

## D1.9 Framework Alignment and Theory Update (ed. 2)

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## Executive Summary

D1.9 is the second deliverable in a series of three updates to come out of T1.3 Framework Alignment and Theory Update. This edition tracked the evolution of PoliRural in M13-M18 by focusing on three key areas: regional foresight, policy evaluation, and stakeholder engagement. Specifically, it took stock of adjustments made to the entire foresight framework, of the preparatory work that made it possible to use Semex, our text mining tool, for policy evaluation, and of changes to stakeholder mapping and management that were made to ensure a more representative and balanced engagement in the future.

PoliRural's foresight framework has been completely revamped thanks to the input provided by CKA. The old present-future-present structure was replaced with a classic foresight model consisting of pre-foresight, foresight and post-foresight stages. Typical foresight activities and deliverables, which weren't part of DoA, are now fully integrated into the formal WP tasks and reports.

As to policy evaluation (T4.5), the new approach followed by pilots is more appropriate than the one initially recommended for this task (ex-ante) because here the regional teams focused on existing measures initiated and implemented by others, on policies that are still ongoing or are about to finish, and which have not been subject to any extensive evaluation yet e.g. LEADER. Later in the project, when PoliRural pilots start planning new measures for their region, an ex-ante approach will be introduced. A part of this will involve defining the KPIs and measures for monitoring progress.

While carrying out T4.5 Perceived Effectiveness of Rural Interventions, the common framework prepared by JIIP ensured consistency with regard to policy selection, data collection and presentation of final results. Additionally, the evaluation exercise proceeded along two parallel tracks - one based on survey research, another on text mining - as required by DoA.

Lastly, updates made to the stakeholder mapping methodology address the main shortcomings of the initial approach. There is now more clarity as to stakeholder types, gender, social group and their relationship to the project. Going forward, stakeholder engagement will benefit from the introduction of i) pragmatic practices aimed at balancing representation with relevance, and ii) scientific approaches aimed at ensuring sound data collection and analysis. For best results, stakeholder mapping and engagement approaches should be reviewed by members of the Advisory Board once it becomes operational.

## Introduction

This deliverable tracks how PoliRural has evolved by comparing initial ideas, concepts and methods to what actually happened in the project. The previous edition (D1.6) looked at changes in needs gathering (T4.3), foresight planning (WP5), model building (WP3, WP5) and text mining (WP2) that occurred in year one. This one focuses on the next six months (M13-M18), taking stock of adjustments made to the entire foresight framework (WP4, WP5, WP6), of the preparatory work that made it possible to use Semex, our text mining tool, for policy evaluation, and of changes to stakeholder mapping and management that were made to ensure a more representative and balanced engagement in the future.

This deliverable will be useful for

- Pilot partners who may wish to check what lies ahead on a foresight journey in terms of tasks and deliverables, and how the official work plan structure is intertwined with foresight activities not foreseen in the original framework
- Pilot partners and the wider consortium who may be interested in applying the PoliRural method on a new project that requires a similar forward-looking, innovation-driven approach that blends foresight, data mining and system dynamic modeling, among others
- Project partners involved in the delivery of an online course and the accompanying webinar series (D7.7, D7.8, D7.9, D10)
- Third parties interested in any of the following: rural foresight, rural policy making, future oriented regional development, innovation enthusiasts, researchers looking for accessible ICTs to reduce cognitive load when working with vast amounts of information

The three key areas where major changes have taken place influenced the structure of this report.

The introduction is therefore followed by a chapter on

- Foresight and how our approach to it has evolved in recent months. The initial graphical representation was quite linear, with main stages following one another in a sequential fashion. Thanks to the valuable work of WP5 leader (CKA), our understanding of the method began to change. Pilots were alerted to new stages, deliverables and tasks that are crucial for the successful delivery of a regional foresight initiative, but which had not been part of the original framework. This change was as much welcome as it was challenging, because the question soon emerged - how to integrate all these new elements into the original work plan structure? The challenge was eventually addressed thanks to a close-knit cooperation between CKA and WP1 leader (21C), resulting in an integrated master framework that will be presented below.
- Policy evaluation assisted by text mining. The actual results are presented separately in D4.5, so their discussion is outside the scope of this deliverable. Because of that, as well as to avoid an overlap, this deliverable will not summarise the main conclusions drawn from the evaluation report. Rather it will review groundwork elements and activities (e.g. logframe matrix, Semex training, development of new Semex features) that enabled the production of text mining input for D4.5.

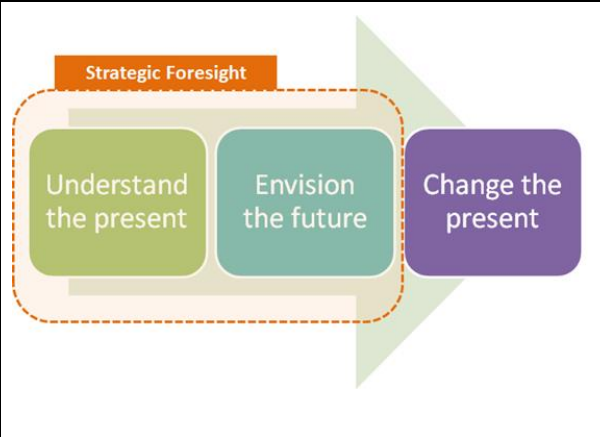
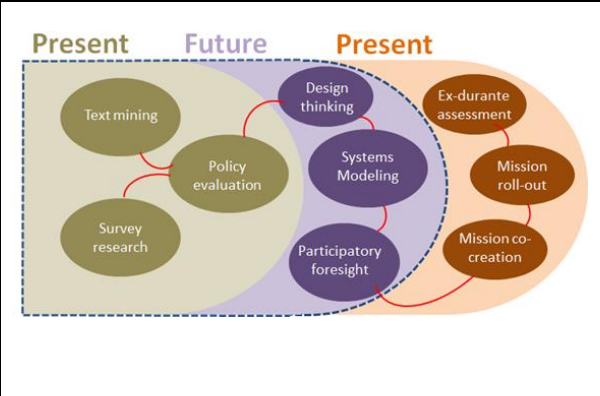
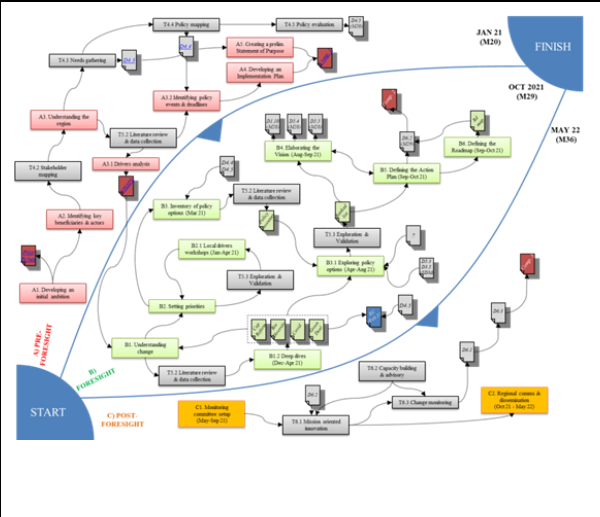
- Stakeholder mapping and updates that were introduced to the process following the receipt of feedback on Y1 results from European Commission and the monitors. The preliminary mapping took place within the context of T4.2 Stakeholder Mapping & Regional Panel Setup. An internal deliverable was drafted by VPR to guide pilots in identifying, classifying, documenting and engaging their regional stakeholders. That early work, and in particular the way inventory sheets were structured, largely reflected the requirements imposed by project objectives as regards the different stakeholder types to be engaged e.g. policy makers, scientific and rural communities, rural newcomers. At the same time, the original reporting method lacked details on who actually was involved (e.g. local or regional authorities?), what sector they represent (in the case of non-state actors), whether they are male or female (such information was missing in policy and science categories), related to the project or completely external. Recent updates sought to address these shortcomings, while also providing guidance on how to make future engagement scientifically sound and meaningful for participants.

## Chapter 1: Foresight Framework

The representation of foresight in PoliRural changed multiple times. At the outset, it was conceived in a very linear fashion on the present-future-present continuum. Strategic foresight occupied the first two stages that correspond to pilot work packages four (present) and five (future). The third stage was reserved for another methodology - mission oriented innovation. Later on, the concept was made more concrete by the addition of specific tasks e.g. design thinking, system dynamic modeling. However, activities that are considered to be part and parcel of a typical foresight exercise were still missing. This meant that foresight according to our representation was foresight in name only.

The third iteration changed that. The present-future-present concept gave way to a more intuitive staged approach: pre-foresight, foresight, post-foresight. Typical foresight activities (e.g. drivers analysis, deep dives, vision building, roadmapping) are now clearly visible in the master diagram. Mission oriented innovation is no longer viewed as something separate to the process. One of the purposes of foresight is to determine what growth means for a region. In our 12 pilots, the general mission is to support sustainable future growth. What this means in reality will differ from one region to another and may break down into subsidiary missions, but that is the overall goal.

