

EN

E-004778/2025

Answer given by Executive Vice-President Fitto
on behalf of the European Commission
(23.1.2026)

The political guidelines for the 2024-2029 Commission¹ include references to reducing regional disparities so people can stay in their home regions and the need for action to address these.

The Commission also recognises, in the long-term vision for the EU's rural areas², the need to address the provision of basic services. Within its framework, the EU Rural Action Plan identifies specific actions targeting rural and remote areas.

The Common Agricultural Policy finances LEADER local development strategies, in which local communities decide their priorities (which include support to local services and community life).

Cohesion policy also plays an important role, through investments in regional attractiveness, connectivity, and quality of life in least developed regions, traditionally most affected by unemployment and emigration. For example, Greece has allocated EUR 1.46 billion from cohesion policy to support territorial strategies, including in mountainous and sparsely populated areas. These funds can be used to offer financial support to small local businesses that contribute to the right to stay in most isolated places in a way that would not breach State aid rules. Such aid can, for instance, be granted under the 'de minimis' Regulation³.

Place-based and integrated development policies are crucial to help regions most exposed to demographic decline, and to help such regions, the Commission launched the Talent Booster Mechanism⁴. It provides technical assistance, funding linked to reforms and innovative projects as well as access to knowledge via the Harnessing Talent Platform⁵.

¹ Political Guidelines 2024-2029 https://commission.europa.eu/document/e6cd4328-673c-4e7a-8683-f63ffb2cf648_en.

² COM(2021) 345.

³ Commission Regulation (EU) 2023/2831 of 13.12.2023, which allows for support of up to EUR 300 000 over any rolling three years.

⁴ COM(2023) 32.

⁵ Harnessing Talent Platform: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/communities-and-networks/harnessing-talent-platform_en.