



Basic information	
2024/2105(INI) INI - Own-initiative procedure	Procedure completed
Strengthening rural areas in the EU through cohesion policy Subject 3.10.01 Agricultural structures and holdings, farmers 3.10.01.02 Rural development, European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)	

Key players				
European Parliament	Committee responsible		Rapporteur	Appointed
	REGI Regional Development		NESCI Denis (ECR)	11/11/2024
	Committee for opinion		Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	AGRI Agriculture and Rural Development		GUARDA Cristina (Greens /EFA)	02/12/2024
European Commission	Commission DG		Commissioner	
	Regional and Urban Policy		FITTO Raffaele	

Key events			
Date	Event	Reference	Summary
28/11/2024	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
13/05/2025	Vote in committee		
04/06/2025	Committee report tabled for plenary	A10-0092/2025	
16/06/2025	Debate in Parliament		
17/06/2025	Decision by Parliament	T10-0122/2025	Summary
17/06/2025	Results of vote in Parliament		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2024/2105(INI)

Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 55
Other legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 165
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	REGI/10/01481

Documentation gateway				
European Parliament				
Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee draft report		PE766.660	28/01/2025	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE770.089	06/03/2025	
Committee opinion	AGRI	PE771.931	08/04/2025	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A10-0092/2025	04/06/2025	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T10-0122/2025	17/06/2025	Summary
European Commission				
Document type		Reference	Date	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2025)10-09	09/10/2025	

Meetings with interest representatives published in line with the Rules of Procedure

Rapporteurs, Shadow Rapporteurs and Committee Chairs

Transparency				
Name	Role	Committee	Date	Interest representatives
GUARDA Cristina	Shadow rapporteur	REGI	12/02/2025	ELARD
GUARDA Cristina	Shadow rapporteur	REGI	03/02/2025	Euromontana

Strengthening rural areas in the EU through cohesion policy

2024/2105(INI) - 17/06/2025 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 622 votes to 24, with 21 abstentions, a resolution on strengthening rural areas in the EU through cohesion policy.

Despite occupying 83 % of the EU territory and being home to a quarter of its population, rural areas are facing serious difficulties as a result of major demographic, economic and social challenges. There are still disparities between urban and rural areas in terms of cohesion policy funding, with urban areas receiving three times more funding than rural areas.

Key role of cohesion policy

With its aim to reduce regional disparities and foster balanced development, EU cohesion policy has a key role to play in securing a sustainable future for these areas at risk of being left behind as a result of population ageing, youth emigration, a lack of services, and limited job and social opportunities.

Rural areas are essential for food production and security, serving as guardians of landscapes, living rural heritage, social and cultural traditions. They play a key role in promoting the strategic autonomy of the EU through the agricultural sector, which remains a strategic priority of the EU. However, their significance remains under-appreciated and inadequately funded.

Revitalising rural areas

Members stressed that the Union must promote genuine revitalisation and regeneration of these territories, by redoubling its efforts to provide rural areas with the right tools to overcome the considerable long-term challenges they face. Parliament recommended:

- strengthening **short supply chains** and promoting the use of labelling systems to recognise the quality and variety of traditional products from rural areas;
- consolidating the role of **small and medium-sized towns** as development centres in rural areas;
- taking measures to combat poverty in rural areas;
- increasing **investment in research and innovation** in rural areas, particularly in the areas of sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, digital transformation and innovative mobility solutions, in order to strengthen the competitiveness and resilience of rural regions and create energy autonomy and new employment opportunities;
- ensuring **equal access**, particularly for vulnerable people and people with disabilities, to all healthcare, transport and connectivity services, specific plans for affordable housing, water services, education and training services, digital infrastructure and other basic services such as postal and banking services;
- improving the quality of transport and digital connectivity so that citizens can easily access work, schools, hospitals, public services and employment opportunities, and accelerate investments in broadband connectivity.

Post-2027 rural strategy

Members called on the Commission to devise a rural strategy for the post-2027 programming period and urged the Commission and the Member States to ensure the **incorporation of a rural dimension** in relevant policies and to make sure that the strategy promotes the economic and social development of rural areas and to allocate specific resources to the modernisation of agriculture, supporting rural small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and start-up and promoting short supply chains in order to make rural areas more connected, competitive, resilient and attractive to young people and investors.

To ensure the long-term prosperity of rural areas and support a strong agricultural sector to maintain this prosperity in rural areas, it is essential to **strengthen the synergies** between EU Structural and Investment Funds and Horizon Europe, the EU's flagship research and innovation programme, and the CAP in the next multiannual financial framework (MFF).

