



RURAL PROOFING
- MECANISMO RURAL DE GARANTÍA -

“Rural Proofing in Spain”

Dr. Serafin Pazos-Vidal

Head of Brussels Office

Convention of Scottish Local Authorities

Member of G100

**Brussels,
15 June 2022**



Rural Pact Conference
15-16 June 2022



Impulsa

elhueco
@coworking_soria

Colaboran:

 Gobierno de Navarra
Nafarroako Gobernua
Departamento de Cohesión Territorial
Lurralde Kohesiorako Departamentua



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www.ruralproofing.com

Personal Background

- PhD European Union
- Manager of Scottish Local Government European and International policy unit & Brussels Office since 2007
- Leading international policy , repatriation EU powers & impact on Devolution
- Chair CEMR Cohesion Expert Group
- Technical draftsman CoR Opinions CLLD, INTERREG, CAP reform, REGI
- Author first EU-wide legal definition of a depopulating area in EU funds
- Co-author, inter alia, of Spain's 1st ever "Rural Proofing" study

- Academic researcher (Multilevel Governance, Comparative Decentralisation)
- Member Regional Studies Association Cohesion Policy Network (CPnet)
- Member AECPA Urban Policy WG
- OLA Network, ECPR Federalism, Local Government & European Union, Red Localis.
- Speaking on a personal capacity



**SUBSIDIARITY AND EU
MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE**
ACTORS, NETWORKS AND AGENDAS
Serafin Pazos-Vidal





Ruralizar las leyes. Una cuestión de justicia.

DIC
2021

Conclusiones para la implantación de un
Mecanismo Rural de Garantía en España

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- Spain's first ever **nationwide exercise**
- From the **3rd sector** (EL HUECO Soria)
- Supported by **public bodies** (Navarre Government, Spanish municipalities federation and others)
- G100 -100 members, **open participation and consultation**
- **70 proposals**
- Final conclusions last 21 January 2022
- Rural Proofing is an EU endeavour
- Spain a **test case for policies against depopulation**



Map 3-4: Sparsely populated areas and areas at risk of becoming sparsely populated

Sparsely populated areas and areas at risk of becoming sparsely populated

Sparsely populated areas and areas with low population potential

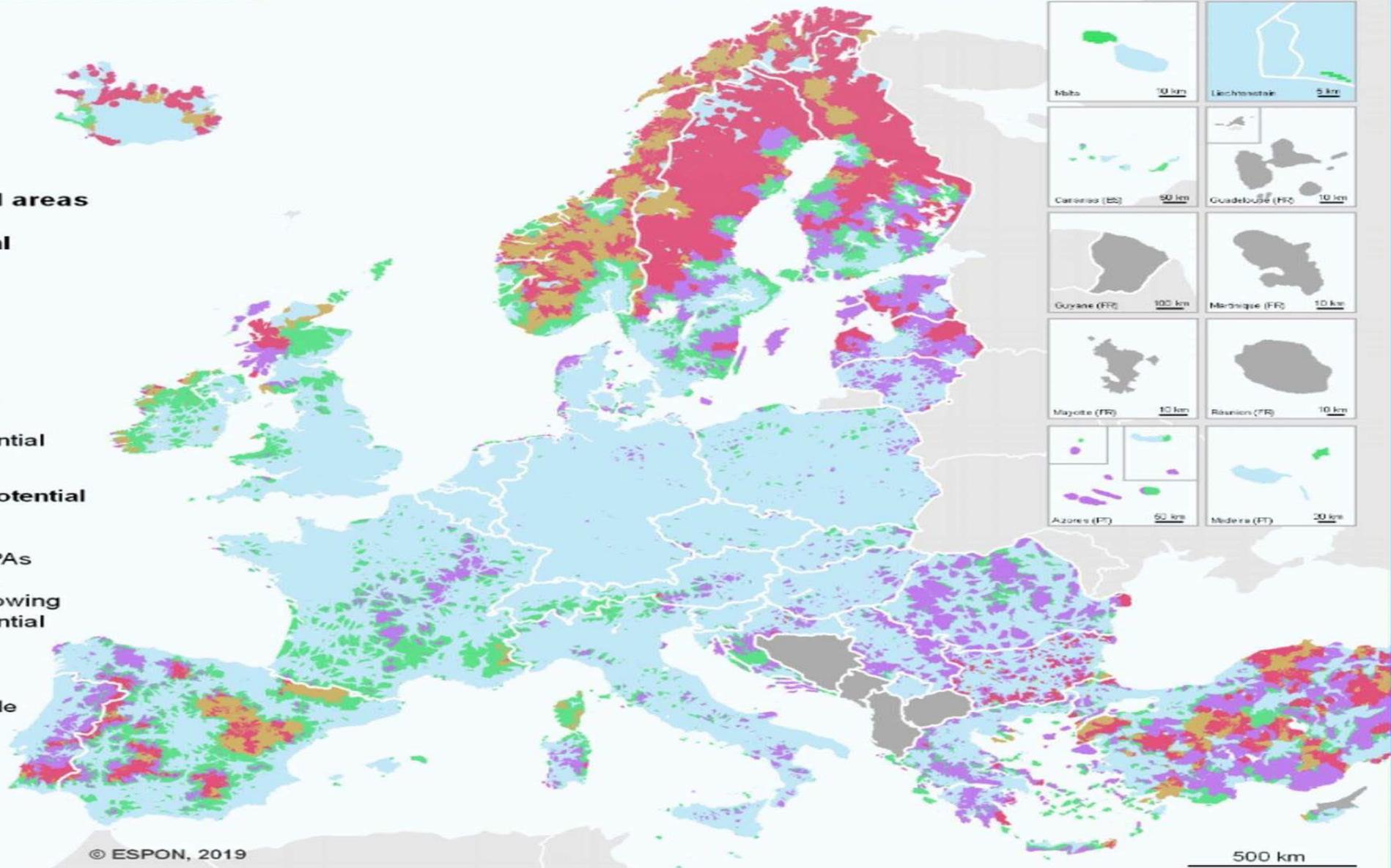
Current SPAs
(population potential < 100,000 residents)

