

Rural Pact Conference

15-16 June 2022



Rural proofing and Equal living conditions

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The Situation

Europe in 2022 and its rural areas face existential challenges:

- Climate Change and the war on Ukraine
- The need for a turnaround in energy and mobility politics
- Demographics and a lack of well trained professionals
- A Europe that seems too far away from its citizens



A Long Term Vision for Europe

- Appreciating the Conference on the Future of Europe and the Long Term Vision for Rural Areas: stronger democracy through participation
 - Taking into consideration the special challenges of citizens in rural areas
- A stronger Europe through decentralisation and diversification
 - More leeway and fewer financial and bureaucratic burdens on small structures
- A better policy through monitoring and mindfulness
 - Rural Observatory and Rural Proofing
- Better support through efficiency and coordination
 - Coherence of funding between CAP and Cohesion Funds
 - Policies and legislation through the lens of Rural Proofing



Rural Proofing and Equal Living Conditions

“Equivalency Check”

An example of better regulation for rural areas?



“Equivalency Check”

The Term Equivalency:

- Equivalency is not focused on rural development alone
- While it is focused on equal living conditions in general, the special challenges facing rural areas and cities are an important part of the scope
- It also takes a regional point of view in addition to a socio-structural perspective

The Tool “Equivalency Check”

- Checklist introduced in 2020
- Tool developed in the “Commission for Equivalent Living Conditions”
- This Commission was a broad alliance composed of all federal ministries, all the federal states (*Länder*), regions and the associations of local authorities and municipalities

➤ Similar to the Rural Pact!



Example I The “financial situation of municipalities” factor

The situation:

“The financial means of municipal communities and regional networks play a huge role when it comes to investment in development projects and providing technical and social infrastructure or services for citizens. This in turn affects the equivalence of living conditions. Legislative proposals which affect the financial situation in the regions – for instance in terms of tax, social benefits, public investment or funding measures – should therefore be checked for whether they are in line with the aim of establishing equivalent living conditions throughout Germany. Checkers should bear in mind that the federal states play a key role in compensating for differences in the development of municipalities within their state. ”

Following questions from the checklist:

- Does the proposal have impacts on the financial means of regional communities or networks?
- If so, which areas of revenue or spending are affected, and at which administrative level (e.g. municipal, town or district level)?
- Are financially weak administrative communities strengthened/unaffected/weakened in financial terms?
- Are certain segments of the population particularly affected?



Example II The “mobility and digital infrastructure” factor

The situation:

“Availability of accessible transport options and digital infrastructure is a basic requirement for access to vital services, participation in society, economic growth, employment and prosperity. Therefore, any measure taken across the country which contributes to the goal of universally available, user-oriented, efficient, affordable and sustainable transport and broadband/mobile telecommunications is an investment in equivalent living conditions. It is crucial that legislative proposals on transport and digital infrastructures be considered not just in terms of their cost-effectiveness but in terms of their importance for regional development and for people’s participation in society. Even if resources are limited, prioritising this factor seems desirable for the economy as a whole.”

Following questions from the checklist:

- Does the proposal have impacts on mobility in regional areas and/or the provision of digital infrastructure and access to services, including administrative services?
- If so, which areas of mobility and digital infrastructure are affected (e.g. broadband, mobile communications, public transport) and at which administrative level (e.g. municipal, town or district level)?
- Are less developed regions strengthened/unaffected/weakened in terms of their access to mobility and digital infrastructure? Are certain segments of the population particularly affected? [If so, please describe this in the explanatory memorandum.]



“Equivalency Check”

- The tool contains seven different descriptions of situations which may trigger the check
 - The check has to be made by all relevant units in the Federal Government
 - Since April 2022, the check has been implemented within the electronic legislative impact assessment
 - No severe consequences, if tool has not been applied
- Therefore: Time is of the essence! Civil servants must, at a very early stage, be aware of the need to consider special challenges in regard to equal living conditions.
- ❖ Major EU policies, legislation and funding need to include rural proofing early on!



Any questions?



Thank you

