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Answer given by Mr Hansen
on behalf of the European Commission
(14.5.2025)

In the political guidelines for the Commission mandate 2024-2029, the Commission commits to address regional and social disparities and ensure all citizens have an effective right to stay in the place they call home. This is in line with the Communication on the long-term vision for the EU's rural areas¹ and further enhanced in the Vision for agriculture and food, which commits to strengthen participatory local development tools (i.e. LEADER/CLLD) and other forms of cooperation (i.e. Smart villages), to update the EU Rural Action Plan² in 2025 and to strengthen the Rural Pact.

Most Member States have identified demography as one of the major challenges with potential negative effects on balanced territorial development, including in rural and remote areas. Consequently, Member States can use the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), Cohesion policy funding as well as the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) strategic plans to help addressing demographic challenges.

Integrated development, promoted by Cohesion policy are crucial to help regions, notably those facing demographic decline or a talent development trap. The Commission stepped-up efforts to support these regions³, notably via the 'Talent Booster Mechanism' and the Harnessing Talent Platform.⁴ The Commission considers important to strengthen those investments to attract people, particularly young generations, to rural and remote areas.

To strengthen cooperation between all governance levels, in 2022 the Commission launched and continues to facilitate a Rural Pact. The Pact produced guidance on how to improve policies for rural areas⁵ and encourages national and regional governments to make official commitments to the Pact.

¹ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:6c924246-da52-11eb-895a-01aa75ed71a1.0003.02/DOC_1&format=PDF

² https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:6c924246-da52-11eb-895a-01aa75ed71a1.0003.02/DOC_2&format=PDF

³ https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/communication/harnessing-talents/harnessing-talents-regions_en.pdf

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/communities-and-networks/harnessing-talent-platform_en

⁵ https://ruralspact.rural-vision.europa.eu/publications/making-rural-pact-happen-member-states_en