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# European Rural Innovation Forum

Day 2 (6 May 2026)

Hosted by **JO  
NVA**

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# Purpose of the day

*Ari Lomis, Agricultural University of Athens, FUTURAL Coordinator*

# Purpose of the day

- **Strengthen capacities and explore** enabling conditions and barriers for Smart Villages across different rural contexts
- **Validate sustainable business models** for rural innovation
- **Discuss policy and governance frameworks** for integrating and scaling Smart Villages

# Agenda for the day

Time	Session	Presenter
9.15 am	<b>Enabling smart rural futures: capacities, conditions and contexts</b> To explore the competences, enabling conditions, barriers and interpretations needed to implement Smart Villages across different contexts	Capacity building workshop <b>Carlo Giua</b> and <b>Brigida Marovelli</b> , <i>UNIFI</i> .
10.45 am	<b>Tea &amp; Coffee Break</b>	
11.15 am	<b>Sustainable business models for rural innovation</b>	Business models validation workshop <b>Pantelis Kanellopoulos</b> , <b>Natasa Koufaki</b> and <b>Giannis Fyrogennis</b> , <i>REFRAME.FOOD</i>
12.15 am	<b>How can policies integrate Smart Villages in the future?</b> Governance frameworks for smart rural communities	Debate with panel. Panellists: <b>Mindaugas Maciulevičius</b> , <i>Lithuanian Rural Innovation Network</i> <b>Juha-Matti Markkola</b> , <i>Network Expert Rural Network Support Unit of Finland, Finnish Food Authority</i> <b>Aiva Apša-Ķišeniece</b> , <i>Latvian Rural Forum, Sustainability and Resilience Specialist</i> Moderation: <b>María Alonso-Roldán</b> , <i>AEIDL</i>
1.00 pm	<b>Conclusion and next steps</b>	<b>Ari Lomis</b> , <i>FUTURAL Project Manager, Agricultural University of Athens</i>
1.00 pm	<b>Lunch Break</b>	



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# Enabling smart rural futures: capacities, conditions and contexts

**Carlo Giua and Brigida Marovelli, *UNIFI***



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## Enabling smart rural futures: capacities, conditions and contexts

To explore the competences, enabling conditions, barriers and interpretations needed to implement Smart Villages across different contexts

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Session Coordinators:  
University of Pisa

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# Capacity Building – FUTURAL