Table 1. Evolution in thinking about foresight at project level

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A linear process along the present-future-present continuum</li> <li>• Strategic foresight occupies only two stages out of three: understanding the present and envisioning the future</li> <li>• The final stage - changing the current situation to prepare for the future - is regarded as part of another methodology: mission oriented innovation<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The foresight process now encompasses the last stage too and all of the associated tasks</li> <li>• In fact, all stages are now more concrete thanks to the introduction of specific activities</li> <li>• However, they largely mirror DoA and the overall process is still very much linear</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The framework has been completely revamped thanks to the input provided by CKA</li> <li>• The old present-future-present structure has been replaced with a classic foresight model consisting of pre-foresight, foresight and post-foresight</li> <li>• Typical foresight activities and deliverables, which weren't part of DoA, are now integrated with the formal WP tasks and reports</li> </ul>

The remainder of this chapter will focus on the bottom-most diagram in the table which reflects the latest understanding of foresight implementation in PoliRural.

<sup>1</sup> M. Mazzucato (2019) "Governing Missions in the European Union." Available online [ec.europa.eu](https://ec.europa.eu)

## A) Pre-foresight

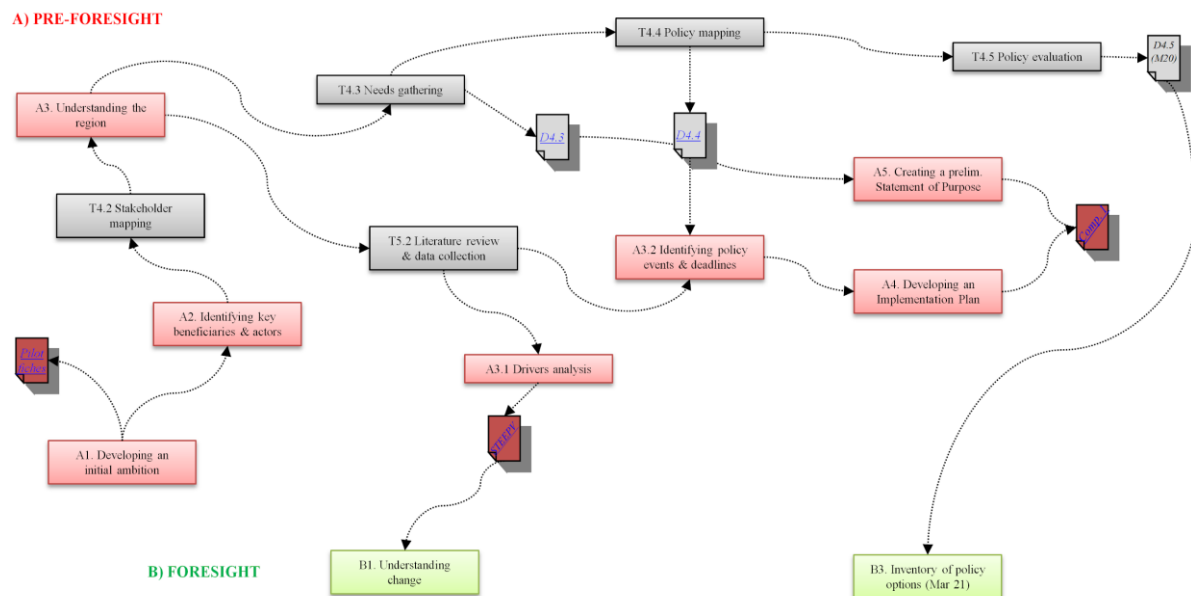


Figure 1. Integrated pre-foresight stage

This stage broadly corresponds to WP4 Current Rural Situation. However, the five official tasks (grey boxes) are not enough to conduct a meaningful preparatory foresight work. To address this shortcoming, we embedded additional activities and outputs (red boxes) into the formal structures of WP4 (T4.2, T4.3, T4.4, T4.5) and WP5 (T5.2). These are

- A1. Developing an initial ambition
- A2. Identifying key beneficiaries and actors
- A3. Understanding the region
- A3.1 Drivers analysis (global)
- A3.2 Identifying policy events and deadlines
- A4. Developing and Implementation Plan
- A5. Creating a preliminary Statement of Purpose

### A1. Developing an initial ambition

Once each region assembled a coordination team, it was time to select a general theme and define an overall ambition for the pilot. This led to the production of pilot fiches,<sup>2</sup> a collection of 12 case studies that set the context for the regional foresight activities.

### A2. Identifying key beneficiaries and actors

Whereas T4.2 distinguishes several stakeholder categories (policy, rural community, newcomers, research), foresight limits the distinction to two: actors and beneficiaries. Actors are those whose job is to develop policies and programs to stimulate regional development. While there are many

<sup>2</sup> <https://polirural.eu/pilots/>



reasons why we need to engage them, the primary one is the implementation of policy recommendations (D.10) to be delivered in M28. But their presence is also important in earlier stages, for example when policy options are being discussed and numerical targets are being defined for new measures. Typically, as the foresight “proper” proceeds, the involvement of actors increases. When we think of actors, we think mainly of public sector stakeholders with a role at EU, national, regional or sub-regional levels, who are responsibilities for (inter alia):

- Cohesion funding
- CAP payment
- Assistance to the agri-food sector
- Rural development and rural tourism
- Infrastructure development (roads, rail, ports, airports)
- Entrepreneurship development
- Circular economy and bioeconomy

Beneficiaries, on the other hand, are those who live in the region, those who work there, those who visit the region for whatever reason, those who invest in the region. In other words, they are individuals, communities and businesses with a direct stake in the future of the region. So far, we have relied on them to understand real needs, opportunities and conditions for success in the region. Examples of beneficiaries include but are not limited to:

- Farmers’ associations or agricultural chambers
- Associations or groups representing young farmers
- Various chambers representing commerce or tourism
- Business associations
- Country-women’s associations
- Associations representing part-time workers, seasonal workers or refugees
- Membership based organisations dealing with poverty, ageing, homelessness etc.
- Environmental associations and similar orgs interested in natural capital

Due to its complementary nature, A2 proceeded alongside T4.2, contributing directly to the two KPI categories: policy and rural community.

### *A3. Understanding the region*

This activity has the same objective as two formal work plan tasks (T4.3, T4.4). However, whereas T4.3 provided a regional perspective on rural needs, A3.1 sought to identify global drivers that can influence change locally. Furthermore, A3.2 supplemented the work performed as part of T4.4, bringing into focus not just policy measures that address specific needs, but also relevant policy programming cycles and deadlines that should be considered when preparing foresight results.

We will continue “understanding the region” also in the foresight stage through tools such as deep dives (B1.2), drivers workshops (B2.1) and System Dynamic Modelling (B3.1). The latter will bring into focus local dynamics that are going to define how the region responds to global trends.

### A3.1. Global drivers analysis

To understand how a region might develop in the future one should look beyond internal developments and consider changes that are happening elsewhere because these can be real drivers impacting change locally in the short or medium term. In PoliRural, we see drivers as underlying issues or trends that share a common theme and are likely to drive future change on a global scale. Besides providing an overview of what is happening in the world, the approach was considered a useful team building exercise. It allowed pilot teams to check and challenge underlying assumptions about local conditions, when they might change, why, and how.

Most project pilots were new to foresight in general and drivers' analysis in particular. Under the leadership of CKA, pilots were divided into six teams to explore drivers of change using the STEEPV mnemonic. This resulted in the selection of 64 global drivers across six categories: social (S), technological (T), economic (E), environmental (E), political (P) and value-based (V). The six headings are used to provide a holistic understanding of change, of how and where it is happening in the world, and how such change may play out locally.

The inventory is not exhaustive. But it does provide a useful starting point for the follow-up exercise (B2.1 local drivers analysis) in each of the 12 regional foresight pilots. Pilot teams are expected to use the inventory<sup>3</sup> to develop useful inputs to various forms of group work that make up part of the foresight process, to reach a shared understanding of how change happens, of what changes are happening now and are likely to happen in the future, of the varying levels of drivers' importance and of one's ability to influence them.

### A3.2. Identifying policy events and deadlines

There are many frameworks depicting a policy cycle. Traditionally, the cycle is visualised as a process containing three key steps: formulation, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. Foresight's primary input to the policy cycle is at the first - policy formulation - step. This is where ideas and insights that emerge from future outlooks can make their greatest contribution to policy development. So, while performing a needs-policy mapping (T4.4), pilots were also checking for existing and future opportunities to provide such contribution. Relevant examples include public consultations, debates, round tables, workshops. A3.2 results were included in the pilot Implementation Plan.