- Red: SPA in decline
- Orange: SPA with stable or growing population potential

Other areas with low population potential (<125,000 residents)

- Purple: Areas at risk of becoming SPAs
- Green: Areas with low, but stable or growing population potential

Grey: No data available



© ESPON, 2019

Resolution: 1x1 km grid cells
Source: ESPON BRIDGES, 2019
Origin of data: TCP International, 2019; ESPON GEOSPECS, 2012; RRG GIS Database, 2018
©UMS RIATE and University of Geneva for administrative boundaries

Regiones productivas de España

"EMPTY SPAIN"

- Áreas dinámicas consolidadas
- Ejes industriales en declive
- Ejes en desarrollo
- Espacios turísticos archipelágicos
- "España vacía"
- Espacios agrícolas ultraproductivos
- Ejes urbanos con estancamiento productivo
- Área afectada por la macrocefalia de Madrid



Cartografía:
Abel Gil Lobo (2019)



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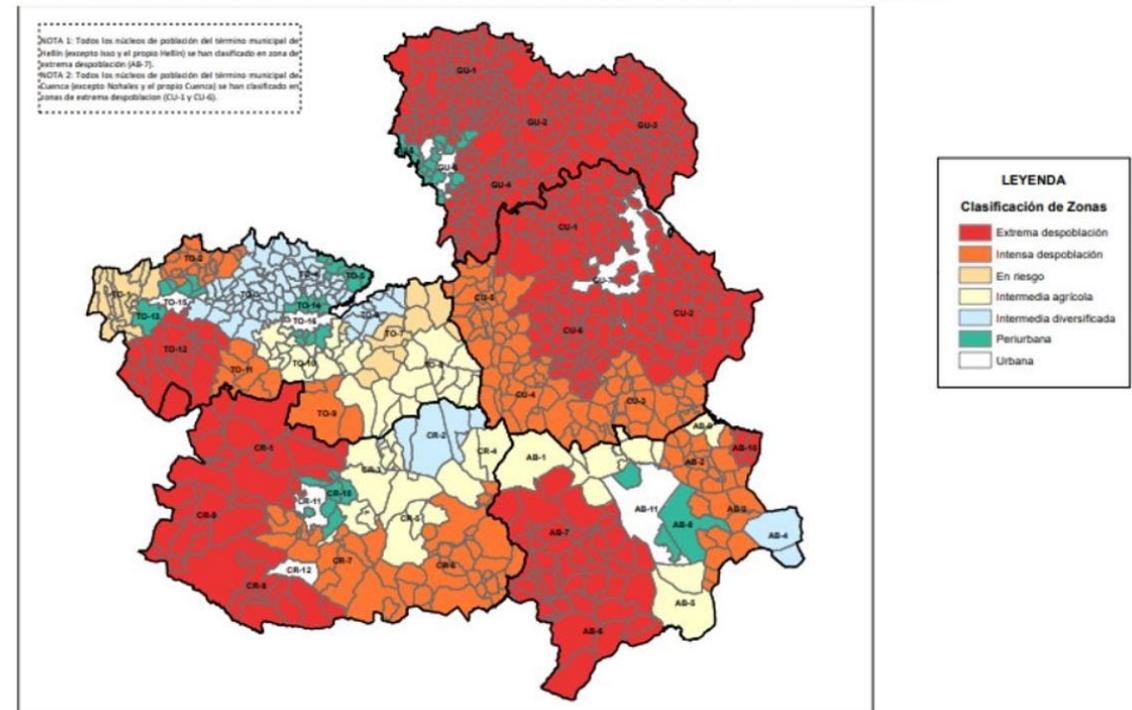


