



European Network for
Rural Development

Working Document

Generational Renewal:

Attracting Young Farmers and Entrepreneurs in Rural Areas

Land Mobility in the European Union

Interest in land mobility (i.e. transfer of land from one farmer to another, or from one generation to the next) and its impact on the structural development and growth of the farming sector has grown considerably amid concerns about the ageing European farming population. In 2017, the European Commission estimated that only 5.6% of all European farms were run by farmers under the age of 35, while over 31% of all farmers in the European Union were older than 65 years of age.

This is a pressing matter in contemporary Europe, due to the fact that generational renewal in agriculture is viewed as crucial for survival, continuity and future prosperity of the European farming industry and the broader sustainability of rural communities.



Image credit: Paul Murtagh

The Land Mobility Conundrum in Europe

Gaining access to land is widely reported to be the single largest barrier facing young people attempting to enter the agricultural sector in Europe however. Various factors have created the current land access issues for prospective farmers. These barriers range from the older generation's reluctance to step aside, land concentration and the low supply of land for sale or rent in many regions, combined with the prevailing high price of available land. Improving land mobility across EU Member States is therefore considered to be one of the European Commission's key priorities in the upcoming CAP reform.



Image credit: Dr Shane Conway

Case Study - The Irish Land Mobility Service

Collaborative farming arrangements such as farm partnership, share farming and contract rearing have actively been promoted within Irish policy discourses as ideal stepping stones to help overcome obstacles to land access. This led to the establishment of the Irish Land Mobility Service in 2013 by Macra na Feirme, a national voluntary rural youth organisation, to link landowners and farmers interested in collaborating and developing sustainable viable farm enterprises. Since its inception this service has successfully been involved in excess of 400 arrangements covering more than 35,000 acres (14,164 hectares).



Macra na Feirme



THE LAND MOBILITY SERVICE



Mapping Land Mobility Initiatives and Schemes Throughout the EU

Although a national Land Mobility Service similar to the one in Ireland has not been explicitly established elsewhere in the European Union to date, there are several analogous ‘match-making’ initiatives in existence throughout Europe which aim to increase the availability of land for young farmers and new entrants. For example:

- In Austria, a farm start-up platform called **Perspektive Landwirtschaft (Perspective Agriculture)** connects farmers without a successor to prospective, aspiring farmers.
- In France, the **Répertoire Départ Installation (RDI)** is a national farm transmission tool that allows farmers seeking to sell their farm, or wishing to find a new farm partnership, to connect with candidates looking to farm.
- In Germany, an internet portal run by **Hof sucht Bauer** offers an online matchmaking platform called ‘Hofbörse’ to connect and support farm owners with young, well-trained people who want to establish a career in agriculture.
- In Italy, **Banca delle Terre Agricole**, is a freely accessible online tool that provides a complete inventory of agricultural land that becomes available nationally.
- In the Netherlands, **Boer zoekt Boer (Farmer seeks Farmer)** is an online platform that brings together retiring farmers without a successor with young people who would like to take over a farm. The programme then guides both parties towards a successful intergenerational farm transfer process. **Landgilde** is another Dutch initiative that aims to match young and old farmers in order to facilitate extra-familial farm succession.



The European Access to Land Network

The European Access to Land network brings together various civic organisations – mostly community and/or farmer-led initiatives - from across Europe to share experiences and practical ways of assisting farmers in accessing land and also to promote the significance of land mobility for agroecological transition and generational renewal. Established in 2012, it functions as an informal network of about 20 organisations from Belgium, Spain, Italy, France, U.K., Lithuania, Germany and Romania. The network aims at reconsidering land as a common good where citizens, farmers and public authorities collaborate. It’s main objectives are to consolidate and disseminate initiatives on access to land, and to put land issues in the spotlight.