### A4. Developing an Implementation Plan

The preceding activities generated enough information for pilots to create a tentative foresight Implementation Plan. The document is essentially a schedule of planned activities divided across three foresight stages: pre-foresight, foresight, and post-foresight.

- **Pre-foresight phase:** Here, pilots had to indicate when they intend to conduct desk research, onboard key beneficiaries and actors, set up online presence and mailing list, publish the Implementation Plan and Statement of Purpose, and organise a formal launch event at regional level, ideally involving local press.

<sup>3</sup> <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1nbxP2vCiTsYnd-ETTYQvINSLhxms-RDi/view?usp=sharing>

- **Foresight phase:** The schedule here covers needs analysis to set the agenda; local drivers analysis to understand what is feasible and set achievable goals; vision building to crystallise an overall ambition and mobilise support; create the Action Plan and the Roadmap to define what needs to be done, by whom, and when. For each task, pilots had to clarify the overall process, timing and priorities.
- **Post-foresight phase:** In this section, pilots outlined their steps towards completing the process of adoption of the foresight package (comprising the Vision, Action Plan and Road Map) by regional actors; establishing a Monitoring Committee; defining a plan for monitoring and evaluation; introducing elements of the plan into identified policy processes.

#### A5. Creating a preliminary Statement of Purpose

Additionally, new knowledge gained by the pilots necessitated an update of the original ambition set out in the pilot fiches. The update was captured in the Statement of Purpose, a short document setting out goals to be addressed by each region and explaining the motivation for the overall ambition. In the case of Slovakia, for example, the motivation was the absence of a long term vision for rural areas, a vision that would coalesce different actors around a common cause. For the Slovak pilot team, PoliRural was therefore an opportunity to finally have something tangible, viable and long-lasting, something that would remove uncertainty and provide a clear direction for the Slovak rural areas and agriculture, ultimately leading to a sustainable future. Their ambition was to anchor the vision in the constitutional law so as to provide continuity, stability, clarity and strategic direction. That is why they kick-started the process in the national parliament.

Many of them view rural development through the prism of rural attractiveness, which varies from pilot to pilot. Some view rural attractiveness from the point of view of people who already live there, with the intention of reversing population decline. Some want to make rural professions more attractive, by focusing on jobs other than farming. Some envision attractive rural regions as a place suitable for living and home-working, while others emphasise the need to focus on entrepreneurs coming from abroad. The Statement of Purpose is not the final ambition to be pursued by the pilots. One more update is in order at the end of the second (foresight) stage.<sup>4</sup>

Together with the Implementation Plan, The Statement of Purpose became part of the first edition of the Foresight Compendium.<sup>5</sup> The Compendium counts as an internal deliverable that will be updated on a regular basis. At present, it contains an overview of the twelve foresight initiatives in rural regions from Belgium, the Czech Republic, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Republic of North Macedonia, Slovakia and Spain. Future updates will include reports on relevant background studies, results of the local drivers' and deep dive workshops, the outcomes of policy exploration assisted by System Dynamic Modeling, and the final foresight package consisting of the Vision, Action Plan and Roadmap.

<sup>4</sup> Initial ambition (pilot fiches) → updated ambition (SoP) → Vision, Action Plan and Roadmap (D6.2)

<sup>5</sup> <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1JyUtK48BdljWv4EfoLO35PzqSziWLBXY/view?usp=sharing>

As the goal of D1.9 is to perform a retrospective analysis of what happened against what was initially foreseen, future foresight and post-foresight activities will be briefly presented below but not analysed at length, for that is the goal of the next edition (D1.12). But their mention in this deliverable is warranted because of new elements that they introduce to the original framework.

## B) Foresight

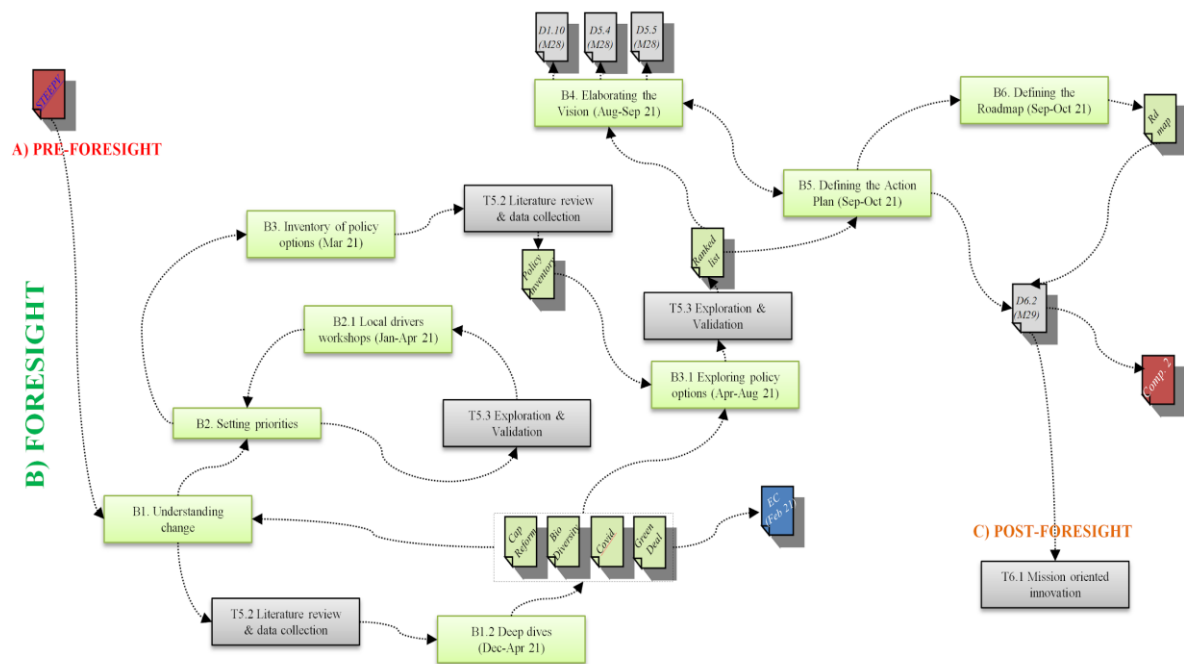


Figure 2. Integrated foresight stage

Foresight corresponds to WP5 Future Outlook. However, the three official tasks - T5.1, T5.2 and T5.3 (grey boxes) - don't capture all the necessary activities that are typically conducted at this stage. To align PoliRural pilots with the standard foresight practices, we added nine new activities (green boxes) to the original framework:

- B1. Understanding change
- B1.2 Deep dives
- B2. Setting priorities
- B2.1 Local drivers workshops
- B3. Inventory of policy options
- B3.1 Exploring policy options
- B4. Elaborating the vision
- B5. Defining the Action Plan
- B6. Defining the Roadmap

### B1. Understanding change

Foresight is about understanding change, how it happens and what causes change. It is therefore fitting that this stage starts with an eponymous task. Some issues require closer inspection. This is

especially the case with mega-trends which usually require a degree of localisation. Drivers like climate change, digital transformation and urbanisation may need to be interpreted locally so that their real significance is apparent and they don't get dismissed as someone else's problem. B1 therefore acts as conduit for a more nuanced local interpretation of global trends identified in A3.1.

### B1.2 Deep dives

To gain a better understanding of some key issues, deep dives are conducted as part of B1.2, focusing on

- Impact of COVID 19 at regional level
- CAP reform (all member states are required to prepare independent plans for local implementation)
- The Green Deal and the transition to net zero
- Biodiversity, which can be both an opportunity as well as a possible source of disruption

These are priority areas for the European Commission (who is seeking input on these by February 2021), as well as for the PoliRural pilots. Our ambition is that deep dives will provide raw material for ideas that might end up becoming new policy measures at both EU and regional level.

Methodological guidance on how to conduct deep dives will be shared by CKA in the early 2021, taking into account the experiences of some pilots (e.g. Vidzeme) that already performed deep dives at the end of 2020. For example, to explore the impact of and an optimal regional response to the pandemic, pilots can use the following questions to guide the discussion during a workshop or a webinar (see the box below).

#### Box 1. Potential impacts to explore in a deep dive on covid

**Direct impact:** How many people have been infected? How many people died? How many waves? What is the overall trend? Is there an end in sight?

**Impact on daily life:** How many people now work from home? How many people work remotely from a co-working space? Are these spaces adequately equipped for remote work? What is the impact on children and children's education? What impact has this had on household budgets? Has it led to higher energy costs (heating and IT)? How has this been reflected in relation to domestic violence, suicide, stress?

**Impact on household incomes:** How many have difficulty paying bills? How many people have difficulty paying rent? How many were evicted? How many were made homeless? How many have been rehoused in appropriate accommodation?

