

Rural Sustainability Transitions through Integration of Knowledge for improved policy processes – RUSTIK

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The overarching objective of RUSTIK is to enable rural communities' actors and policy makers to design better strategies, initiatives and policies fostering sustainability transitions of rural areas, through an advanced understanding of different rural functionalities, characteristics and future scenarios of rural areas, their potentials and challenges.

Central specific objectives are to provide (1) a robust methodological framework for functional rural areas, (2) databases integrating data of different types and sources, (3), improved strategies and governance approaches for rural decision makers and stakeholders, and (4) improved approaches for rural impact assessment and decentralised rural proofing.

RUSTIK aims to substantially contribute to enhancing existing European policy tools and approaches, most of all to support the European Green Deal, the European Digital Strategy, the European pillar of Social Rights and the EU Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas of the European Union.

RUSTIK addresses the topic by illuminating three key transitions in rural areas, i.e. (1) socio-economic, (2) climate change and environmental, and (3) digital. Five types of rural functions are RUSTIK's starting point for characterising the diversity of rural areas and their capacity to respond to these transitions.

In order to achieve its overarching and specific objectives, RUSTIK will (1) create a conceptual basis for functional rural areas, transition and resilience of rural areas building on previous research, (2) co-design data collection approaches, and (3) investigate policy frameworks and coordination mechanisms. Closely interrelated with all of these activities, Living Labs in 14 European Pilot Regions in 10 European countries will be the central element of an action-oriented multi-actor

approach to researching rural diversity and societal transformations.