

Committee of the Regions study: Rural proofing – a foresight framework for resilient rural communities

17.05.2022 | Roland Gaugitsch



Rural?



Sources: Uwe Kunze / Kasina / Walter J. Plisak / Rosel Eckstein / pixelio.de

Study goals and approach

- ▶ Review of rural proofing approaches in different countries
 - Finland, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, England, Sweden
- ▶ Review of territorial impact assessment methodologies
 - TIA Quick Check, EATIA, Rhomolo, Foresight methodologies
- ▶ Exploring interlinkages between TIA and rural proofing
- ▶ Providing concrete guidance for rural proofing on EU, national, regional and local level

Rural Proofing and the Better Regulation Agenda

- ▶ Rural proofing called for by **Cork Declaration 2.0** and **EU long-term vision for rural areas**
- ▶ Pick up in the Better Regulation Guidelines:
 - Rural areas explicitly mentioned in 11 tools of the Better Regulation Toolbox
 - Strong link to **Tool #34 – Territorial Impacts**
 - No concrete methodology or approach for rural proofing!
- ▶ Important actions on wider integration in policymaking outside of formalized assessments
- ▶ Important actions on rural proofing on a process level, not only methodological

Rural proofing in the policy process

- Rural proofing **required in the policy process in a formal or explicit manner.**
- **TIA methodologies** can form an integral part of the rural proofing process
- Selecting the **right timing** is important, as steering policies towards better impacts on rural areas is possible mainly early in the process.
- Rural issues are not the only issues requiring attention in policymaking. In order not to overburden the policy process, **rural proofing should be conducted in a targeted manner.**
- In a multi-level governance structure, a mechanism that **ensures feedback loops between governance levels responsible for developing policies and governance levels impacted most** by a policy should be put in place

Supporting measures

- A **group/department/agency with the methodological and thematic knowledge necessary for including a rural perspective in policy processes should be established.**
- Raising awareness and **creating a feeling of responsibility** within policy drafting bodies is crucial. Rural proofing cannot be seen as an external process or assessment, but rather part of policy development. To that end, capacity building for people involved in policy development is important.
- Even though **bodies responsible drafting a specific policy should be responsible to ensure the consideration of rural issues, they should be supported in doing so.** A core group with the thematic and methodological knowledge about rural proofing policies can also provide targeted support to individual bodies responsible for a policy. “Quick and easy access” to such resources has been reported as another crucial success factor.
- For actual application of specific methodologies, **clear methodological guidance** should be made available.

Recommendations for the EU level

- What seems to be lacking at the very beginning of any legislative process is the **territorial angle of the proposals** as **horizontal pre-check embracing all sectoral effects at the same time** and “translating them into EU territories (preferably regions). Such a **horizontal “necessity check”** may then also include the differentiation of potential effects on different territorial typologies (including explicitly rural areas).
- The **“necessity check”** (as foreseen in the legislative process in the preliminary impact assessment) will have to include rural proofing elements.
- Screening for territorial and rural impacts will become a **mandatory element of the policymaking processes**
- Territorial impact assessment and rural proofing should be established within **every interservice consultation of legislative proposals** with DG Regio and DG Agri acting as “custodians” of potential methodological applications (e.g. suggestions for specific methods to be applied).
- By such an integration of territorial impact assessment and rural proofing the scrutiny for both elements in the policymaking process shall be ensured.

Recommendations for the local, regional and national level

- ▶ Rural issues should be considered **early in policy drafting** and already in first policy design, deciding if it is necessary and relevant
- ▶ As rural proofing should be a recurring element of policy design, it is important to **develop capacities and methodological knowledge**, taking into account internal capacities and external support
- ▶ **Availability of resources** should be ensured in terms of personnel and time
- ▶ On a national or regional level, a **centre of expertise** with the purpose of supporting authorities in implementing rural proofing in their policy drafting should be established and funded.
- ▶ Authorities should **verify the existence of support structures** early in the process. Permanent links between government levels can support early detection of rural impacts
- ▶ Engagement in **networking efforts** regarding experience exchange on assessment methodologies and policy design is strongly encouraged

Rural proofing is part of the policy design, not a „checkbox“ after everything is already finalised

Additional information

ÖIR GmbH

Roland Gaugitsch

gaugitsch@oir.at | +43 1 533 87 47 - 38

1010 Wien, Franz-Josefs-Kai 27

Subscribe to our e-letter: www.oir.at/e-letter