“Empty Spain”

- Fight against depopulation is now a key Spanish national priority: rural areas, villages, towns & shrinking cities
 - Own Ministry & Vice-presidency
 - National Strategy 130 measures, up to €10bn
 - Embedded in Spain Next Gen EU recovery plan
 - Rural Proofing included in Demographic Strategy – simultaneously 1st ever draft Law on Evaluation of Public Policies creation of specialised units on public policy evaluation in Spanish independent fiscal authority, courts of auditors, social committees
-
- Mirrored by increasing number of regional policies and plans: Castilla y Leon, Galicia, Navarra...
 - Most particularly Castilla-La Mancha’s New Law on Depopulation
 - Drafted by public participation exercise
 - Includes first ever official map of areas facing depopulation
 - Multivariable: depopulation, access to services, functional areas
 - Fiscal incentives (state aid) & EU and national funds
 - Rural Proofing given legal status



CLASIFICACIÓN DE ZONAS DE CASTILLA-LA MANCHA





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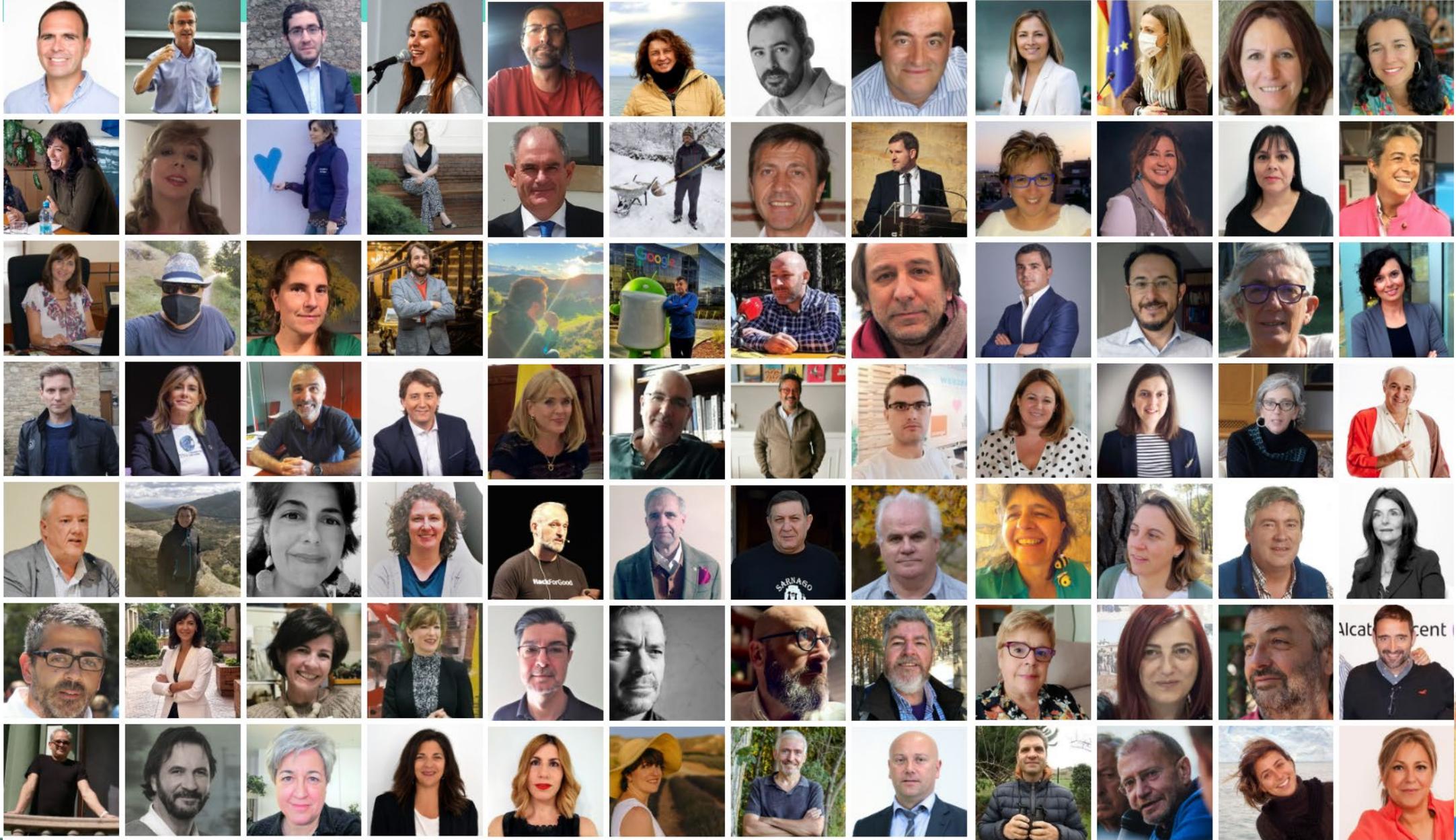