## **Purpose:**

Develop capacities for co-created community-led innovations

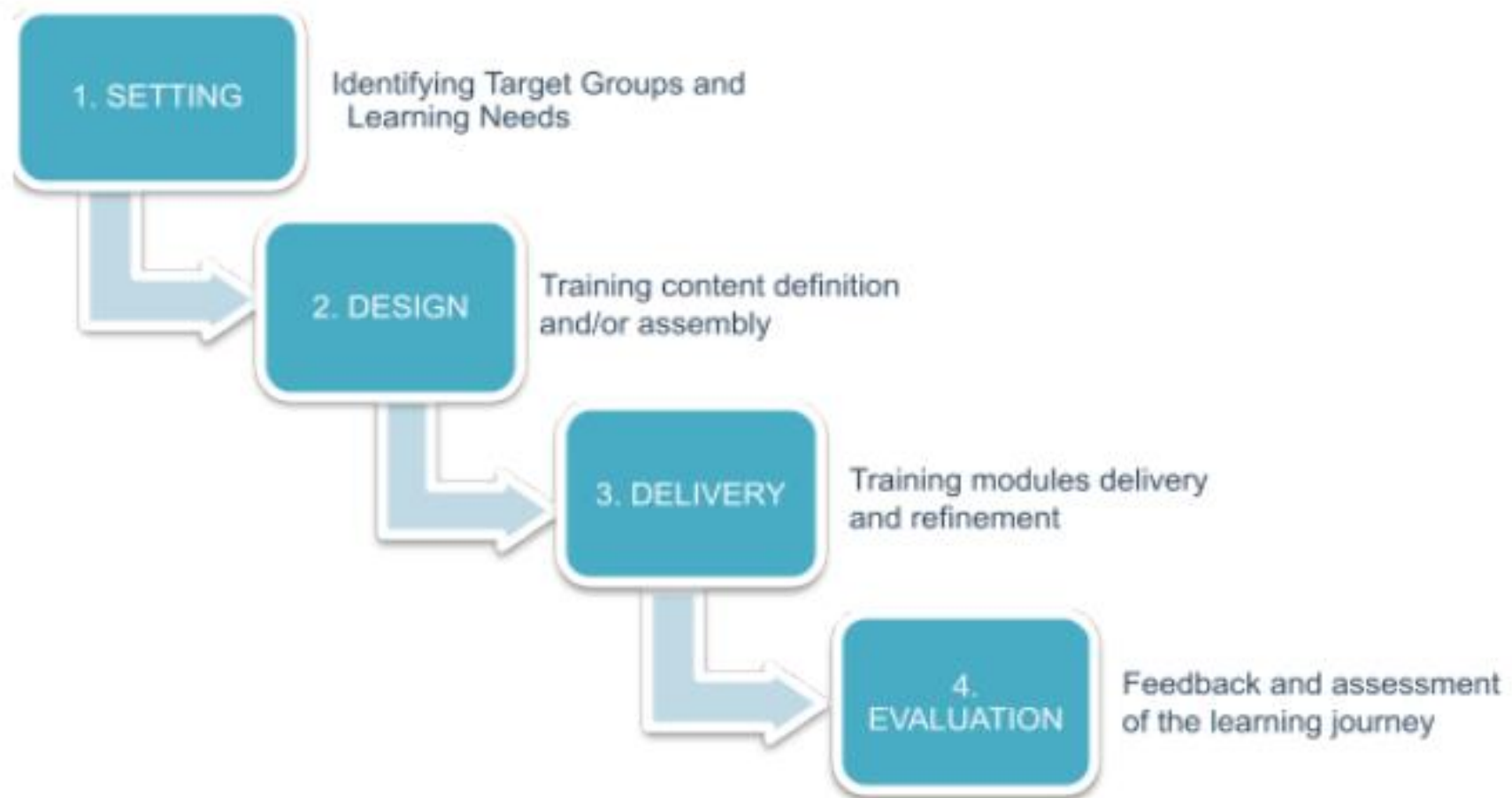
## **How it works:**

- Embedded in Multi-Actor Pilots activities
- Structured capacity building sessions
- Focus on knowledge, skills, attitudes

## **Methodology:**

- Evidence-based & participatory
- Built on co-creation + learning needs analysis
- Joint design: MAPs + solution providers + project partners

# Phases of Capacity Building within FUTURAL



# Capacity Building – FUTURAL

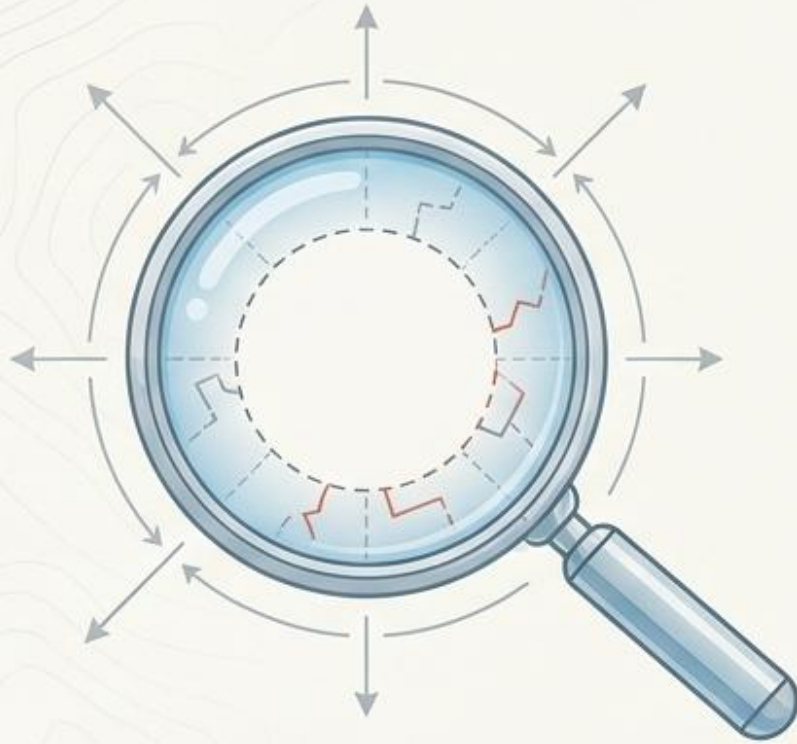
## Key features

- ✓ Hands-on learning (practice + reflection)
- ✓ Inclusive & accessible
- ✓ Tailored training strategies (DigComp-aligned)