**Impact on employment:** What sectors have been affected? How many jobs have been lost? How many people on furlough? How likely are these to become layoffs? How many layoffs are likely to become permanent? What are the ages of those being laid-off? What are the prospects of them getting their jobs back? What is the prospect of them finding new work? What about the quality of new work? What differences exist, if any, for full-time, part-time, out-of-region and seasonal /

migrant workers?

**Impact on businesses and self-employed:** How has this affected revenues? How many businesses have shut temporarily? How many businesses have folded? Which sectors have been affected negatively? Which sectors have been affected positively?

**Impact on public services:** Here, the focus can be on education, healthcare, public transport.

**Impact on business sectors:** Here, one can focus on retail, restaurants and cafés, leisure and entertainment (sports, concerts, cinemas, festivals, galleries, museums), long-distance travel (by plane, international train, boat), local travel (local trains, metro, bus, taxi), hotels and accommodation, agriculture and food processing, manufacturing, construction, IT.

**Changes ushered in by the pandemic:** What changes have happened? What changes are probably only temporary? What changes may be permanent? What changes are structural? What changes provide an opportunity to make improvements and build back better? What needs to be done to lock in the positive changes and take advantage of opportunities?

Deep dive results will feed back to B1 to provide a better understanding of change and to help pilots proceed to priority setting. They will also feed into the exploration of policy options (3.1), where they can be used to develop future scenarios and translated into the SDM models in the form of variations in variables or relations between them.

## *B2. Setting priorities*

By this time, pilot teams will have absorbed most of the lessons about how change happens, so it will be necessary to transition to a new phase where priorities can be decided. The goal is to move from a long list of factors (such as those identified in the STEEPV inventory) to a priority list of key localised trends. The ranking activity will help pilots identify the level of urgency of different issues, as well as to see what issues are actionable at local, regional and national levels. We avoided doing the ranking exercise early on in the project, fearing that important priorities may get overlooked or ignored due to a lack of understanding.

Another option would be to group similar trends into clusters. This approach to priority-setting was followed by the Slovak pilot, which now has three clusters of connected drivers of change.

### *B2.1 Local drivers workshops*

Such workshops are a means to create priority lists comprising a small number of the most relevant trends. Operationally, drivers workshops will require some form of interactive group work and the use of ranking techniques e.g. simple ranked lists, four-dimensional matrix tables, and more complex multi-criteria approaches. However, such interactive group work may not be possible due to the pandemic, which required pilots to adapt their practices and conduct workshops online in the form of webinars.

It's important to bear in mind that drawing up priority lists is not hard science. The technique simply provides a way to manage complexity and structure a collective learning process that arrives at a result that can be justified based on evidence from the literature and a debate involving local experts. When organising a drivers workshop or webinar, care should be taken to involve all the major stakeholder groups in the ranking process. The list should get a final review to make sure that something important is not missing.

To improve communication with stakeholders, pilots were asked to create special web pages for sharing all the documents, activities and their outcomes through the Digital Innovation Hub ([hub.polirural.eu/](http://hub.polirural.eu/)) or another medium of their choice. For example, the Slovak team set up a special website [www.atraktivnyvidiek.sk](http://www.atraktivnyvidiek.sk).

### *B3. Inventory of policy options*

The aim of B3 is to identify international good practice examples of policy measures that could address prioritised issues from B2.1. It may sound ambitious but we are not naive. To expect that a policy solution from country A will work in country B is wishful thinking. It is trite but true that countries have different ecosystems and starting points on various issues. To copy-paste a successful solution may be tempting, but it is far from guaranteed that something good will happen in the end. Fully aware of that, we are going to approach this task with caution. Our intent is modest in ambition, as we simply seek to map out good practices and then see which ones can be adapted to suit the needs of a particular region. This will help pilots innovate without reinventing the wheel while learning from others' mistakes and successes.

#### *B3.1 Exploring the policy options*

Just like policy evaluation was assisted by text mining, so policy exploration will rely on System Dynamic Modeling (SDM) to test the impact of potential new measures that policy actors can introduce to make the region more attractive. We're using SDM because it has demonstrated considerable value across a number of different fields, helping decision makers understand and predict the dynamic behaviour of complex systems in support of the development of effective policy interventions tailored to the needs on the ground.

Designing a policy structure that is both effective and feasible requires practical thinking i.e. knowing how things really work. Such thinking must be contextualised. SDM experts are not expected to know all the answers when assessing policy feasibility; local stakeholders must be involved in the modelling process.

To that end, pilot partners will meet with subject matter experts online and face-to-face to get accustomed to the principles of systems thinking. Regular, intense contact is needed to create a solution that satisfies all requirements yet is not so complicated that it becomes difficult to comprehend. The model will be built from theories, values and ideas proposed by dozens of people from different disciplinary, cultural, geographic and linguistic backgrounds. These differences need to be accommodated into the system dynamics framework along with quantitative and qualitative



inputs coming from previous tasks and deliverables. Such considerations are particularly important for SDM experts who must communicate essential features of the model, which can be quite complex, to a non-technical audience.

In later states, we will simulate the impact of potential policies under different scenarios e.g. business as usual, worst case, best case, pessimistic, balanced development, sustainable development. The final output will be a ranked list of hypothetical policy measures whose potency can be justified based on SDM results and the conclusions of local stakeholders.

#### *B4. Elaborating the Vision*

The next step is to draw upon all of the work performed so far to develop a shared vision of what the region should become at some point in the future, say 10, 20 or 30 years from now. Depending on the detailed mission of the foresight initiative, and the nature of the challenge it attempts to address, the time horizon for the exercise may differ considerably. Major projects such as the construction of highways, ports and airports, the reforestation of vast tracts of land, often aim at goals to be achieved over a period of up to 50 years. Initiatives that address more immediate issues such as unemployment or flooding may require quicker action and can therefore be implemented over shorter time scales, within 5 or 10 years for example.

Whatever the landing place, there is a need to describe what this new and better world will be using an easy to remember and easy to understand narrative, one that helps all of those involved visualise the result of the various policies and measures that will need to be put in place. A typical Vision comprises a vision statement about half a page long. This can be qualified by adding further paragraphs to elaborate the Vision with the help of value based scenarios that enrich the message from the point of view of different stakeholder groups e.g. those who live in a region, those who work in the region, those who run a business, those who visit it for business or leisure.

A typical vision initiative might start with a workshop where pilots present what has been achieved so far. Then all participants discuss key concepts or words that should appear in the Vision, its overall structure and values against which the final text might be judged as being more or less compatible. At some point breakout groups should work on different thematic aspects that they would like to see reflected in the text, before reconvening and making their wishes known to the rest of the audience. Often the second workshop is needed to agree on the final or near final text to be included in the Vision document.

#### *B5. Defining the Action Plan*

The Action Plan is essentially an elaborated ranked list of policies that includes key objectives (based on quantitative and qualitative indicators) necessary for achieving the Vision. Action Plan identifies clear routes plus means of execution for achieving the objectives, and a plan for monitoring progress. Action Plan can be structured as follows:

- **Current situation:** Baseline and key regional features supported by data
- **Objectives and goals for the landing place:** Specifics of the Vision along with quantitative and qualitative KPIs



- **Steps to be taken:** Actions and measures to be taken, specifying who is responsible, and in cooperation with whom

It is important to remember that developing an Action Plan is similar to vision building in that both are learning and a consensus building processes. They reflect a group's view of how to get where the region needs to be in the future.

New measures that will make up the Action Plan should include mid-term evaluation and ex-post evaluation as part of their implementation plan. This provides an opportunity to adjust plans to the local reality and to ensure that important lessons are learned.

### B6. Defining the Roadmap

The Roadmap adds a timeline to the Action Plan. It uses a phased approach to make it easier to monitor progress step by step e.g. annually or biennially. It should be made clear who is responsible for leading the implementation of each action. This is important because if there is no take-up of results, practically all efforts leading to this point will be in vain. However, it is worth noting that certain recommendations (particularly those involving major changes) are often kept in reserve, only to be implemented at an appropriate time further down the line.

The Roadmap along with the Vision and the Action Plan represent the final foresight package that must be

- Endorsed by major beneficiaries. To be credible and to be able to play their role, they should be politically significant stakeholders (e.g. major business associations, citizen groups) that local government will talk to from now on.
- Adopted by key regional actors. If public administrations, agencies and other bodies are adequately involved and from an early enough stage in the process, the handover from the regional foresight team to these actors should be fairly easy.

The package will be included in the second edition of the Compendium, describing the entire process up until this point and crediting all those involved. Crucially, it will guide pilots through the post-foresight phase to be initiated at the start of WP6.