Future cohesion policy

Parliament called on the Commission to ensure that the future cohesion policy is **firmly and comprehensively focused on the development of rural areas**, so that all strategic initiatives contribute to the objective of reducing territorial disparities. It stressed the need for an **integrated European strategy** for the revitalisation of rural areas, including through the development of bio-districts, recognising their potential for diversifying the rural economy by targeting fiscal, economic and social measures to maintain the active population.

Member States are invited to make full use of all support measures for **rural, inland, mountainous, island and outermost regions**, as well as for cross-border regions and regions situated at the external borders of the Union, including those bordering Russia, Belarus and Ukraine.

Support policies

Parliament stressed the importance of promoting priority policies that support **young people**, as the main actors of the rural exodus, and called on the Commission to ensure them an effective application of the 'right to stay' through targeted measures, designed to stem the demographic decline in rural areas. It also urged the Commission to adopt measures to protect the family farming model that underpins the rural territory, is more environmentally friendly and guarantees food security in the EU. In the context of a more sustainable model, the Commission and the Member States are called on to take strong and targeted action by **reducing excessive regulatory burdens** and ensuring fair market conditions, to mitigate the decline in the number of farms and encourage generational renewal.

The Commission is also called upon to ensure that trade agreements respect European agricultural standards and guarantee a level playing field for EU farmers.

Culture and tourism

Members recognised that tourism is a major source of income for many rural areas with the potential to draw in growing numbers of visitors curious to discover their culture, nature and traditions through the unique experiences on offer. Investing in rural tourism, in synergy with the agricultural, food and cultural sectors, means not only improved accommodation facilities and a better supply of activities with which to showcase the local produce, culture and identity, but also fresh economic opportunities for local communities, encouraging job creation and entrepreneurship while keeping local traditions alive.

Strengthening rural areas in the EU through cohesion policy

The Committee on Regional Development adopted an own-initiative report by Denis NESCI (ECR, IT) on strengthening rural areas in the EU through cohesion policy.

Despite occupying 83 % of the EU territory and being home to a quarter of its population, rural areas are facing serious difficulties as a result of major demographic, economic and social challenges. These difficulties can be seen from the GDP per capita figures, which are well below the European average and point generally to the persistent disadvantage of rural with respect to urban areas.

With its aim to reduce regional disparities and foster balanced development, EU cohesion policy has a key role to play in securing a sustainable future for these areas at risk of being left behind as a result of population ageing, youth emigration, a lack of services, and limited job and social opportunities.

Rural areas are essential for food production and security, serving as guardians of landscapes, living rural heritage, social and cultural traditions. They play a key role in promoting the strategic autonomy of the EU through the agricultural sector, which remains a strategic priority of the EU. However, their significance remains under-appreciated and inadequately funded.

In this regard, Members emphasised the need for increased investment in research and innovation for rural areas, particularly in the fields of sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, digital transformation and innovative mobility solutions, to enhance the competitiveness and resilience of rural regions and create energy self-sufficiency and new employment opportunities.

Post-2027 rural strategy

Members called on the Commission to devise a rural strategy for the post-2027 programming period and urged the Commission and the Member States to ensure the incorporation of a rural dimension in relevant policies and to make sure that the strategy promotes the economic and social development of rural areas and to allocate specific resources to the modernisation of agriculture, supporting rural small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and start-up and promoting short supply chains in order to make rural areas more connected, competitive, resilient and attractive to young people and investors.

In order to ensure the long-term prosperity of rural areas and support a strong agricultural sector to maintain this prosperity in rural areas, it is essential to strengthen the **synergies** between EU Structural and Investment Funds and Horizon Europe, the EU's flagship research and innovation programme, and the CAP in the next multiannual financial framework (MFF).

Agriculture

The report stressed the key role played by agriculture and the agri-food sector in food production, ensuring food security in the EU and job creation. The Commission and the Member States are called on to take strong and targeted action by **reducing excessive regulatory burdens** and ensuring fair market conditions, to mitigate the decline in the number of farms and encourage generational renewal.

Culture and tourism

Members recognised that tourism is a major source of income for many rural areas with the potential to draw in growing numbers of visitors curious to discover their culture, nature and traditions through the unique experiences on offer. Investing in rural tourism, in synergy with the agricultural, food and cultural sectors, means not only improved accommodation facilities and a better supply of activities with which to showcase the local produce, culture and identity, but also fresh economic opportunities for local communities, encouraging job creation and entrepreneurship while keeping local traditions alive.