Combines:

- **Localised competence development**
- **Collective learning and exchange moments**

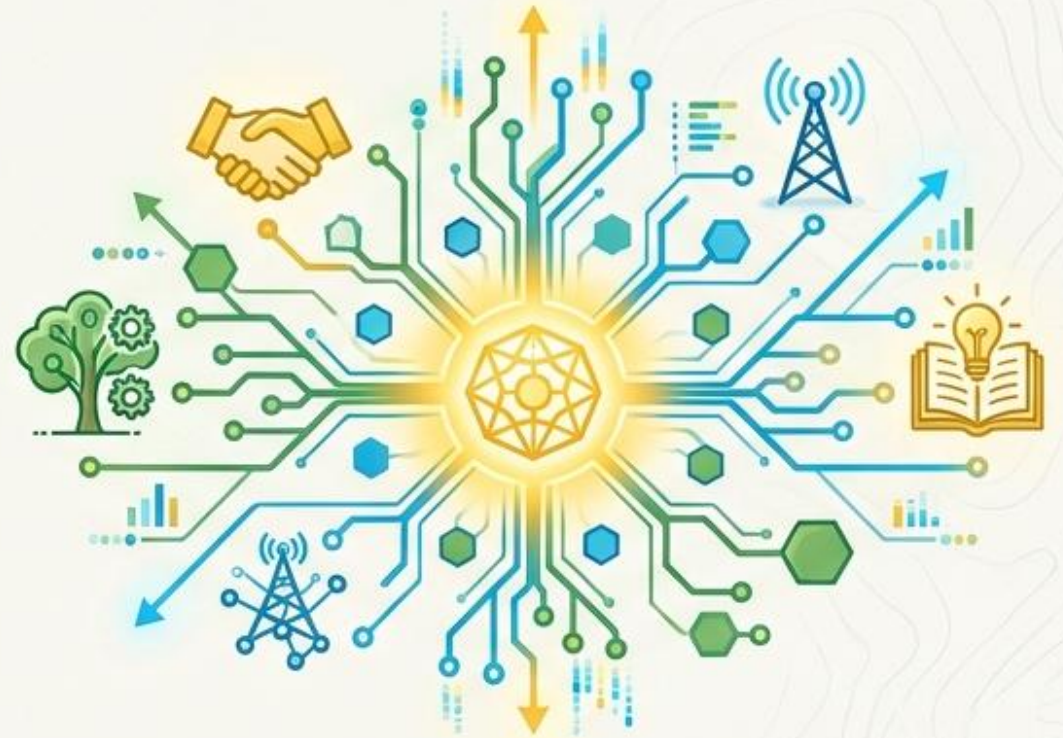
# Focus on Gaps



Viewing rural areas primarily through the lens of what they lack (infrastructure, youth, digital access).

DEFICIT-BASED VIEW

# Focus on Assets



Recognizing and building upon existing local strengths, successful embedded practices, and community resilience.

STRENGTH-BASED VIEW

**Today's objective is to shift the narrative to what works, exploring opportunities to amplify the smart solutions already embedded in our communities.**



## Round 1:

**What works well in the rural areas where you live or work?**

Think about a project, initiative, service, local collaboration, governance model, or community-led innovation that has had a positive impact.







**25 Minutes**

# Tool 1: The Rural Strength Map

## RURAL STRENGTH MAP

— Let's begin from assets, not deficits. —

 Example of successful initiative/ practice	 Where?	 Why did it work?	 Who made it happen?	 What local strengths supported it?



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## Round 2:

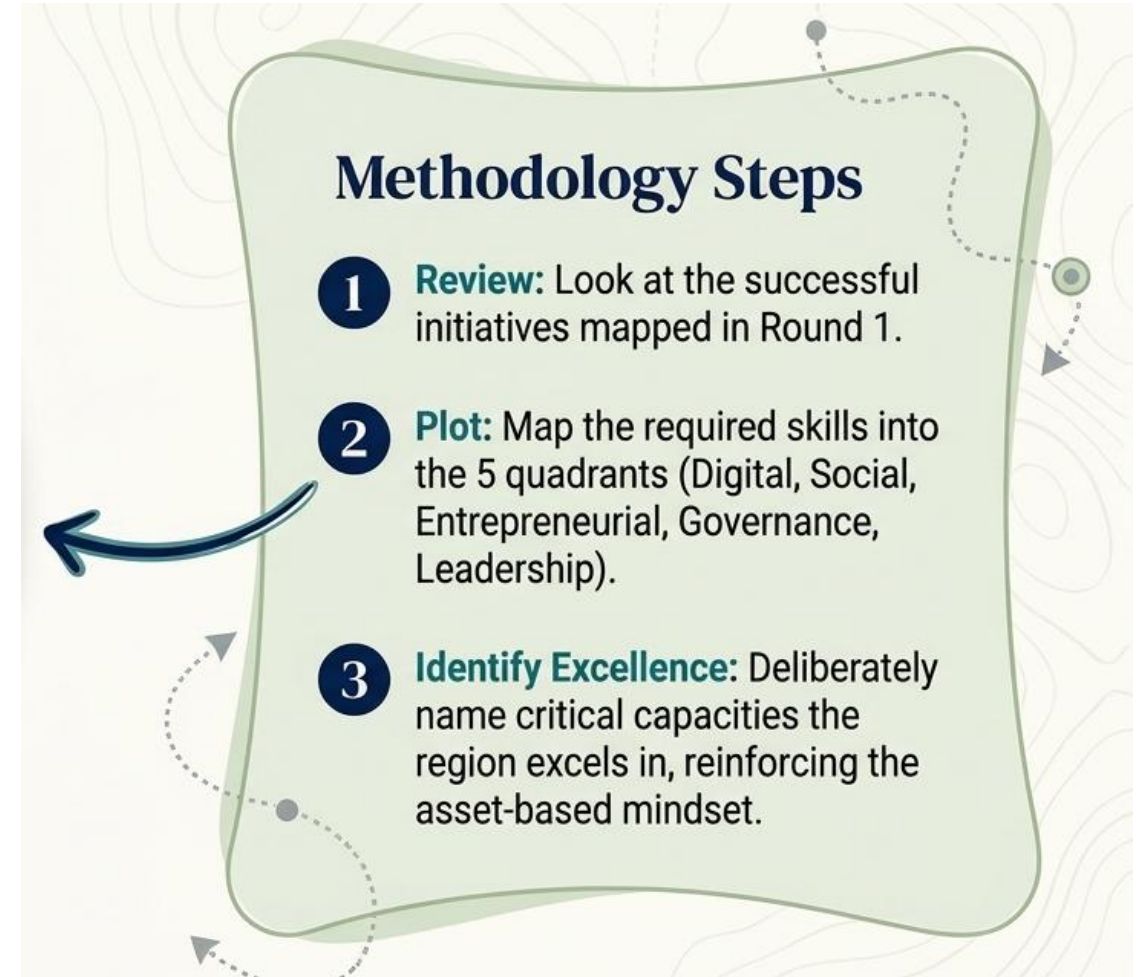
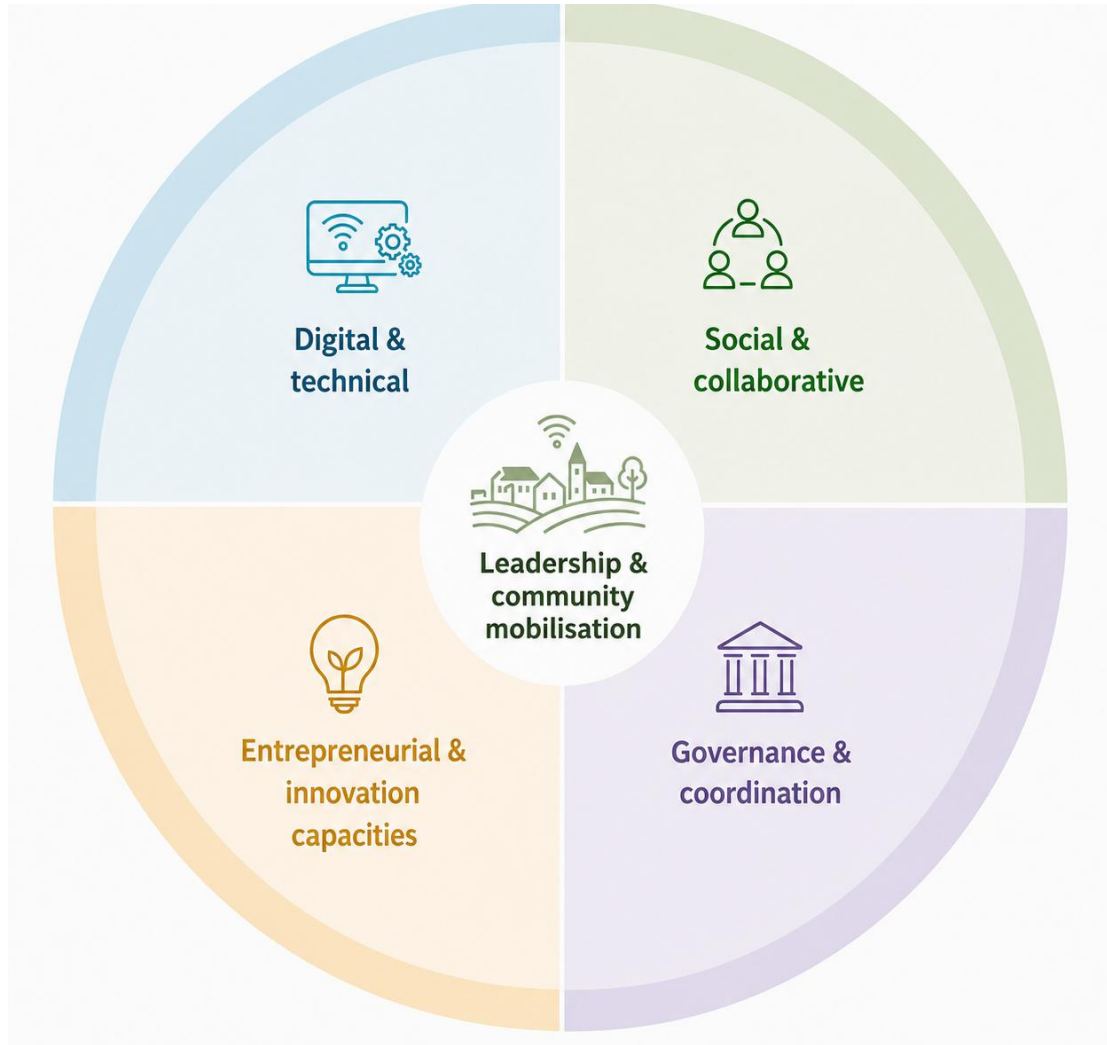
**What competences made the successful initiatives you identified possible?**