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- G100 -50/50 gender balance
- Experts, practitioners, local & reg politicians
- Feb 2021-Jan 2022: Presented 31 May to Spanish PM and opposition leaders

- Quality rural services for all people
- Affordable, efficient and sustainable rural infrastructure
- Strengthened and viable rural economies
- Sustainable rural environment
- Rural legislation promoting these areas- EU/national/regional



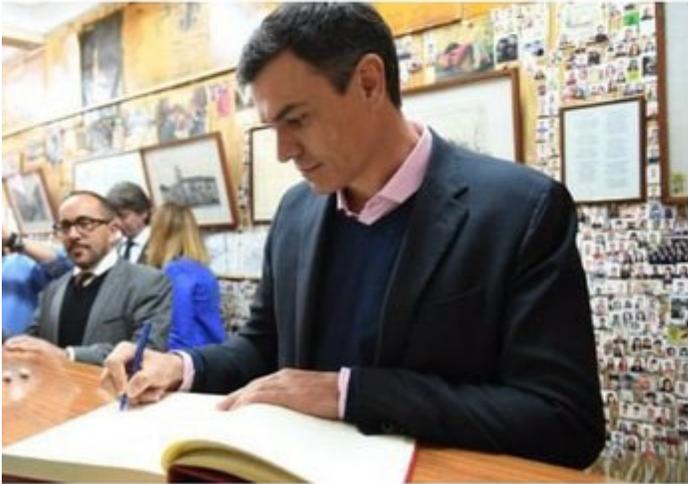


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Scope and Methodology



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- **100 members** from all across Spain, personal capacity
- **19 Working Groups - 3 coordinators**
- **Open terms of reference – participatory approach**
- Identification of problems and broad connection with EU and domestic law & policies
- **Drawing from experience** rural proofing Canada, Scotland, rest of UK, Scandinavia, OECD and EU: Rural Proofing and Better Regulation
- **70 specific proposals:** policy, regulatory & governance
- The rural proofing methodology and the open participation method has been validated by this G100 exercise



