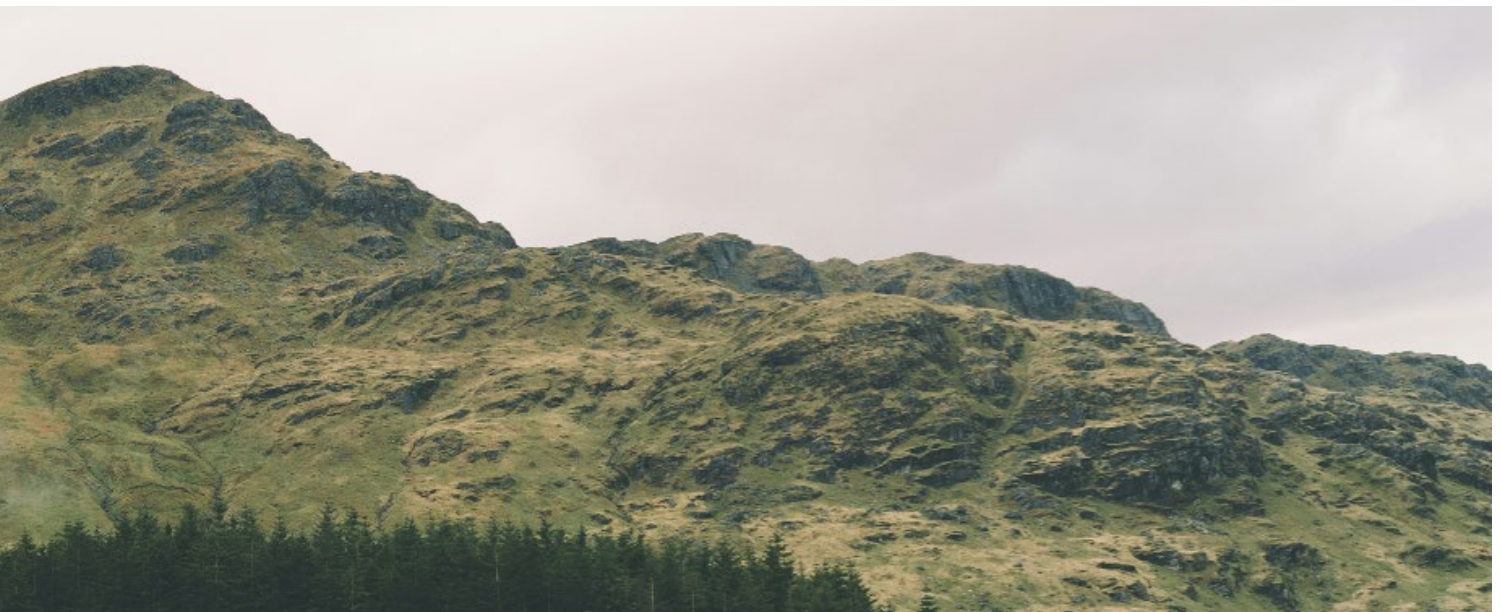
The LTVRA proposes the **Rural Pact** as one of the tools to achieve correct application of Rural Proofing. It provides a framework to facilitate dialogue and cooperation between rural area stakeholders.

Join the Rural Pact Community here.

At the same time, the LTVRA has also been accompanied by the creation of several tools, such as the **Rural Observatory** and the **Rural Toolkit**.

The **Rural Observatory** is focused on gathering and disseminating data on European rural areas. Furthermore, the Observatory contributes towards a better understanding of rural areas, through an **impact assessment** of EU legislative initiatives in rural areas. It also provides **guides, tools and information** for designing policies from a rural perspective. Access the EU Rural Observatory here.

The **"Rural Toolkit"** is a platform that offers **updated information on all the**



EU funding sources that can be used for revitalization of rural areas, as well as resources and sources of inspiration. You can consult the platform here.

At the same time, in line with this vision, the European Union implements the Rural Proofing mechanism in its own regulatory processes. Thus, in EU **regulation and policymaking**, the European Commission must follow the **“Better Regulation Guidelines”**. These guides include, among others, assessment of the possible impact of the proposed policies on the rural context.