Which skills, competences, leadership and support systems were needed for these examples to succeed?



**25 Minutes**

# Tool 2: Competence Radar





# TOP 3 COMPETENCES



Plenary restitution – Group: \_\_\_\_\_



**Top 3 competences**



**Why are they important?**



**Who used them?**



**One concrete example**

1

2

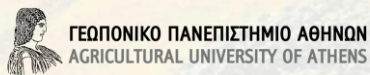
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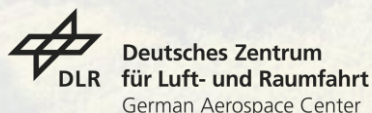


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Thank you!!



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# Sustainable business models for rural innovation

**Pantelis Kanellopoulos, Natasa Koufaki & Giannis Fyrogennis,**  
*reframe.food*



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# **Business Model Validation Workshop**

**reframe**  
**.food**

**Business Modelling** is the way we **capture value**,  
we **deliver** it to the ones who **needs** it and **how**  
we generate **revenue streams**.

# Workshop Mission

We are not examining only **what technology** can do to help us in everyday life but **how those smart solutions** in the reality of rural areas can be **effectively communicated to citizens, adopted** and **retained / sustained** by them for future **after the end** of the FUTURAL grant.

# Structure

## A. Pre-reflective Question: 7 minutes

Participants *work individually*

## B. Validation Questions: 30 minutes

Participants work in **pairs** within their Groups

## 5 wide categories where you will **express your preference** ( *A or B option* ) :

- **Priority:** Where should our limited resources, efforts, and focus go first?
- **Social Benefit:** What is the true value we are creating for our fellow citizens?
- **Digital Divide:** Where is the primary gap: in our technological infrastructure or in our community's skills and trust?
- **Governance:** Who do we trust to “hold the keys” and make the final call?
- **Finance/Funding:** How do we finance the service, so it continues running independently?

