



Policy Insights

Funding rural Europe's future: Investing in the next generation

Young people represent an important pool of talent for sustaining the future of rural Europe. A useful variety of opportunities is available from the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and elsewhere to help younger generations find employment in rural areas by sourcing funding for their business ideas.

The younger generation of rural citizens has a crucial role to play in safeguarding the long-term sustainability of Europe's countryside. Regarding agriculture, the CAP defines young farmers as being up to 35-40 years old (exact upper age limit to be set by MS). CAP can support such a sustainability goal through facilitating funding for the business proposals and ideas of young and future farmers, as well as other young rural entrepreneurs.

CAP Strategic Plans (CSP) interventions for the programming period 2023-2027 can be used to help Member States create conditions which enable young people to fulfil their potential in rural areas through financing rural employment and entrepreneurship as well as vocational training. Young people can take advantage of all the **CAP interventions in their country**, which are expected to support production and investment, promote generational renewal, and foster cooperation and knowledge exchange. Here the CSPs can assist proven approaches as well as more innovative thinking. For example, young farmers and generational renewal will be supported with at least EUR 8.5 billion under the new CSPs and a total of 377 000 new young farmers are expected to set-up their own businesses with CAP support in the 2023-2027 period.

LEADER success stories

Support from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural development provided by **LEADER** has been particularly successful at supporting youth entrepreneurship throughout rural Europe. For example:

- In Austria, LEADER funds helped implement **Creative Apprentice Workshops** to inspire careers for school leavers in rural craft trades. On average, around 30% of the project's target group started an apprenticeship with a company that they got to know through the project.
- Latvia is home to another typical LEADER success story involving youth employment results from an innovative **creative arts facility** aiding new rural jobs and income for local people under 30 years old.
- Finland has also demonstrated good practice in using LEADER for tackling rural depopulation pressures experienced by young people through LAG innovation, such as the **SILTA** project's cooperative structure which fostered and nurtured business ideas from rural residents aged 16-21.
- **Coworking spaces** in Spain illustrate more good practice showing how LEADER can be used to build social capital in rural communities by actively attracting young skilled professionals.



Demand for CAP's youth support options is stressed in the EU's long-term [Vision](#), which calls on Member States to increase employment and learning opportunities for young people in rural and remote areas. The Vision also points to the reinforced [Youth Guarantee](#), a commitment by all Member States that each young person (under 30 years old) in rural and remote areas "receives a good quality offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship." Other complementary policy insights on this CAP topic have emerged from the [EU Youth Strategy's](#) dialogue with over 50 000 young people resulting in a dedicated goal for [moving rural youth forward](#).

Supporting youth know-how

Young people are often interested in modern innovations and embracing new ways of doing things. This characteristic helps them to be front-runners in tackling rural demographic challenges. Results contribute to improving the appeal of rural Europe as an attractive place to live, work, and visit. Examples of how this happens on the ground are demonstrated in the [Rural youth as leaders of change](#) and the [Youth and Generational Renewal EAFRD Project Brochures](#).

Outcomes from the [Young entrepreneurs - Engines of innovation in rural areas](#) EU CAP Network workshop also offer helpful insights. The event provided examples of different support possibilities for youth innovation through EIP-AGRI Operational Groups or other EU-funded programmes, such as the [Erasmus for young entrepreneurs](#). Win-win benefits emerge from the Erasmus cross-border exchange programme as aspiring entrepreneurs gain an opportunity to learn from experienced

entrepreneurs already running small businesses. These proprietors can in turn profit from fresh perspectives on their business and learn about options for new markets.

Part of the EU CAP Network's mandate involves encouraging coordination between CSPs and complementary funding sources like Erasmus. Member States' new National Networks for 2023-2027 can play key roles in raising awareness among young rural entrepreneurs and their stakeholders about the EU's overall support for rural youth employment. For instance, CSP funding awarded to National Networks can contribute to help younger rural citizens understand assistance offered through the [Enterprise Europe Network](#), [European Social Fund Plus](#), [Regional policy](#), the [European Maritime, Fisheries, and Aquaculture Fund](#), and [LIFE](#) as well as through private sector credit leveraged via [EU financial instruments](#) and other [EU policy support for young entrepreneurs](#).



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