To facilitate fulfillment of these guidelines, they are complemented by the **Better Regulation Toolbox**, a compilation of tools that through the **checklist method** help assess a policy's

possible impacts and how to deal with them, carry out public consultation projects, and engage in monitoring. Specifically, tools 18 and 34 deal with **territorial impact**.

Consult Guidelines and the Toolbox here for a better regulation in the EU.

In addition, the EU has an interactive digital tool, **ESPON TIA**. This is free access tool to assess ex ante the territorial **impact of proposed policies**. ESPON is not solely aimed at the different departments of the Commission that take part in the regulation, but also at any administration or stakeholder involved in initiatives and projects that can in some way affect rural areas. Access ESPON TIA here.

(REDR 2023; EU, s. f.).

Other initiatives and projects

Rural Health Advocacy Project (RHAP)



The **Rural Health Advocacy Project (RHAP)** from the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg seeks to ensure **equal access to healthcare in South Africa rural communities.**

To achieve this vision, RHAP is structured around four strategic objectives:

- **Rural proofing policies:** ensuring that existing policies and future ones take into account the rural context and protect the right to quality healthcare in rural communities.
- **Financing rural healthcare:** promoting appropriate, sufficient and transparent funding that facilitates access to the healthcare system in the rural environment.
- **Human resources for rural healthcare:** advocating for a better distribution of healthcare workers in rural areas.
- **Monitoring and implementation:** gathering information on the state of healthcare in rural areas and incentivizing implementation of good practices.

In 2015, RHAP introduced the **Guide for Rural Proofing for Health based**

on the WHO standards. The objective was to provide guidelines to include Rural Proofing in the **“National Health Insurance Fund”**, (NHI).

Consult The RHAP Rural Proofing Guide here.

An example of a success story where RHAP Guide recommendations were integrated is that of the “Ward Based Primary Healthcare Outreach Teams”. Along these lines, the Department of Health of the Government of South Africa recognized the need to apply a Rural Proofing Mechanism in its **Strategic Plan and Policy Framework for the Primary Healthcare Outreach Teams 2018- 2024** as part of the 2030 National Development Plan. The strategy establishes as a priority guaranteeing access to basic healthcare services in all of the rural communities in the country. It establishes that the Primary Healthcare Outreach teams will be expanded according to funding, **first prioritizing the poorest and most vulnerable areas.** Furthermore, to **adapt healthcare services to the specific needs of each area**, it implements a bottom-up monitoring

system, where it is the medical teams themselves who through the checklists inform about the situation at the local level.

(RHAP, s. f.; 2015; Rensburg 2021; National Department of Health 2018).