### C) Post-foresight

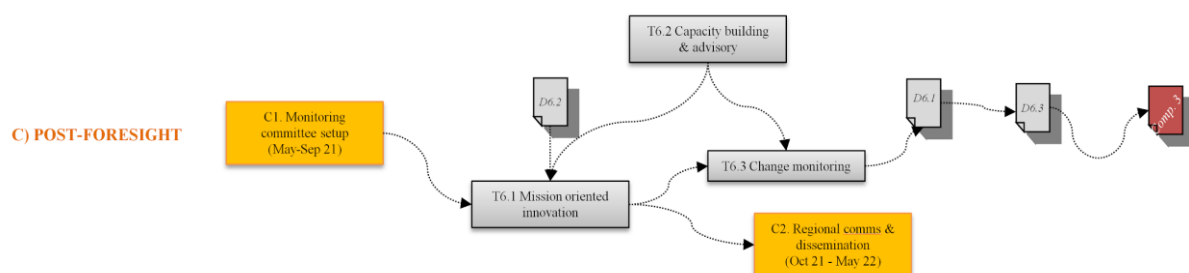


Figure 3. Integrated post-foresight stage

This stage is all about implementation. Out of the three foresight stages, this one was modified the least. The main changes include

- C1. Monitoring Committee setup
- C2. Regional communication and dissemination

#### *C1. Monitoring Committee setup*

Establishing a Monitoring Committee is the start of implementation. The Monitoring Committee must be set up in advance of T6.1. Its role is to check whether the Action Plan is implemented according to the phased approach outlined in D6.2. Furthermore, it may propose revisions to the above based on the examination of results and an assessment of whether targets have been reached.

Some pilots like the Vidzeme region (VPR) have already made significant steps in this direction and will be sharing their experience with others. By Spring 2020, they set up a local "Advisory and Monitoring Board for the VPR Development Programme" whose members were identified based on the stakeholder methodology. VPR then explained that they see them as an advisory mechanism for the elaboration of the programme and for monitoring its implementation. It is important to note that board members are not the same people who elaborate the programme. This approach ensures a more impartial assessment of any progress made with regard to program implementation.

#### *C2. Regional communication and dissemination*

The success of a foresight initiative depends on the existence of a proactive, well-crafted and targeted communication strategy to disseminate results and secure the buy-in from more actors. This entails a sufficient investment of resources in different communication tools, including publicity materials, a website, social media and a launch event. Presentation of the results to high-level policy makers is critical. Securing this level of interest may unlock both political will and resources necessary to implement the results. Production of policy briefs that summarise key findings and recommendations for policy makers will be highly beneficial for this final step.

To conclude, PoliRural foresight pilots will be deemed a success if

- Each completes the development of a Vision, Action Plan and Roadmap, a package that is then endorsed by beneficiaries and adopted by actors
- That a process and structure for monitoring the implementation of the Action Plan and the achievement of the Vision is created and starts its work
- Pilots provide an occasion for exploring the use of System Dynamic Modeling and/or text mining in a foresight initiative
- Pilot work is not compromised by any uncertainties with the development of the above tools

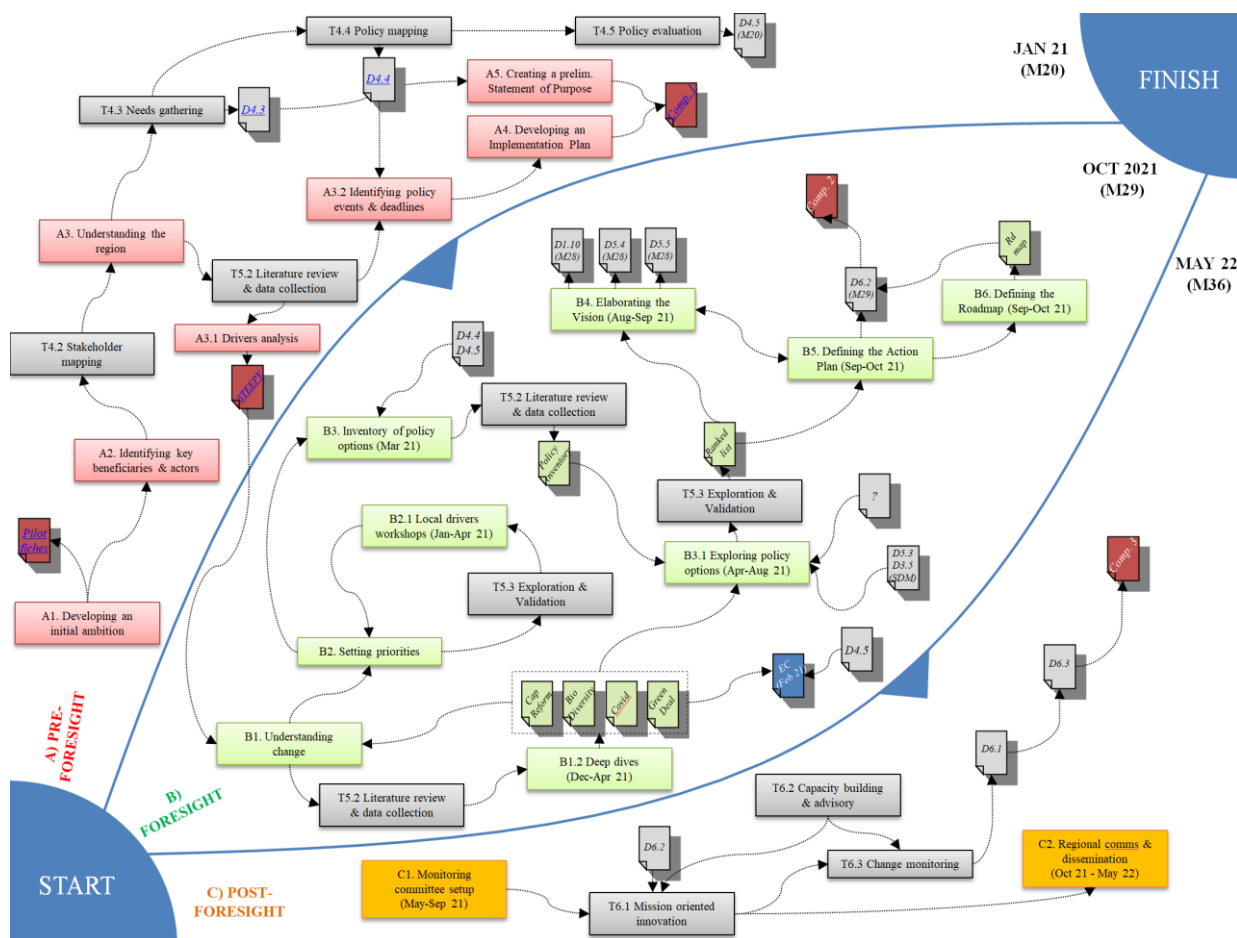


Figure 4. Integrated foresight framework

## Chapter 2: Policy Evaluation

The new approach followed by pilots is more suitable than the one initially recommended for T4.5 because here the regional teams focused on existing measures initiated and implemented by others, on policies that are still ongoing or are about to finish, and which have not been subject to an extensive evaluation yet e.g. LEADER. Later in the project, when PoliRural pilots start planning new measures for their region, an ex-ante approach will be introduced. A part of this involves the definition of KPIs and measures for monitoring progress.

Given the limited timeframe reserved for T4.5, there was little room to conduct an extensive evaluation exercise. Thus a much lighter and more flexible approach had to be developed and adapted to the experience of those involved in the pilots while bearing in mind available resources.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, T4.5 had to include an innovation stream, by which we mean the use of text mining to extract useful insights for policy evaluation.

<sup>6</sup> The ultimate goal of the PoliRural evaluation is to develop local-regional dialogue on the kinds of interventions which may be relevant in the context of the specific foresight pilot.

