

2nd Thematic Group meeting on Rural Youth Employment: The Voice of Rural Youth

The **second meeting** of the **Thematic Group (TG)** reflected on support programmes and tools that are available at different levels (EU, national, regional, local) and further explored how they help rural youth employment in practice. The discussion aimed to help identify functional youth employment support models in order to inform relevant policies.

Introduction

The meeting started with a review of TG activities conducted since the **first TG meeting**. These included informal networking exchanges on trends in rural employment and on TG members' experiences with support programmes and tools (some of them published on the **event page** - see Documents), as well as a Twitter chat. All these activities helped to set the scene for the second TG meeting.

A short survey of TG members asking, 'What would be one key message that you have taken so far from the TG activities?' confirmed that the diversity of needs for rural youth employment can be managed best by tailoring support to local circumstances. It was also pointed out that living in the countryside is not a limitation, but an opportunity.

EU and national support programmes and tools



Conversations between TG members and institutions were opened by Elena Schubert (DG AGRI, Unit B3 Social Sustainability), who **informed** about the opportunities provided by CAP 2023-2027 in relation to young farmers and rural youth. She referred to the funding opportunities for young people, especially considering the need for generational renewal and sustaining food security. In addition to the age gap in rural employment, the gender gap and the need to attract more women into agriculture was highlighted.

CAP funding opportunities presented included the complementary income support for young farmers (CISYF) and the installation of young farmers and rural business start-ups. Furthermore, CAP 2023-2027 provides opportunities and services to rural youth by developing infrastructures and basic services in villages, developing local economy and business development in rural areas and supporting community led developments related to societal needs through LEADER and Smart Village strategies. In addition, the majority of Member States committed in their CAP Strategic Plans (CSPs) to include the organisations

Event Information

Date: 23 May 2023

Location: Virtual meeting

Organisers: CAP Implementation Contact Point (CAPI CP)

Participants: 40 participants from 14 EU Member States, including young farmers and rural entrepreneurs, MAs, NNs, European organisations, the European Commission, Local Action Groups (LAGs), national/regional stakeholder organisations and researchers.

Outcomes: Exchange of members' experiences on support mechanisms and tools for rural youth employment; identification of functional youth employment support models.

Web page: [2nd TG meeting on Rural Youth Employment](#)

representing youth in the Monitoring Committees for CSPs. The European Commission attached great importance to young people. This has become visible throughout the **European Year of Youth (2022)**. TG members were encouraged to make use of the **European Youth Portal** for information on various youth employment opportunities and EU funding.

Various national support programmes outside the CAP were **presented** by funders and beneficiaries. Matteo Solivo from the Italian organisation Microfinanza described the programme Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs, which facilitates international work placements for young Italian entrepreneurs. Alessandro Villella, one of the programme beneficiaries, shared with TG members how the placement in Spain broadened his business development opportunities.

Another example of a support tool managed at the national level was presented by Thomas Jonsson from the Swedish Public Employment Service (PES). This PES provides career experience for school-leavers in disadvantaged regions through the '**Ungdomsjobb**' programme.

Local and regional support programmes and tools



This session showcased support provided at the regional and local level. The Spanish Innovation & Talent programme implemented in the Extremadura region was presented by TG member Maria Soto Gallardo. This regional support scheme under the Public Service Employment (SEXPE) facilitates a 12-month apprenticeship contract for unemployed people under the age of 30. Beneficiaries enjoy high prospects to remain employed, which is also the personal experience of Maria.



Another Spanish initiative from Madrid Region, presented by Mario González Azcárate, is a private crowdfunding model also called 'Match-making'. Crowdfunding was shown to be effective for enhancing youth employment in agri-food supply chains through matching private and public funding. This can simultaneously improve young entrepreneurs' familiarity with financial terms and instruments whilst drawing on market demand from investors and consumers for products and services related to farming, such as agroecology and pastoralism.



In France, as reported by local elected representative Quentin Legouy, a group of local municipalities (the communauté de Communes Val de Cher Controis) supports youth employment with a grant of 3 000 EUR to local businesses employing young people. The Erasmus programme is used not only for university students, but also to allow young inhabitants to go to a high school in a different county and help them broaden their horizons. In addition, the LAG Vallée du Cher et du Romorantinais (Loir-et-Cher), active in the area, supports cultural activities for local youth.



Finland's Youth LEADER fund, presented by TG member Paivi Hakkarainen, is implemented in approximately half of Local Action Groups (LAG) in the country. It provides youth with financial support to start their own project or business idea while the rules and the amount of the funding varies across different LAGs. The Youth Fund is very easy to participate in, provides information in a simple form, and involves youth in the local decision-making processes.

These examples (more details available on the [event page](#) – see Presentations) inspired participants to share more good practices during the plenary discussion, including the match-making initiative '[RAISE Youth](#)' implemented in Croatia.



The subsequent discussions in the breakout groups provided space to exchange about success factors of existing support programmes/tools for rural youth employment, as well as options for improving their functionality and uptake by young people. TG members reiterated the value of well-targeted communication and outreach and the importance of providing training (e.g. on business skills) as well as mentoring. Other valuable elements included the dissemination of best practices, establishing 'ambassadors' to promote knowledge and use of support tools, aligning the support to appropriate age groups (e.g. young people who set up businesses in their 30ties might not qualify for some support schemes targeted at younger cohorts) and the overall need to promote positive aspects of rural life and agriculture. Details from the discussion are collected in the Miro boards on the [event page](#).

Reflections on EU-wide projects and actions



The meeting continued in the afternoon with a panel session discussing additional enabling conditions for rural youth employment, gathered from the analysis of larger-scale approaches. This session featured projects spanning several countries: the Cost Action '[Rural NEET Youth Network](#)' (presented by Francisco Simões), the H2020 project [Ruralisation](#) (presented by Willem Korthals Altes) and the project [CoWORK4Youth](#) (introduced by Laura Incze).

The discussion noted how disadvantaged groups such as young mothers, NEETs (not in education, employment or training), and long-term unemployed residents of regions with population loss have benefited from practices that fill gaps in the provision of business spaces or that reduce mismatches between skills and jobs. All ways of easing access to land acquisition were welcomed; migrants were recognised as representing a resource; and the need for careful coordination of projects, programmes and policies was again stressed.

Closing speakers Shane Quigley ([Rural Youth Europe](#)), Elena Schubert (DG AGRI) and David Lamb (CAPI CP) thanked the TG members for the rich and useful collection of examples and the expertise that had been shared throughout the TG's work. Members were encouraged to continue networking and keep developing youth-led actions to foster rural youth employment.

See the [TG webpage](#) for information about the TG's overall outcomes.