

What is a long term vision?

Visioning is a stock taking exercise, an imaginative self-empowerment and an expression of individual and collective ambition

You start with: Where are we today? And where are we going?

You continue with; What are we dreaming of? And: What do we fear?

Then you start creating your space: Where would we like to be in 10 or 20 years?

And go deeper into: What are our needs, potentials, aspirations, shortcomings, gaps, hurdles

Finally you would watch out for support to make the vision real: So you ask for: “What would be the enabling conditions in learning, cooperation, governance, policies and support?”

Rural Development visioning is going on all the time:

Right now there are two main Rural Vision processes going on in Europe.

One led by **rural civil society and rural stakeholders**, Rural Parliaments, rural People, and a broad range of alliances active in rural Europe

The other process is led by the **European Commission**.

Both need to relate to each other

What is Our Long Term Rural Vision for the coming ten or twenty years?

As **Agricultural and Rural Convention ARC2020**, we envision people in regions and organisations all over Europe working together to enable rural people to initiate and carry socio-ecological transition. A **vision for 2040** is important, but a sustainable and coherent policy change for a just socio-ecological transition must **start now in 2020**.

We see a strong need to improve **EU governance systems and policy leadership**, recognizing and strengthening the role of civil society but also of **CAP Strategic Plans** now being prepared by **National Member States**. We need more than just a vision which ignores the coming programming period. We need **strategic coordination** and smaller scale “seed” investments now which create the conditions for larger investments in all socio-economic fields relevant for rural areas. **We see the need for a rural taskforce and a rural proofing policy.**

The earlier and the more local, regional, national and EU levels engage with each other in building a long term vision and strategy for rural Europe - the better. That is the role of LEADER groups and LAGs. There are entities and initiatives that can help with this, from **ENRD to NRNs, to Rural Parliaments** and organisations like **Ecolise, Forum Synergies and ARC2020** - we are all bringing dialogue and action ideas together. **ARC2020 has recently contributed** in this regard on 7 July with the Conference “A Vision for Rural Europe” at the European Parliament and **we will continue this process in the coming months.**

See our working document on a vision and a strategy for rural Europe:

<https://www.arc2020.eu/working-document-on-a-vision-and-strategy-for-rural-europe-now/>

Why does the EU Commission start the “Long Term Rural Vision Process” - only now?

It seems it is because Rural Policy is now seen as being more than just a second pillar of the CAP.

Formally, there was an internal process going on at EU [commission level](#), with a roadmap feedback period from 22nd July to 9th September.

Now we are in the **public consultation** stage, which is going on until 30th November. All going well, the Commission plans to adopt an act for mid 2021, which will be called a “**Communication on Rural Europe**”- the first of its kind on an institutional level.

The Commission’s **Long Term Rural Vision 2040** process is developed under the Directorate General “**Democracy and Demography**”, integrating other elements such as the **European Green Deal (EGD)** with its **Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategy**. Internal Submissions are up until 7th November. **A conference** gathering ideas from the **public consultation process** and the Commission’s **internal process** will be held in spring 2021, prior to the publication of the already mentioned “**Communication on Rural Europe**”

The **thematic context** covers well known challenges like **rural depopulation and demographic change**, but also **access to social and digital infrastructure**, and rural **economic and social innovation**, but also taking into account a range of **socio-environmental goods**, **climate** mitigation, **biodiversity** recovery, the need for a more **circular economy** and an appropriate response to the **covid-19 pandemic**.

With **Covid 19** there is a strong new dimension to it: - **more digitalised and decentralised living and working** may attract young people and new rurals, and a re-invention of the rural space.

Could the ambition for a Rural Vision lead to better coordination of resources for rural development?

EU Institutions are aware that we are facing **multiple, interlocking crises**, with **Covid-19** just being the latest. **Commission President Ursula von der Leyen** showed ambition with the **EU Green Deal**. She called it “**Europe’s Man on the moon moment**”, including policy strategies like farm to fork, biodiversity, circular economy, just transition and eight more formal initiatives.

The Commission’s rural vision process involves **3 General Directorates (Democracy and Demography, Agriculture, and Cohesion)** ; **The Farm to Fork strategy involves 5 different DGs: DG AGRI, DG ENV, DG MARE, DG SANTE and DG TRADE**. This is an innovative way to work together **within** the Commission.

It's fair to say too that with the **Green Deal Proposal** the Commission has thus been **far more ambitious than the Council of Ministers and even the European Parliament**, as regards funding and the status of the ambitious targets. However, **the flexibilities requested by member states for their National Strategic plans may also provide opportunities for rural actors** such as LAGs, LEADER companies, EIPs and others to engage at the national level.

What is the EU Green Deal all About?