The first step in the evaluation process was policy selection. What measures to evaluate was determined based on the results of

- A5 Statement of Purpose
- A3.2 Policy events and deadlines
- D4.4 Needs-Policy Canvas
- D4.3 Grassroot Needs & Factors of Rural Attractiveness

The selection resulted in a policy mix, representing rural measures at different scales (local, regional, national) as required by DoA. The table below provides a list of measures that were selected by each region. It was important to look at the policy mix because different types of policies may have reinforcing, overlapping and/or contrasting effects. When pilots start exploring new policy options (B3.1), a policy mix will be one of the key ideas to consider. Past studies suggest that solutions combining different policy instruments may ensure an effective and well-coordinate public intervention (Mantino & Vanni 2019).<sup>7</sup>

**Table 2. Policies selected for evaluation**

Region	Policy name	Level
Monaghan	LEADER Theme 3: Priorities for Rural Environment	Local, regional
Segobriga:	LEADER M19.2	Local, regional
Flanders	Rural development programme Flanders 2014-2020 RDP III	Regional
Vidzeme	LEADER M19.21	Local, regional
	Central Finance and Contracting Agency Specific goal of support Specific Objective No. 3.3.1	National
Mazowieckie	"Programem Rozwoju Obszarów Wiejskich na lata 2014–2020"	Local
	ROP 7 Regional Operational Programme for Mazowieckie Voivodeship 2014-2020	Regional
Central Bohemia	"Strategie rozvoje územního obvodu Středočeského kraje na období 2019-2024, s výhledem do 2030"	Regional
HAME	"Local Time" - Hämeenlinna region's local development strategy for 2014-2020	Local, regional

<sup>7</sup> Mantino, F.; Vanni, F. Policy Mixes as a Strategy to Provide More Effective Social and Environmental Benefits: Evidence from Six Rural Areas in Europe. Sustainability 2019, 11, 6632

Central Greece	LEADER M19, M41	Local, regional
Apulia	LEADER M19.2, M19.4	Local, regional
Slovakia	Implementation of EU regulations on quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs	National
Gevgelija Strumica	Annual Program for Financial Support for Rural Development	National
Galilee	National Digital Program of the Government of Israel	National

Each pilot then had to prepare a profile sheet for the selected policy measures following JIIP's evaluation matrix as a guide. In describing their policies, pilots also had to explain the following

- **Theme:** Availability of public and other services, recreational and social activities, living conditions and quality of life, demographic and human capital, business economy and innovation, social and cultural aspects of rural areas, environment and biodiversity.
- **Coordination:** Who initiated and manages the policy implementation:
- **Budget allocation:** EU contribution, national, regional and local contribution (indicating relevant split where necessary), private finance (e.g. industry, foundation, business angel), other funding sources
- **Beneficiaries:** Type of beneficiaries (SMEs, farmers, NGOs, citizens in general etc.) and target numbers. If the latter are not available, estimates had to be provided.
- **Status:** Whether the policy is completed or ongoing. In the former case, depending on the period since completion, information about the outputs, outcomes and impacts can be collected and evaluated. In the latter case, results that have been achieved so far can be evaluated, for instance by looking at outputs and shorter-term outcomes.
- **Transferability:** Pilots had to assess whether the measure is transferable to other areas or to other farms/rural businesses facing the same issue? Is it transferable outside of the farming/rural domain? Has it been already replicated elsewhere in your country or in Europe?
- **Synergy:** Does the policy in question contribute to the objectives of other EU policies, in areas such as energy transition or digitisation?

The above largely deal with the background of selected policies. To answer key evaluation questions, a logframe process was developed, linking the evaluation criteria - relevance, effectiveness and coherence - with key elements of the evaluation exercise: needs, objectives, inputs/actions, outcomes and impacts (see Figure 5).

In addition, external factors impacting a policy measure were considered. External factors are those political, economic, environmental, social or technological factors that have influenced the achievement of the objectives of the policy measure but are beyond the control of the policy

measure evaluated. External factors were selected based on i) information provided in the Needs-Policy Canvas (D4.4), and ii) survey and/or interviews with the beneficiaries involved e.g. SMEs, farmers, associations, NGOs.

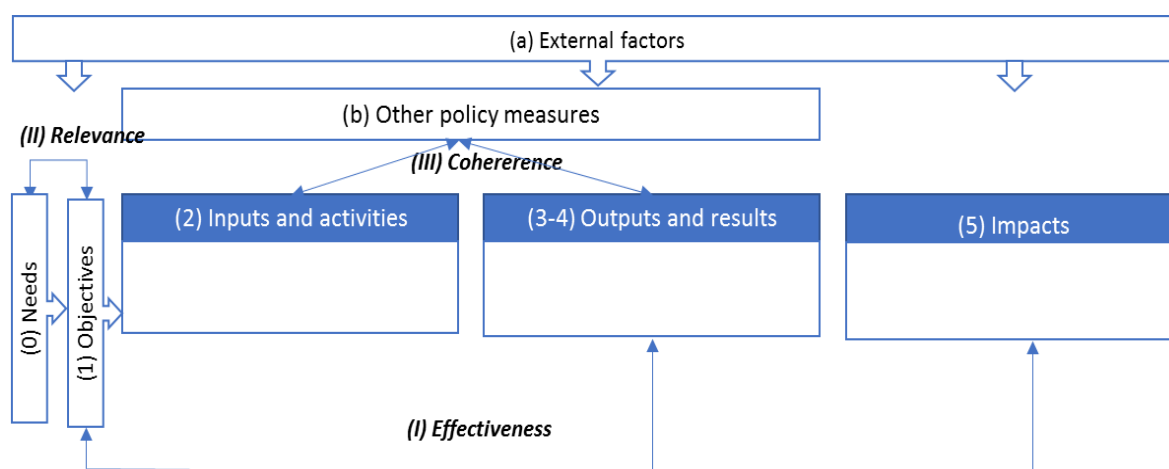


Figure 5. Logframe linking evaluation criteria with key evaluation elements

Evaluation criteria were operationalised as follows

- **Effectiveness:** Assessment of how successful the action has been in terms of achieving or making progress towards the objectives set and how external factors and policies have influenced the progress.
- **Relevance:** Assessment of the relationship between the needs and the objectives of the intervention.
- **Coherence:** Assessment of the initiative compared to other initiatives and policies.

Pilots were then free to select the most appropriate research methods for data collection depending on the complexity of the selected measures. JIIP developed guides for quantitative surveys, depth interviews, group discussions, literature review and document analysis. In addition, JIIP organized several online training sessions to prepare pilots for the evaluation. The evaluation survey was conducted in all pilots, plus policy specific questions were added to the questionnaire.

As already mentioned, this deliverable does not seek to repeat the results of T4.5 as they are presented separately in D4.5. The goal here was to review i) changes made in relation to the overall evaluation framework and ii) preparatory activities (e.g. training, development of new Semex features) that enabled the production of text mining input for D4.5.

### Use of text mining for policy evaluation

Since policy evaluation in PoliRural is composed of two streams (survey and text mining), it is worth highlighting some of the benefits the latter can bring to the process. For instance, using Semex, our text mining tool, it may be possible to:

- Identify additional issues/benefits linked to a specific policy (i.e. things that people talk about on the internet) that weren't picked up by the survey, and thus paint a more complete picture of a policy under investigation
- Confirm/validate survey findings by revealing broadly positive or negative sentiment toward a policy
- Cast the same policy in a different light compared to survey, and therefore reach a more balanced conclusion about its performance
- Identify relevant persons (through Named Entities) that may be engaged in policy development

To teach pilots how to use Semex for policy evaluation, KAJO and 21C developed a comprehensive training programme whose goal was to:

- Build capacity among pilots to work effectively with Semex on their own with minimal or no supervision from KAJO
- Upskill pilots to work with different types of sources (e.g. blogs, news articles, reports, policy documents), understand their relative strengths and weaknesses, and know how to correctly interpret the findings taking into account unique features and characteristics of each source type
- Help pilots transition from source-gathering and library-building to the more analytical activities whereby insights from Semex are used to inform evaluation decisions
- Enable pilots to assess the credibility of text mining results by identifying weaknesses in the underlying data sources and taking corrective action as and when necessary
- Make further improvements to Semex based on feedback on its usability and credibility as a decision support tool within the context of policy evaluation
- Deliver robust findings that complement survey results and feed directly into T4.5 Evaluation of Regional Policy Measures

An important milestone in this regard was the creation of a training library using data from CAP reform website.<sup>8</sup> KAJO extracted all content (articles) from there and made it available as a separate reading list on Semex. Further improvements to and the eventual release of analytical features made it possible to:

- Visualise sentiment using different polarity intervals (0.1, 0.25, 0.5, 1) for topics and keywords
- Explore semantic relationships between topics through a dynamic tree diagram
- Dive deeper into each topic and jump straight to the part in the text where the topic is discussed
- Access the reading list "dashboard" for better understanding of
  - Polarity scores per paragraph
  - Topics identified and their polarity scores
  - Named entities identified
  - Keywords identified and word count

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<sup>8</sup> <http://capreform.eu/archives-2/>

### *Semex training*

Evaluation oriented training consisted of two parts. The first one focused on Reading Lists - how to create and populate them with different sources. The second one went one step further and explained how Reading Lists can be examined using features such as sentiment analysis, a relational diagram and named entities.

Total time required for this training was about 30 minutes. Afterwards, pilots had to create and analyse policy specific Reading Lists using the newly acquired knowledge and skills. In the end, they had to produce a short report on their results which were then integrated by JIIP into the main evaluation deliverable.<sup>9</sup> These reports cover

- Overview of sources added to the evaluation Reading List
- Commentary on the polarity scores along with an accompanying screenshot of the bar chart
- Commentary on the semantic diagram for CAP reform (if relevant)
- Any relevant quotes found in PERSON named entity
- A brief discussion of whether text mining confirmed or added any new perspective on survey findings

When thinking about text mining and its application in policy evaluation, one should bear in mind that although text mining output does contain some numbers (e.g. polarity scores, frequency counts), the approach per se is qualitative. The aim is not to prove one version of the truth but to expose decision makers to opinions that may not be captured using the traditional methods e.g. surveys, interviews. In the case of social media analysis, text mining results can capture very extreme views that are not necessarily held by the majority of the public. Still, it is important to be aware of such opinions when trying to evaluate the perceived effectiveness of a policy.