Main Findings



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- Many issues stem from EU law and policies (CAP, Structural Funds, Environmental & Competition legislation)
- However, crucial factor is how they are transposed & delivered in Spain: gold-plating
- Rigid & risk averse interpretation: e.g. same EU health rules loosely applied in France
- Weak culture of evaluation of public policies : lack of independent evidence, disconnect between national, regional and local levels
- Excessive legalism & preponderance of political discretion in policy setting
- Weak participatory involvement in policy & law-making
- Preference to overregulate prescriptive legislation than design of effective policies & funds



Main findings (II)



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- Lack capacity in small municipalities (8,000, most of them under 5,000 inhabitants)
- Unclear delimitation of competences – grey areas, duplications and gaps
- No set definition of minimum standards local basic services
- Key economic actors overlook needs of rural areas (e.g. broadband)
- Regulatory maze hampers rural entrepreneurship & migration to rural areas
- Lack of robust housing policy – people want to move or stay in rural areas but there is no housing available: no market incentives, public grants not targeted
- Rural policies do not yet sufficiently favour local sustainable agrifood value chains
- Extractive approach to rural resources (e.g. wind energy, solar and hydro)
- Planning very restrictive in theory and poorly enforced in practice



4 Recommendations



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- **Recommendation 1:** A Spanish “Rural proofing” must be framed and participate in the process of EU Rural Proofing/Vision Rural Areas, territorial impact assessment and EU Better Regulation.
- Many of the policies and regulations that most affect the rural world (CAP, ESIF, environment, procurement) come mainly from EU.
- **Recommendation 2:** The experience of other countries indicates the need to create a Spanish rural proofing mechanism that reflects the Spanish political and institutional culture, and not simply the mimetic translation of other models and political cultures.



4 Recommendations



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- **Recommendation 3:** When establishing a Rural proofing mechanism, it is necessary decide whether your approach is sectoral, or horizontal, reflecting the multiple impacts of public policies and regulations in the rural world.
- It is also necessary to decide whether it is more appropriate to trust the execution and coordination to an agency of the respective governments (central and regional), or to an ad hoc independent body.
- In the case of choosing by a government agency it is necessary to decide whether it is more effective establish a coordinating department or centralising in a sectoral department, depending on the approach adopted.



4 Recommendations



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- **Recommendation 4: An holistic approach is necessary through a permanent and participatory mechanism**
- Coordination of all ministerial departments and their regional equivalents, either by an interdepartmental mechanism or by a body that centralises rural proofing, or both: ex ante and ex post evaluation.
- Integration of rural impacts in the official reporting of statutory bodies by a common assessment plan: Council of State, Courts of Auditors, INAP, Institute of Fiscal Studies, Independent Authority for Fiscal Responsibility, Economic and Social Committee.
- Embedded Rural Proofing scrutiny and coordination in national and regional legislatures.
- Creation of a permanent, proactive, civic rural participatory mechanism





Draft Central Government Public Policy Evaluation Law

- Introduced under duress as a request from the EU Recovery Programme fund
- Reintroduces the national agency for Evaluation Public Policies (AEVAL)
- However draft Law is very procedural and content-light
- **Does not mention Rural Proofing** (despite G100 contribution in drafting phase)
- Does not include Regions (50% of Spain's spend and powers)
- Nor EU Better Regulation (despite that 70% domestic laws are EU's –partic. rural)
- Enters an already crowded landscape (regional initiatives, Court of Autors operational audits and independent fiscal authority AIREF evaluation unit)
- EU level – baby steps to develop Rural Proofing within Better Regulation (eg CoR study, Rural Pact proposals)





More info

- [Rural-Proofing-Resumen-ejecutivo.pdf \(ruralproofing.com\)](https://ruralproofing.com/Rural-Proofing-Resumen-ejecutivo.pdf)
- [70-propuestas-para-conseguir-una-legislacion-mas-justa-para-el-medio-rural.pdf \(ruralproofing.com\)](https://ruralproofing.com/70-propuestas-para-conseguir-una-legislacion-mas-justa-para-el-medio-rural.pdf)
- [Documentos de interés - Rural Proofing](#)
- <https://ruralproofing.com>





Thank you

Serafin Pazos-Vidal
Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
(COSLA)

House of Municipalities
1 Square De Meeus
1000 Brussels Belgium
serafin@cosla.gov.uk
0032 496 084 967
@SPazosVidal