Other initiatives and projects

Rural Proofing for Health Toolkit

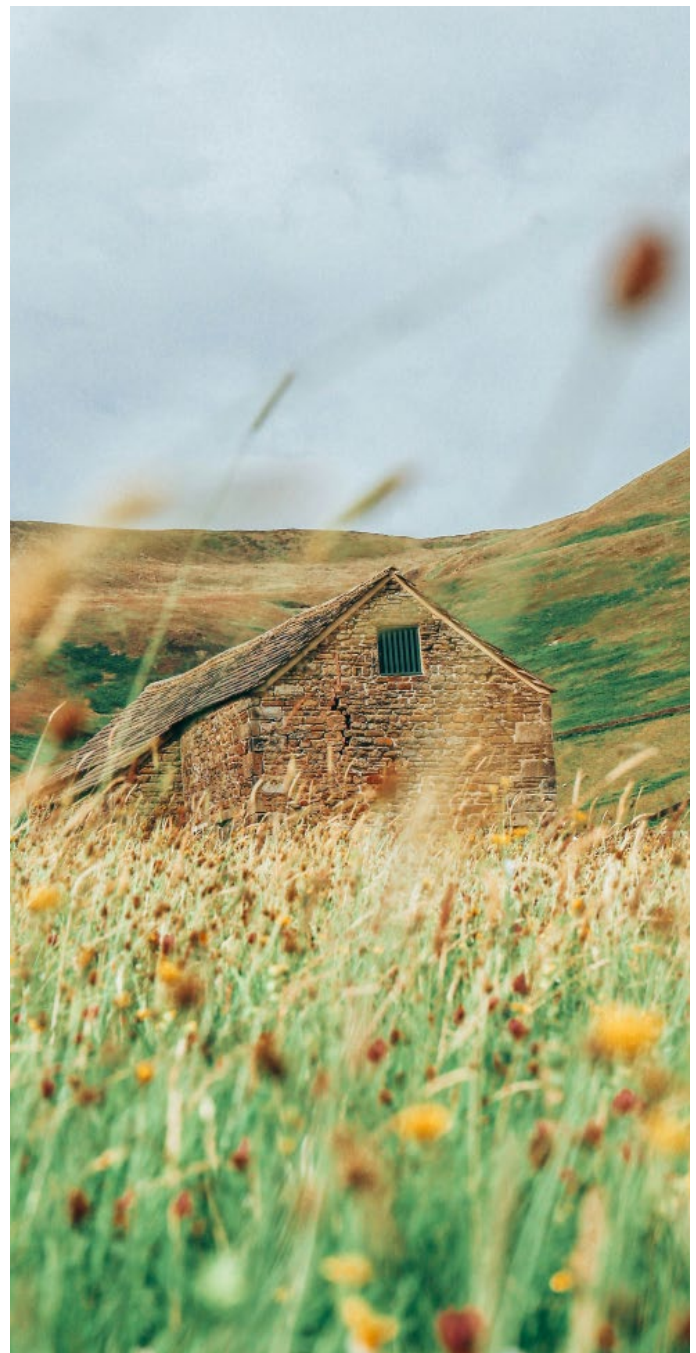
Along the lines of South Africa, “Rural England”, an independent research and networking organization in the rural English context, in 2020 published together with the National Center of Rural Health (NCRHC), **the Rural Proofing for Health Toolkit**.

This is a set of tools to implement the Rural Proofing Mechanism in the healthcare system of England. This guide is aimed at organizations that work in the healthcare sector, to help them take into account the needs of local rural communities when developing strategies and initiatives.

Through the **checklist methodology** the Guide provides orientation about design and planning of healthcare service in the rural context, focusing on six themes: hospital services; primary and community care; mental health; public healthcare and prevention services; social work; healthcare personnel.

The toolkit also includes more than 10 good practices or case studies where Rural Proofing was successfully applied in healthcare systems in the country’s rural localities. Consult it [here](#).

(Rural England 2020).



Other initiatives and projects

Thrive Rural Framework

Aspen CSG is an entity in the United States that advocates for the **prosperity of the rural community and the Native nations**. Under a future equitable vision that facilitates the development of these communities, in 2022 this institute developed the **“Thrive Rural Framework”**. This is a tool aimed at all the stakeholders in the rural community to guide them in designing projects, initiatives, regulations and policies that affect rural communities and/or Native nations.