## **Chapter 3: Stakeholder Engagement**

Since the beginning of the project, PoliRural pilots have engaged 433 individuals in project activities (see figure 6). Of those, 107 are policy makers, 188 are members of the rural community, 68 representing rural newcomers, and 70 come from the research sector. Stakeholder engagement has not been sporadic but actually followed the methodology prepared by VPR, the leader of T4.2 Stakeholder Mapping & Regional Panel Setup.

To date, stakeholders have contributed to (inter alia):

- The production of pilot fiches that outline the initial ambition and objectives for the rural development for each involved region
- The pan-European survey on rural needs carried out as a part of T4.3 Regional Needs Gathering & Analysis
- The development of Statement of Purpose and Implementation Plan for each pilot

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<sup>9</sup> The only exception was Macedonia due to language restrictions.



- The identification of the drivers of change for rural areas that will shape the future of each pilot region
- Deep dive workshops and focus groups to localise global trends
- The New Entrant Atlas<sup>10</sup> by providing the necessary information
- PoliRural communication by sharing their opinions and quotes which are referenced in the comms material

**REGIONAL PANEL MEMBERS**

No	Pilot area	Policy		Rural Community		Rural Newcomer		Scientific		TOTAL
		Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	
1	Belgium	3	7	2	7	1	1	5	8	34
2	Ireland	2	1	5	13	2	3	1	2	29
3	Spain	9	7	6	14	1	4	4	2	47
4	Latvia	16	10	18	4	8	4	6	6	72
5	Poland	3	0	4	10	1	1	2	0	21
6	Czech Republic	3	3	9	6	1	1	5	1	29
7	Slovakia	5	1	15	7	3	1	5	1	38
8	Finland	5	8	7	4	12	5	4	0	45
9	Greece	3	8	8	12	1	2	1	1	36
10	Italy	2	0	3	4	1	0	4	0	14
11	FYROM	0	2	5	13	2	4	1	3	30
12	Israel	9	0	6	5	4	5	8	0	37
Stakeholders involved		60	47	88	99	37	31	46	24	432
KPI		36		60	180	60	60	60		456

Figure 6. Overview of the regional stakeholder panels

However, after the interim evaluation, it became necessary to introduce some updates to the original stakeholder engagement and categorization approach. In particular, the following updates were requested:

- Disaggregating the “policy” and “scientific” categories by gender.
- Specifying where exactly people come from. In the case of policy category, for example, is it local government, regional government or ministry.
- Specifying whether stakeholders are members of the consortium, related to the project in any way, or completely external stakeholders.
- Splitting the rural newcomers into two sub-categories: i) new entrants into farming and ii) rural newcomers (not linked with farming).
- More efforts to engage stakeholders from the tourism sector, third sector organizations, more young people and women.

### Stakeholder mapping

In terms of stakeholder mapping, it is worth explaining the old method before introducing recent changes to it.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> <https://hub.polirural.eu/best-practises>

<sup>11</sup> The updated methodology can be found here <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1MlroAGrFdiUkmj8Qknqw-oEGDpHKjhrw/view?usp=sharing>

No.	Organization	Position	Policy	Rural Community		Rural Newcomer		Scientific	Consent form signed
				Female	Male	Female	Male		
1	New Edu, n.o.	owner						1	17.12.2019
2	TBS, a.s.	owner			1				26.11.2019
3	Ustav ekologie lesa SAV, Arboretum Mlynany	researcher						1	16.12.2019
4	National Centre for Rural Equalities	director		1					
5	OZ Tekov – Hont	manager		1					17.12.2019
6	National Agriculture and Food Centre	director						1	
7	Vegget	owner				1			
8	Obec Jesenské	Village major		1					16.12.2019
9	Biocentrum s.r.o	Director		1					07.01.2020
10	AKS - Agrarna komora Slovenska	Director							
11	Activist	Private person- craftswoman		1					12.11.2019
12	Secondary school of Agriculture and Rural services in Levice	Deputy director		1					29.11.2019
13	Civic association - Guľôčka	Private person		1					10.11.2019
14	ARVi: Agency for rural development	Deputy Director	1						25.5.2020
15	OZ Lišov Múzeum	Director			1				22.04.2020
16	Nitrianska organizácia cestovného ruchu	Director	1						09.03.2020
17	PD Liptovské Revúce	Director		1					20.04.2020
18	Rural population	Political scientist						1	01.04.2020
19	OZ Nádej	Director		1					13.04.2020
20	CEDA	Chairman						1	27.04.2020
21	WaJ Craft	craftsman		1					23.12.2019
22	VOKA	Director	1						29.04.2020
23	City Holíč	Major	1						04.05.2020
24	Plynova	Director			1				03.05.2020
25	OZ Kresťan na vidieku	Director			1				06.05.2020
26	Rural population	Craftworker				1			25.05.2020

Figure 7. Initial stakeholder inventory table

The initial method required pilots to list the following information for each stakeholder:

1. Information on status

- Organisation
- Position

2. Information on field and gender (where requested)

- Policy
- Rural community
  - Female
  - Male
- Rural newcomer
  - Female
  - Male
- Scientific

3. Information on consent

- Whether it was given and, if so, when the relevant paperwork was signed.

The main drawbacks of this approach were that:

- Two categories (“policy”, “scientific”) were not disaggregated by gender.
- It wasn’t clear which sector or level the organisation represented.
- Identification of rural newcomers was still confusing due to aspects or migration.

To address these shortcomings, the following updates were made:

1) A new field - link to PoliRural - was added to denote whether individual is:

- A direct project team member i.e. part of the project team

- From partner organisation, meaning he/she is a staff member of the partner organisation but doesn't officially work on the project
- Completely external i.e. outside the project consortium

2) Additional fields were added to specify:

- **Vulnerable groups:** there is an option to select whether the stakeholder is a young person, the elderly, migrant, or doesn't belong to any of the above (N/A)
- **Sector:** private sector, public sector, third sector, individual, research, other
- **Field of operation:** primary sector, manufacturing and industry, tourism, services, regional and local development, youth issues and education, ICT, environment and bioresources, business and farming support, other

3) As in the initial version of the stakeholder inventory table, pilots must mark only one of the following categories to classify a stakeholder which he/she represents. But the updated version adds more granularity in these four categories:

- Policy category
  - Level: national, regional, local
  - Gender: female, male
- Rural newcomer
  - Type: new entrant into farming or rural newcomer (not engaged into farming)
  - Gender: female, male
- Scientific
  - Gender: female, male

No.	Organization	Position	Link to PoliRural	Vulnerable groups	Sector	Field of operation	Policy			Rural Community		Rural Newcomer			Scientific		Consent given
							Level	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Type	Female	Male	
1	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development of the Republic of Latvia	Head of regional policy department	External	N/A	Public sector	Regional & Local Development	National		1								March 2019
2	Valmiera municipality	Mayor	External	N/A	Public sector	Regional & Local Development	Local		1								March 2019
3	Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Latvia	Head of Sustainable Agricultural Development	External	N/A	Public sector	Primary sector	National	1									22.04.2020
4	Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments	Regional Development Advisor	External	N/A	Third sector organization	Regional & Local Development	National	1									20.04.2020
5	Latvian Rural Forum	CEO	Direct project	N/A	Third sector organization	Regional & Local Development				1							17.12.2019
6	Latvian Food Bioeconomy Cluster	CEO	External	N/A	Third sector organization	Manufacturing & Industry					1						16.12.2019
7	Valmiera Development Agency	Head of the board	External	N/A	Third sector organization	Regional & Local Development				1							03.04.2020
8	State Finance institution ALTUM	Head of Vidzeme department	External	N/A	Public sector	Business & Farming support				1							March 2019
9	Local action group "Sateka"	Manager	External	N/A	Third sector organization	Regional & Local Development				1							17.12.2019
10	Cooperation space SKOLA6	Manager	External	N/A	Third sector organization	Business & Farming support				1							
11	The Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry	Head of Cēsis department	External	N/A	Third sector organization	Business & Farming support				1							March 2019

Figure 8. Updated stakeholder inventory table

The new approach makes it easier for pilots to keep track of the engagement process, to see which groups require more attention (in case they are not well represented compared to other stakeholders), and then adjust the efforts accordingly.

With regards to rural newcomers, the following distinction is made. If a stakeholder had previously lived in the region for at least a year, moved away, and then moved back to the region, that person no longer counts as a newcomer, even if he/she has spent more time living outside the region than in the region before the departure.