Officially, the European Green Deal provides an [action plan](#) to

- boost the efficient use of resources by moving to a clean, circular economy
- restore biodiversity and cut pollution

The plan outlines **investments** needed and financing tools available. It explains how to ensure a just and inclusive transition.

The EU aims to be **climate neutral in 2050** with a [European Climate Law](#) to turn this political commitment into a legal obligation.

Reaching this target will require action by all sectors of our economy, including

- investing in environmentally-friendly technologies
- supporting industry to innovate
- rolling out cleaner, cheaper and healthier forms of private and public transport
- decarbonising the energy sector
- ensuring buildings are more energy efficient
- working with international partners to improve global environmental standards

The EU will also provide financial support and technical assistance to help those that are most affected by the move towards the green economy. This is called the [Just Transition Mechanism](#). It will help mobilise at least €100 billion over the period 2021-2027 in the most affected regions.

How can the Rural Vision process interact with the EU Green Deal?

Rural areas have unique opportunities to contribute here. **EU Green Deal** has **12 thematic areas** which include **farm to fork and biodiversity strategies** (which also includes forestry and digitalisation). But they also include **circular economy, just transition, climate law, energy integration and energy directive renewals**. All these fields of action have **dedicated budgets** as well as **significant CAP and recovery funds for integration**.

CAP at least is a quite developed part of the EU's functionality. With **an ambitious reform** it could potentially give us more tools, supports and opportunities for rural agri-food and forestry.

Moreover, the CAP Strategic Plans - which are being written by member states as we speak - need to integrate elements of the EU Green Deal such as Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategy. To a significant extent, **all CAP objectives relate to rural Europe, from farmer income to climate, landscape, biodiversity and environment**. Importantly, **“Vibrant Rural Areas” is also one of nine objectives**.

The main problem is that there is a **blind spot** for **DIRECT** rural integration into the initial Green Deal planning. **INDIRECTLY** - rural integrates into ALL areas, but especially just transition, circular economy, farm to fork, biodiversity are not specifically integrated into the next CAP. Just before the EP will adopt its position on CAP reform by the end of this month, the problem is that the Green Deal ambitions are being watered down by Council as well as the Parliament. It would be only logical that during the following trilogues between Commission, Parliament and Council the Commission would amend its own proposals accordingly.

What role could LEADER have in future rural development?

First of all LEADER and CLLD projects and structures should be **present and visible** in both Rural Vision processes - at **civil society and institutional level**

In the new programming period, LAGs should not simply be seen as **decentralized offices for distributing small grants** but as partnerships for fostering real bottom-up resilience and a transition to a greener and fairer society.

Already the CAP Strategic Plans currently being formulated will need to integrate in the EU Green Deal - so the parts of CAP that LEADER relates to, will have this extra layer.

LEADER and CLLD can enhance imagination and innovation by further supporting and highlighting the needs for socio-ecological transition within rural businesses and communities. This includes social farming, forestry, agritourism, rural enterprise clusters, new rural and potentially digitised livelihoods in all realms of rural societies. The LEADER method can be nurturing rural talents and helping regions develop in a resilient manner - this redoubles in these EU Green Deal Covid times.

The ENRD Thematic Group on Vision 2040 for Rural Europe

...in which Marion and I are members, has analysed that of the **35 headline targets/objectives under Farm to Fork and Biodiversity strategies, a full 24 have relevance for the vibrant rural areas objective within CAP reform.**

The ENRD analysis adds a further 14 components of the EU Green Deal - eight of these have direct relevance for vibrant rural areas, including this rural vision process, two circular economy initiatives, new forestry strategy, climate adaptation, environmental action plan, clean energy and mobility.

[ENRD analysis](#),

https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/sites/enrd/files/draft_agenda_1tg_egd.pdf

https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/enrd-thematic-work/greening-rural-economy/european-green-deal-rural-areas_en

https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/1st-meeting-enrd-thematic-group-rural2040-long-term-rural-vision_en

Following the Conference in the European Parliament on our [vision and strategy for rural Europe](#) , ARC2020 has highlighted the **strategic role of LEADER and CLLD** in promoting inclusive structural changes, **building community capacity to stimulate innovations as key drivers of a socially, environmentally sustainable and just transition in rural areas.**

But we have also stressed that In order to ensure that local development strategies effectively empower local communities make the changes happen as mentioned above, the **European Commission and Member States must drastically simplify procedures and reduce bureaucratic burden.** They should ensure the use of **one lead fund and harmonised one stop shop solutions** to improve multi-funded CLLD projects in both rural and urban areas, including harmonised selection criteria and calls, simplified cost options, block exemptions from State Aid Rules, simplified application processes and eligibility conditions for small and civil society projects, and co-funding options for smaller projects by foundations and other agencies).

