



Rural proofing: science and national examples

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- ▶ Why RP ?
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 - ▶ Where is Rural Proofing implemented ? Who does implement RP?
 - ▶ What implications for local actors ?



Why Rural Proofing



- ▶ Rural Proofing (RP) was first introduced in **2000** following the Government's publication of the *White Paper, Our Countryside, the future. A fair deal for Rural England*
- ▶ **2016** by the **Cork 2.0 Declaration** proposing a RP mechanism
- ▶ **2020**, the **OECD** published "Rural Well-being: Geographies of Opportunities", that recognises the importance of RP to review new policy initiatives
- ▶ **2021**, the **Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas** confirms the need to review policies through rural lens
- ▶ In **2021**, the European Commission issued "**The Better Regulation Guidelines Toolbox (Tool #34)**" where RP is framed in the broader context of impact assessment at territorial level
- ▶ The ENRD has set up a working group on RP **in 2022**

What is Rural Proofing



- ▶ Rural proofing is a **systematic** process
- ▶ to review the **likely impacts of policies, programmes and initiatives** on rural areas because of their particular circumstances or needs (e.g., dispersed populations and poorer infrastructure networks).
- ▶ it requires policy-makers to **'think rural'** when designing policy interventions
- ▶ in order to **prevent negative outcomes** for rural areas and communities.
- ▶ If it is determined that a policy may have different – negative - impacts in rural areas compared to urban areas, **policies should be adjusted** to eliminate them



How has Rural Proofing been implemented



Country	Starting year	Thematic focus	Methodologies	Guidelines	Monitoring activity
European countries					
England	2000	Policies having impact on Infrastructures, services, working and living conditions, environment, equality	Checklist; Decision Tree; Examples of possible assesment. Descriptive assessment of impacts	DEFRA practical guidelines	Annual RP Reports
Northern Ireland	2015-17	All national policy proposals having an impact on the economic, social, cultural and environmental well-being of rural communities	Rural needs impact assessment: coherence of likely impact with social and economic needs of rural areas	DAERA guidelines for public Authorities (updated in 2018)	Annual Monitoring Reports
Scotland	2020	Policies with specific and differentiated impacts on Islands Communities	Island Communities Impact Assessment		No reports
Finland	2007	Policies having impact on municipal merging, rural livelihoods, expertise, housing and services, accessibility, attractiveness factors and community cohesion. Emphasis on sparsely depopulated areas.	Checklist produced by Rural Policy Council, with 6 thematic areas and flexible application	Guidelines produced by the Rural Policy Council and Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	No reports

Who does implement and where is Rural Proofing implemented ?



Country	Mandatory/voluntary application	Level and policy stage of application	Responsible body/Coordination	Institutional bodies engaged
European countries				
England	In principle mandatory, but practically patchy application	Open level of application, but mainly national	Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)	Government Departments and Offices. RP lead in each department
Northern Ireland	Mandatory	Mainly national	Departm. Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA).	Rural needs Coordinators in each public authority and appropriate staff to conduct impact assessment
Scotland	Mandatory (with justification for not doing it) only for policies having effects on Scottish Islands	Mainly regional	Scottish Government	
Finland	Voluntary, no sanctions	Open level of application, but mainly at regional and local level. Early stages, but potentially throughout the policy lifecycle	Rural Policy Council, led by Minister of Agriculture and forestry	Individual public officials and authorities in charge of policy under assessment

What is Rural Proofing for a local Agency (LAG, Municipality, Regional development body, etc.)?



- 1) Assess **implications of a national/regional policy** for the concerned rural area
- 2) Rural Proofing is a component of a **place-based approach to local needs**
- 3) Two **categories of policies**:
 - policies not having a territorial focus
 - policies having a specific territorial focus
- 3) Rural Proofing of both kinds of policies should be **part of the project cycle** of the concerned area
- 4) This implies some specific activities:
 - **inventory of relevant policies** for the area
 - **monitoring funds allocation** (funds mapping) and types of recipients
 - **understanding potential effects on well-being** (increasing social and economic disparities?)
 - **understanding potential relations** (complementarities, synergies, conflicts) with projects managed by the local Agency

► What implications for local actors ?

