

Measuring Social Inclusion and Wellbeing in European Rural Areas



This factsheet presents the rationale, challenges, and approach of the INSPIRE project for measuring and enhancing social inclusion in rural areas across Europe.

Why Measure Social Inclusion/ Exclusion in Rural Areas?

Rural communities across Europe, often face **remoteness, limited services, aging populations, youth outmigration, and digital gaps.**

Measuring inclusion in rural contexts helps to:

- **Target investments and policies** more effectively
- **Identify barriers** and collaborate to co-create solutions.
- **Build inclusive and resilient communities**

Social Inclusion VS Social Exclusion

- | Social Inclusion | VS | Social Exclusion |
|--|----|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A goal and process that enables participation and empowerment • Ensures individuals and groups can participate fully in society • Focus on capabilities, participation, and agency | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A dynamic, relational, and multidimensional process • Denial of access to resources, rights, services, networks • Focus on barriers, deprivation, and disadvantage |

Key Challenges in Rural Social Inclusion

Geographic isolation and poor access to basic services



Digital exclusion, widening social and economic gaps



Climate change vulnerability affecting already disadvantaged areas



Key Challenges in Rural Social Inclusion



Low social participation, reflected in reduced civic engagement and cultural isolation

Poor education access, especially for youth and women



Health disparities, especially in preventive care and mental health

Economic exclusion, including:

- Inadequate housing, overcrowding, and lack of basic amenities
- Youth unemployment and outmigration Gender pay gaps



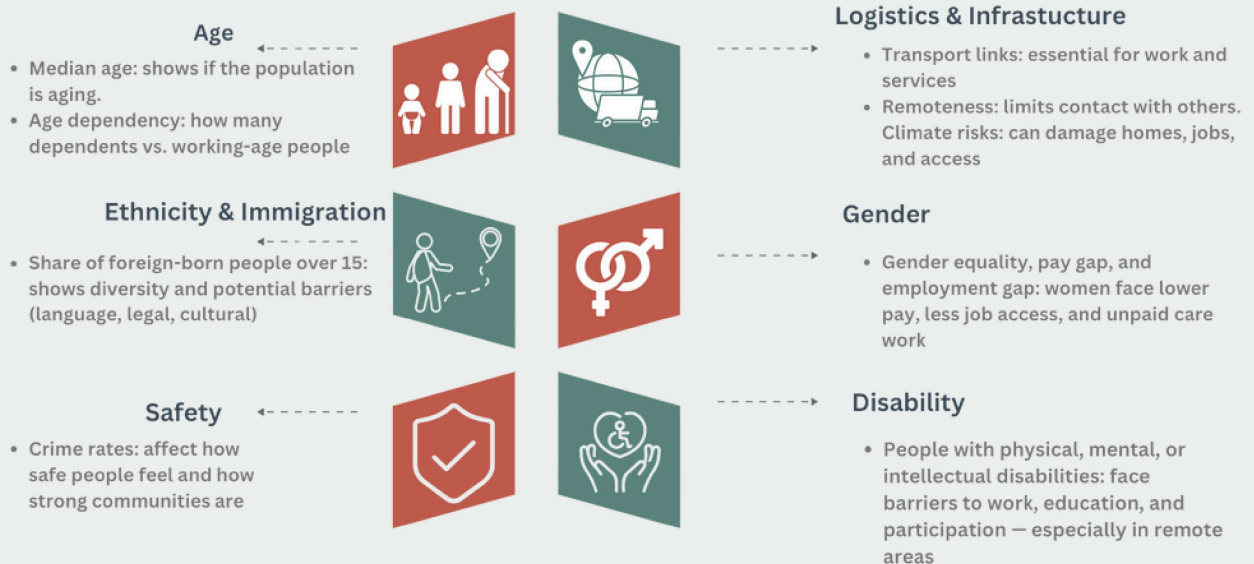
Weak support for small rural businesses

How to measure Inclusion & Exclusion

In the Horizon Europe “INSPIRE” project, we identified **four core dimensions** that reflect how people experience wellbeing or exclusion in rural areas. These dimensions help translate complex social realities into measurable indicators for action, **covering economic security, physical and mental health, quality of living conditions, and levels of social participation**.



Axes of Social Exclusion — Why They Matter



Understanding these axes ensures policies are **intersectional** and tailored, recognizing that people face exclusion **in different ways, at different intensities**, depending on their identity and environment.



About INSPIRE

INSPIRE is a Horizon Europe project supporting **inclusion, wellbeing, and growth in rural areas** by establishing **Smart Village Labs***. These Labs promote innovation in governance, empower local communities, and create inclusive strategies tailored to rural needs.

* **Smart Village labs are physical and virtual places that promote social inclusion through user innovation and social entrepreneurship, based on a participatory approach and the use of digital technologies.**



Learn more about [here](#):
D1.1 MEASURING SOCIAL INCLUSION AND WELLBEING IN EUROPEAN RURAL AREAS: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

Interested in learning more or collaborating with INSPIRE?

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