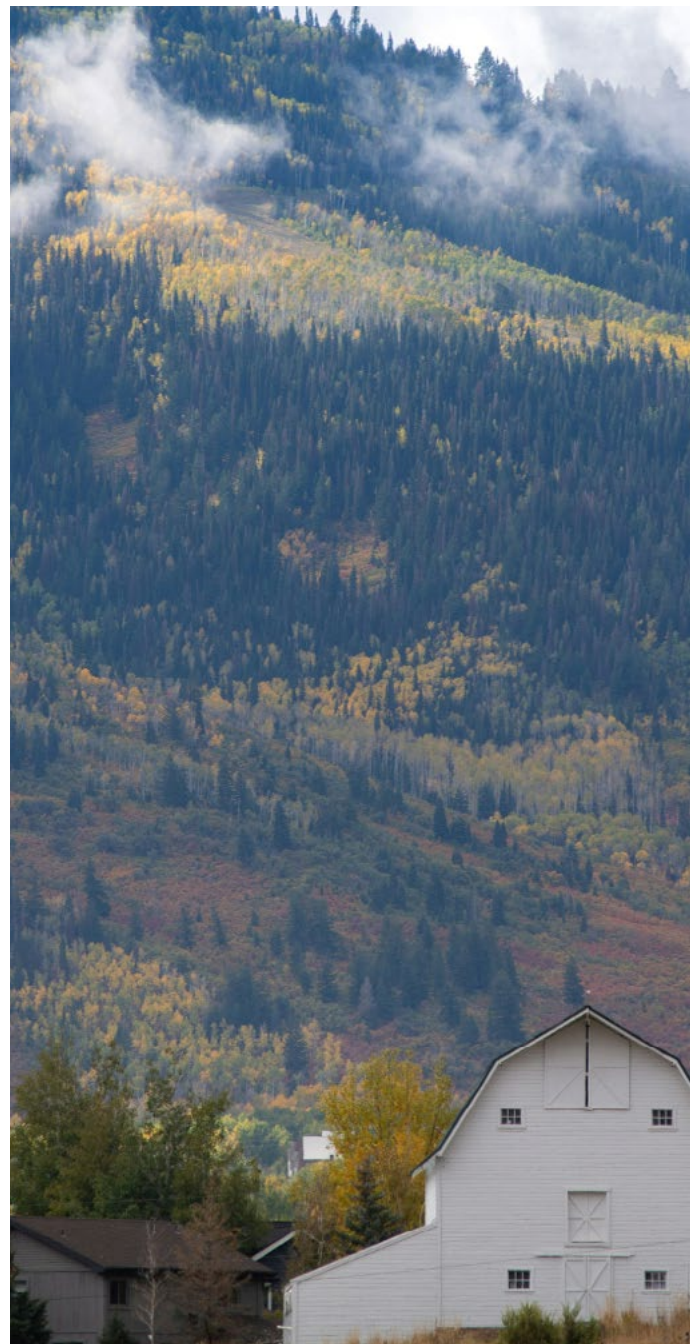
This framework has been designed with collaboration of **local, regional and national organizations, consultancies and researchers**, and takes into consideration different aspects of well-being and the development of rural communities, such as **health, the economy and the environment**. A central aspect of the tool resides in it working at different levels to be able to attain the necessary prosperity, with **citizen participation** and a **bottom-up approach** being essential.

The guide takes into account, in addition, the **specific needs and realities** of these communities, as well as the **discriminatory practices** that they often face. Some of these factors include the size and location of the community, race, immigration, the culture and the acquisitive power.

One in five people in the United States live in rural areas, and of those, four out of five are **racialized persons**.

These rural communities and Native nations, who inhabit **97% of the land area** in the United States, play an **essential role in the country’s economy, culture and future**, since hydraulic, energetic, and food resources are inherently rural. Consult the Thrive Rural Framework [here](#).

(Aspen CSG 2022).



Other initiatives and projects

Interreg Project Coop4RURALGov

Coop4RURALGov or “**Rural Proofing. Cooperation for better governance with a rural approach**” is a project being led by the Office of Depopulation of the Government Navarra for the 2023-2027 period. The project pertains to the **Interreg Europe Program** and is financed with **FEDER funds**.

It consists of collaborative work and the **exchange of interregional experiences** between four countries (Estonia, Bulgaria, Ireland and Spain) and seven organizations through which it seeks to **improve governance through Rural Proofing**.

To this end, Coop4RURALGov will create a **toolbox** that serves as a guide to revise the impact of legislation on rural, coastal and mountain areas. It is foreseen to contribute to **reducing regional inequalities** and redressing economic, social, security and territorial disparities.

The project is aimed at developing a Rural Proofing mechanism based on an innovative **SMART methodology** adapted to the specific needs of each territory and that enables systematic review of policies with a rural approach from the very start of the policy-making process.

(Administración Local 2023).



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