

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000217/25
to the Commission
Idoia Mendia (S&D)
(20 January 2025)**

Subject: ‘Demographic change in Europe: a toolbox for action’ — support for rural areas

In October 2023, the Commission presented a communication on ‘Demographic change in Europe: a toolbox for action’ ⁽¹⁾ outlining tools for Member States to address demographic challenges and their impacts on the EU’s society, economy and competitiveness.

To address demographic challenges, the Commission committed itself to presenting a report on the long-term vision for rural areas and supporting the creation of regional innovation valleys (RIVs) in regions with lower innovation performance.

1. When will the report on the long-term vision for rural areas be presented, or, if already published, what were its main conclusions?
2. Which RIVs have been created or are planned under Horizon Europe and I3 funding, and what are their timelines and expected outcomes?

Submitted: 20.1.2025

**Answer given by Executive Vice-President Fitto on behalf of the European Commission
(3 March 2025)**

The Commission adopted on 27 March 2024 its report on the long-term vision for EU’s rural areas. Key achievements to date include: the rural revitalisation platform ⁽¹⁾, the rural energy community advisory hub ⁽²⁾, the EU Rural Observatory ⁽³⁾, the Startup Village Forum platform ⁽⁴⁾ and the Rural toolkit ⁽⁵⁾, in addition to a number of concrete projects ⁽⁶⁾.

In June 2024, the Commission designated 146 regions as Regional Innovation Valleys under the New European Innovation Agenda as a recognition to their commitment.

The EU backed this initiative with EUR 116 million through the European Innovation Ecosystems (EIE) part of Horizon Europe and the Interregional Innovation Investments (I3) Instrument of the European Regional Development Fund.

The I3 project implementation usually takes two to three years and cover a variety of technological and economic sectors relevant for the twin transition ⁽⁷⁾. The EIE project implementation takes three to five years.

Approximately 30 calls were launched under the Horizon Europe programme ⁽⁸⁾ between 2021 and 2024 for proposals with a direct impact on rural areas in three clusters (cluster 2 ‘Culture, creativity and inclusive society’, cluster 5 ‘Climate, energy and mobility’, cluster 6 ‘Food, bioeconomy, natural resources, agriculture and environment’).

The 60 projects selected under the calls have a budget of EUR 253 million available for rural areas.

¹ COM(2023)0577.

⁽¹⁾ https://ruralpact.rural-vision.europa.eu/rural-revitalisation_en

⁽²⁾ https://rural-energy-community-hub.ec.europa.eu/index_en

⁽³⁾ <https://observatory.rural-vision.europa.eu/>

⁽⁴⁾ <https://startup-forum.rural-vision.europa.eu/?lng=en>

⁽⁵⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_24_656

⁽⁶⁾ E.g. 2025 Commission report on policy implications of demographic trends in the EU’s rural regions: <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC140514>

⁽⁷⁾ EU Funded projects: <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/projects-results;programCode=I3?order=DESC&pageNumber=1&pageSize=50&sortBy=title&isExactMatch=true&frameworkProgramme=44416173>

⁽⁸⁾ https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe_en