With regard to migrants, we used the definition provided by the European Commission<sup>12</sup> to figure out whether a person belongs to this category or not. Specifically, a migrant is:

- (In the global context) a person who is outside the territory of the State of which they are nationals or citizens and who has resided in a foreign country for more than one year irrespective of the causes, voluntary or involuntary, and the means, regular or irregular, used to migrate
- (In the EU/EFTA context) a person who either:
  - establishes their usual residence in the territory of an EU/EFTA Member State for a period that is, or is expected to be, of at least 12 months, having previously been usually resident in another EU/EFTA Member State or a third country, or
  - having previously been usually resident in the territory of the EU/EFTA Member State, ceases to have their usual residence in the EU/EFTA Member State for a period that is, or is expected to be, of at least 12 months

With regards to gender, Eurostat data shows that on average around 30% of farms across the EU are managed by women.<sup>13</sup> The differences among member states are remarkable, ranging from just over 5% in the Netherlands to around 47% in Lithuania. In our case, the KPI for women represents 25% of the “rural community” category (60/240), which is more or less in line with statistics. Still, to compensate for this imbalance, we will overrepresent women in other categories, notably “policy” and “science”. Also, despite the set KPIs in “rural communities”, we will try to engage more women here too. In fact, the gender gap there is already quite small (88 vs. 99), while in all other categories women represent the majority of stakeholders engaged

- Policy: 60 vs. 47
- Rural newcomer: 37 vs. 31
- Scientific: 46 vs. 24

### **Stakeholder engagement**

Going forward, our efforts will seek to improve stakeholder engagement by strengthening its scientific foundation. By science we do not mean some hard and fast rules supported by equations. For us, science is first and foremost about eliminating bias in our work and making sure that results are representative.

As the next period will require a lot of input from stakeholders (to develop and validate system dynamic models, to understand local priorities through deep dives and drivers workshops,<sup>14</sup> to conceive alternative policy options, to elaborate the Vision, Action Plan and Roadmap, to continue collecting new entrant stories for the Best Practice Atlas), a scientifically sound engagement and data collection strategy is key to producing valid results.

<sup>12</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european\\_migration\\_network/glossary\\_search/migrant\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/glossary_search/migrant_en)

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.euractiv.com/section/agriculture-food/special\\_report/young-people-and-women-in-eu-farming/](https://www.euractiv.com/section/agriculture-food/special_report/young-people-and-women-in-eu-farming/)

<sup>14</sup> This requirement applies to pilots that have not yet organised drivers workshops and/or deep dives

To that end, PoliRural will make use of the willingness-expertise matrix (as described in VPR's methodology document) to ensure that relevant people are invited to the workshops and other activities. The approach classifies stakeholders according to their interest in the subject and influence over processes e.g. policy making, farming, regional development, job creation. It will help identify key stakeholders that should be targeted (e.g. high interest, high influence) or modified (e.g. low interest, high influence) by attempting to increase their level of interest.

Due to limited resources, key stakeholders must be prioritised and contacted first. This pragmatic approach should be undertaken carefully to ensure that balance is still maintained whenever possible, and that engaged stakeholders provide knowledge and opinions that are representative of or are accepted by the stakeholder community at large. Whenever a certain group is excluded, a risk assessment should be performed to better understand any negative consequences that may result from failing to include certain stakeholders in the process.

We do realise that, although ideal, a strict proportional, quantitative representation may be neither possible nor desirable. First, activities such as workshops are unlikely to cater for and attract all relevant stakeholder groups, so ensuring that one representative from every group is present is likely to be an impossible goal. Furthermore, some individuals may represent larger stakeholder groups, whilst other individuals represent only themselves. Such group representatives, however, may have collated the views and speak on behalf of a large number of individual stakeholders. The key aim with ensuring balance is to allow all major types of stakeholder to be given the opportunity to provide input. This can be achieved by:

- Always communicating to an entire panel rather than a limited pool of familiar people.
- Coordinate events in such manner that each participant gets a chance to give an input - organize small breakout groups; give a word to those who haven't shared their views by that moment; give a ground for a proper dialog; provide an opportunity to give feedback both orally and in writing.
- Announcing forthcoming events and opportunities to provide input via public channels e.g., PoliRural Hub, social media, website of pilot partners.

After the first contact, stakeholders must be informed how future communication will be organised. It is important to keep all stakeholders engaged by providing regular updates about the results achieved so far. Stakeholders must be able to access and review the data or reports generated from the data with sufficient time to critique and perhaps add relevant information. How stakeholders are approached and communicated with is important as well. Certain groups may interact more if contacted in a specific way or at a specific time. Other groups may require different wording in emails, for example, if their level of understanding of technical jargon is expected to be higher/lower.

A key element in stakeholder engagement is group dynamics. We believe it is important for stakeholders to get to know each other, to understand each unique perspective on the issue through discussion, debate, and brainstorming. Having said that, one should be aware of potential conflicts between different stakeholder groups. Such awareness can be crucial for ensuring that stakeholder

engagement activities run smoothly, for example by interacting with conflicting groups at different meetings rather than assembling them in one room.

Part of the “art” of foresight is to improve minority groups and make sure their interest is reflected in the overall vision and measures intended to achieve it. A common error, however, is to focus exclusively on the interest of minority groups and forget those of the majority. Just as minorities can be “oppressed” by a majority, so can majorities be oppressed by minorities. A good foresight exercise will strike a balance. One needs support of the majority to get credibility and inputs of minorities to get fairness and justice. Good stakeholder management (engagement) is required to strike this balance. A skilled foresight practitioner will take account of practical realities, such as that different stakeholders have different “stakes” and that every stakeholder cannot (and should not) be involved in everything all the time.

As most of the future engagement will be workshop based, such events will be conducted using tried and tested qualitative techniques. In particular, pilots will need to:

- Develop workshop guides to act as a roadmap or memory aid for the facilitator, making sure that all the key topics are covered, main issues addressed and relevant input received.
- Ensure that notes are taken and the meeting is being recorded to create a transcript of the event thereafter, so all input is properly received.
- Eliminate facilitator bias and ensure that discussion is not dominated or side-tracked by a few individuals - ensure the ground for proper dialog.
- Transcribe data in sufficient detail to enable thematic and/or content analysis.
- Follow the ethics and confidentiality agreements as outlined in the Consent Form.

## Conclusion

This deliverable reviewed changes to the original framework that were made in M13-M18, with a special focus on foresight, evaluation, and stakeholder engagement.

As regards foresight, pilots now benefit from a more coherent framework that includes all the key foresight stages, tasks and deliverables, and that shows how these are connected to the official project structures. As the project develops, further guidance on key activities and deliverables in foresight and post-foresight stages will be provided by PoliRural’s subject matter experts CKA, 22Sistema, JIIP and VPR, among others. We expect no major updates to the integrated framework in the coming months. By major updates we mean a complete reorganisation of the stages and dynamics between them. However, some small changes may be in order to adjust, for example, the timings or focus of certain tasks to the needs of regional actors and/or European Commission (as was done with deep dives).

As regards T4.5 Perceived Effectiveness of Rural Intervention, the overall approach to this task has evolved since the publication of D1.5 (May 2020). The ex-ante evaluation was replaced with a more flexible method to suit the needs of PoliRural pilot teams. Consistency with regard to policy selection,

data collection and presentation of final results was ensured through a common methodology developed by JIIP. Selected measures represent a diversity of scales (local, regional, national) and were evaluated using text mining alongside the more traditional, survey based approach. Lastly, measures taken by KAJO and 21c - namely the development of new Semex features, the creation of a training library, the roll out of a training program - made it possible for pilots to explore the use of new technologies for policy evaluation.

As regards stakeholder engagement, since the beginning of the project, pilots managed to engage a significant number of different stakeholders (432 at the time of writing). It's a great achievement but the process was in need of some improvement to make future efforts even better. The key updates implemented by VPR concern stakeholder mapping. According to the updated methodology, all categories are now disaggregated by gender. There is more clarity as to who the stakeholders are, what sector and social group they represent, and in what way they are linked to the project. Going forward, stakeholder engagement will benefit from the introduction of i) pragmatic practices aimed at balancing representation with relevance, and ii) scientific approaches aimed at ensuring sound data collection and analysis. For best results, stakeholder mapping and engagement approaches should be reviewed by members of the Advisory Board once it becomes operational. It may also be beneficial to review our stakeholder engagement strategy using theoretical approaches such as the actor-network theory (ANT).<sup>15</sup> With ANT, it may be possible to further strengthen the innovative space to improve conditions for interaction among stakeholders.

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<sup>15</sup> R. Dankert (2012) "Actor-Network Theory," International Encyclopedia of Housing and Home 2012, pp. 46-50