# **READ CAREFULLY THE SMART SOLUTIONS OF YOUR GROUP**

**Pre-reflective Question: 7 minutes**

*Participants **work individually***

# ***Example***

***YOUR VOICE***

# Validation Questions: 30 minutes

Participants work in **pairs** within their

Groups

**Based on your experience**, what do these tools need to be **trusted and accountable**?

We are setting up Business Model that **“hears the voice”** of the rural society.

**Each option** you write on the post it paper you should rate it **from 1 to 9**  
*(Saaty scale)*

*HOW MUCH **MORE IMPORTANT** IS ONE CHOICE  
COMPARED TO THE OTHER*

# *Example*

***B: 8***



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# How can policies integrate Smart Villages in the future?

María Alonso-Roldán, *AEIDL (European Association for Innovation in Local Development)*



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# How can policies integrate Smart Villages in the future?

Governance frameworks for smart rural communities

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# AEIDL

- **38 years of experience in European Projects**
- Brussels-based, non-profit
- Facilitating exchange
- Providing policy support, research, and networking at European level

[aeidl.eu](http://aeidl.eu)



# AEIDL – Rural and Territorial Development



**Serafin Pazos-Vidal**  
Senior Policy Expert



**María Alonso**  
Policy



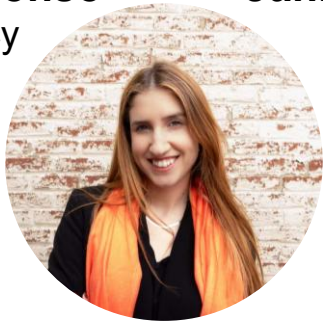
**Janne Sinerma**  
Policy



**Blanca Casares**  
Policy



**Raquel Pastor**  
Policy



**Maite Iglesias**  
Communications



**Miranda García**  
Communications



**Merveille Ntabuashe**  
Communications

# Objective

Identifying governance frameworks capable of supporting the long-term scaling of rural innovation in Europe

# Governance frameworks

2nd EU RIF – Jonava (May 26)

- PROPOSAL

2nd EU RIF – online (9 June 26)

- VALIDATION

3rd EU RIF – Pongau (Feb 2027)

- POLICY TOOLKIT

# Where we are in FUTURAL

- Understand existing frameworks and generate initial policy recommendations
- Current challenge: identifying governance frameworks and enabling conditions that actually enable scaling



# Current governance frameworks – insufficient?

- fragmentation between CAP/cohesion/digital/social policies
- weak local implementation mechanisms
- short-term funding logic
- limited role of intermediaries
- insufficient integration of innovation ecosystems

# Timing matters

Strong political moment:

- post-2027 CAP debate
- MFF negotiations
- implementation of long-term vision for rural areas
- simplification agenda
- competitiveness debate in EU institutions

# Five governance frameworks for Smart Rural Futures?

Stable multi-level and partnership-based rural governance

Dedicated and predictable financing for community-led innovation

Adaptive and innovation-proofed administrative and regulatory environment

Inclusive digital capacity-building and skills

Strong rural innovation ecosystems and networks

# Five governance frameworks for Smart Rural Futures?

Stable multi-level  
and partnership-  
based rural  
governance

Ensure territorially balanced,  
participatory and place-based  
governance for Smart Rurality

# Five governance frameworks for Smart Rural Futures?

Dedicated and  
predictable  
financing for  
community-led  
innovation

Secure stable, accessible and  
place-based funding for rural  
smartification

# Five governance frameworks for Smart Rural Futures?

Adaptive and  
innovation-proofed  
administrative and  
regulatory  
environment

Reduce structural barriers and  
enable experimentation and  
innovation in rural areas

# Five governance frameworks for Smart Rural Futures?

Inclusive digital  
capacity-building and  
skills

Strengthen human, institutional  
and digital capacities as a  
governance condition

# Five governance frameworks for Smart Rural Futures?

Strong rural innovation  
ecosystems and  
networks

Anchor Smart Rurality in organised  
civil society and territorial  
networks

# Discussion

Are these governance frameworks fit for future Smart Rural policies? What is still missing?

# Panellists



**Mindaugas Maciulevičius**

Lithuanian Rural Innovation  
Network

[futural-project.eu](http://futural-project.eu)



**Aiva Apša-Ķīšeniece**

Latvian Rural Forum



**Juha-Matti Markkola**

Rural Network Support Unit of  
Finland



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