How to promote the role of youth in rural areas of Europe?

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Young People: Should I Stay or Should I Go?

- Youth out-migration is often seen as a challenge to rural sustainability. But it may be in the best interests of young people to move away. A policy dilemma?
- Young people’s perception of their rural area depends on its geography, social setting, infrastructure, services, accessibility, the local labour market, and the role of family, friends and social networks.
- In rural Europe, 11.9% of population are aged 15-24.
  - Highest %s in EE, LT, LV, PL, IE, CZ, RO and SK;
  - Lowest %s in FR, IT, DE, DK, NL.
Context: Rural Areas and Rural Change in EU

How to promote the role of youth in rural areas of Europe?
The Youth Transition

• The *youth transition* is a core concept. The world into which young people grow has changed, offering less stability and support from traditional institutions (church and family) and engagement instead with labour markets and welfare state.
  • “Individualisation”: each person making ‘correct’ choices
  • Extended transitions; fractured transitions
  • Relevance to NMS and post-soviet transition
• PaYPiRD study highlighted uncertainties facing YP in rural Europe and their lack of support and guidance.
• Greater flexibility in policy responses is required.
The Transition from Education to Employment

• The inflexibility of educational systems
• Distance to educational institutions
  • Centralisation of services; availability of broadband; costs.
• Policy implications
  • Access to good quality school/vocational/higher education
  • Availability of individual guidance and support
  • Access to desirable training places and to jobs
  • Support for non-linear pathways
  • Protection from exploitation in the labour market
The Youth Transition into Farming

• COM AGRI has looked in detail at this issue, noting the low % of young farmers, and proposing aid for young farmers among the compulsory measures of RDR.

• Research on young people’s transition into farming:
  • Succession is more likely on larger, more viable farms or where pluriactivity offers a stable future.
  • Parents on family farms speak of a painful dilemma: they wish to hand on the farm to their children, but worry that this condemns their children to a life of poverty and struggle. “Educating out”?
  • Schemes to support and assist new entrants to farming may be of crucial importance.
Youth Unemployment

Youth unemployment has increased dramatically in the economic crisis. Young people are twice as likely to be unemployed…

- 5.69m youth unemployed
- 23.5% of youth labour force
- 40% of youth in work are on temporary contracts

In rural areas of many MSs the youth unemployment rate is higher (see Annex).

The rural youth unemployment rate (2012) was above 50% in Spain & Greece; over 30% in Portugal, Italy, Cyprus, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Ireland, Lithuania, Latvia; over 25% in Hungary & Poland. In Netherlands it is 7%, Germany 6%, Austria 5%.
Youth unemployment in rural England

Rural areas of England have a lower % of young people not in education, employment or training – but still 13% and rising faster than in urban areas.

Young people in rural areas of England face:
- Poor access to transport
  - Lack of public transport, and the high cost of private transport is a major barrier to finding work.
- Careers advice lacking
  - Schools have a new duty to access independent careers advice, but no additional funding for this
- Employment and training
  - Low wage, low skill economy
- Youth services disappearing
  - Public services are being withdrawn (especially in more remote areas) and voluntary services are also losing much of their funding.

The Commission for Rural Communities called for the Government to create a Minister for Youth Affairs, and to develop a coordinated rural youth strategy. It didn’t happen!
Young People’s ‘Voice’ – does anyone listen?

• Young people feel ignored by those in authority.
• Little involvement of young people in decisions, and little account is taken of young people’s “voices” either in formulating rural development policies, or in evaluation.
• A lack of feedback mechanisms to show young people that their ideas are taken into account.
• Fundamentally there is an issue of accountability to young people and their rights as citizens.

eg. Community X Change and European Citizens’ Panel
Policies and their Impact on Young People

• Most youth policies ignore ‘rural’, and most rural policies ignore ‘youth’. So rural youth are in a ‘bermuda triangle’ where they are invisible to EU and national policies.

• While promoting social inclusion among young people can arguably be an objective of rural development, it is clear that the aims of rural development (retaining rural youth?) can conflict with those of youth policy (promoting increased opportunities for young people?).

• Has the EU Commission asked if youth unemployment requires a different policy response in rural contexts?
The Impact of Employment and Youth Policies

• EU employment and youth policies make no reference to the rural context. For example:
  • Draft Joint Employment Report 2010
  • Ten Years of the European Employment Strategy (2007)
  • The Renewed Social Agenda (2008)
  • The EU Strategy for Youth (2009)
  • Youth on the Move (2010)

• Europe 2020 does make references to rural areas, and to youth, but never to rural youth. Yet many measures proposed could be relevant to rural youth.

• It is remarkable how little recognition is given to the situation of rural youth in EU documents.
The Impact of Rural Development Policies

• Young people are rarely a priority group in RD, with few attempts to examine the impacts of RD on young people.

• LEADER+ was asked to pilot new approaches to young people as a priority target group. But mid-term evaluation of LEADER+ and ex ante evaluation of the RDP 2007-13 both found that young people were rarely targeted.

• Proposals for CAP post-2013 emphasise food production and agri-environment, with less attention to territorial rural development (which could help promote the role of youth in rural areas and promote youth integration). This might require DG Regional to address territorial RD.
Conclusions and Recommendations
DG Agriculture

• Promotion of the role of youth in rural areas requires more attention and funding to territorial RD within the RDR.
• Young people entering farming will also experience individualisation, so will need guidance and support, perhaps through RDR and a broadened New Entrants Scheme.
• Partnerships have become a central element in RD, and much more could be done to involve young people. CEC should fund research to learn lessons of LEADER and fund the piloting of innovative ways of involving rural youth.
Conclusions and Recommendations
DG Employment and Social Affairs

• Praise for commissioning PaSERA: now fund further work on the situation of young people in rural Europe, and especially on the challenges of youth unemployment.
• Evaluations of youth policies should reveal their impact on youth unemployment in rural areas.
• In preparing young people for precarious non-linear youth transitions, flexible and creative support structures are needed which can address each young person’s individual and diverse needs. This should encompass employment, welfare, education, training, careers and guidance services.
Conclusions and Recommendations
DG Regional

- Cohesion policy is being refocused on the NMS, but there is a tendency to direct funds to cities as areas of greatest potential. This risks neglecting the rural areas where living standards are lower. Such strategies will encourage the out-migration of rural youth.
- The challenge is to develop a coordinated policy in relation to young people which promotes balanced territorial development of rural and urban areas of the NMS.
- Centralisation of services worsens issues of remoteness, accessibility and migration for young people in rural EU.
Finally...

• Young people are essential to the future sustainability of rural communities.

• Youth unemployment is high and rising in rural Europe.

• Young people in rural areas seem invisible to EU policies – whether CAP, Regional, Employment or Youth Policy.

• The post-2013 reforms are a real opportunity to address the situation of young people in rural areas of Europe.