

# ID TALKS!

*This series of ID Talks is about inclusive youth work policies and practices at local level. We'll discover the realities of different municipalities and of local youth work actors across Europe, from rural to cosmopolitan areas.*



## ID Talks:

EGL  
VILLAGE  
TOWN  
METROPOLIS  
QUALITY LABEL

Download this and other SALTO Inclusion & Diversity booklets for free at [www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/Inclusion/](http://www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/Inclusion/). This document does not necessarily reflect the official views of the European Commission, the SALTO Inclusion & Diversity Resource Centre or the organisation co-operating with them.

## ABOUT SALTO

...‘Support and **A**dvanced **L**earning and **T**raining **O**pportunities within the Erasmus+: Youth in Action and European Solidarity Corps programmes’. The European Commission has created a network of seven SALTO-YOUTH Resource Centres to enhance the implementation of the EU Erasmus+: Youth in Action and European Solidarity Corps programmes, which provide young people with valuable non-formal learning experiences.

SALTO’s aim is to support the implementation of the European Erasmus+: Youth in Action and European Solidarity Corps Programmes with regard to priorities such as Social Inclusion, Diversity, Participation, and Solidarity. SALTO also supports co-operation with regions such as EuroMed, South-East Europe, or Eastern Europe and The Caucasus and coordinates all training and co-operation activities, as well as information tools for National Agencies.

In these European priority areas, SALTO-YOUTH provides resources, information, and training for National Agencies and European youth workers. Most of these resources are offered and disseminated at [www.SALTO-YOUTH.net](http://www.SALTO-YOUTH.net). Find online the [European Training Calendar](#), the [Toolbox for Training and Youth Work](#), the database of youth field trainers active at the European level ([Trainers Online for Youth or TOY](#)), links to online resources, and much more.

SALTO-YOUTH actively co-operates with other actors in the European youth field, among them the National Agencies of the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes, the Council of Europe, the European Youth Forum, European youth workers and trainers, and training organisers.

### **THE SALTO-YOUTH INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY RESOURCE CENTRE [WWW.SALTO-YOUTH.NET/INCLUSION/](http://WWW.SALTO-YOUTH.NET/INCLUSION/)**

The SALTO-YOUTH Inclusion and Diversity Resource Centre (based in Belgium Flanders) works together with the European Commission to support the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities in the Erasmus+: Youth in Action and European Solidarity Corps programmes. Through that, it works to contribute to social cohesion in society at large. SALTO Inclusion and Diversity also supports the National Agencies and youth workers in their inclusion work by providing training, developing youth work methods, disseminating information via the newsletter, etc. By offering opportunities for training, exchange, and reflection on inclusion practice and diversity management, SALTO Inclusion & Diversity works towards the visibility, accessibility, and transparency of its inclusion & diversity work and resources, and towards making ‘inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities’ and ‘positive diversity management’ a widely supported priority.

For more information and resources, have a look at the Inclusion & Diversity pages at [www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/Inclusion/](http://www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/Inclusion/)



## DISCLAIMER

This magazine contains pictures as a result of the Graphic Recording which is an integral part of all the ID Talks events. There are four types of styles throughout the whole magazine.

- **General Cover Picture.** It is used for promotional reasons throughout the social media channels and the dissemination materials and it depicts the logo of SALTO Inclusion & Diversity, the title, and the graphic elements of each version of the ID Talks events. It is displayed as a cover picture of each ID Talks version.
- **Portrait of Speaker.** It depicts each speaker and a few graphic recording elements such as written parts of their "speech" and/or any other graphics according to the style of each ID Talks version. It is displayed on top of the speaker's description page.
- **Main Graphic Recording Card.** It is used for promotional reasons throughout the social media channels and the dissemination materials and it depicts the logo of SALTO Inclusion & Diversity, the title, and the graphic elements of each version of the ID Talks events, including the specific name of the event, the portrait of the speaker, written quotes of their "speech" and/or any other graphics. It is displayed on top of the first page of each article.
- **Graphic Recording Elements.** Throughout each article, the graphic recording elements complement the text with essential parts of each speaker's "talk".

# I & D Talks

## “Europe Goes Local”

### What is it all about?

“ID Talks” is a series of 5 online workshops on 5 major topics to promote inclusion & diversity (ID) and quality youth work. It features youth workers, professionals and volunteers, from all over the world to share insights, research findings, food for thought, good practices or inspirational stories. They will guide participants through the pressing matters and challenges affecting Inclusion & Diversity and inspire them to make their programmes and organisations more inclusive, embrace human differences, look ahead and picture how the future of youth work and Inclusion & Diversity might be.

Each workshop begins with an input from a guest speaker. Afterwards, participants have the opportunity to engage in the discussion, ask questions and share about their own realities and experiences.

### For whom?

- Youth workers, youth leaders, professionals and volunteers involved in ID in the EU youth programmes, as well as all those interested in youth work and inclusion & diversity topics.

### Why should you join?

- Get food for thought and learn from inspirational ID stories.
- Learn about ID topics from the youth work sector and beyond.
- Get information, inspiration, methods to help the youth sector address ID.
- Put some more quality in your (international) youth work.
- Identify and learn how to tackle existing and future challenges within ID.

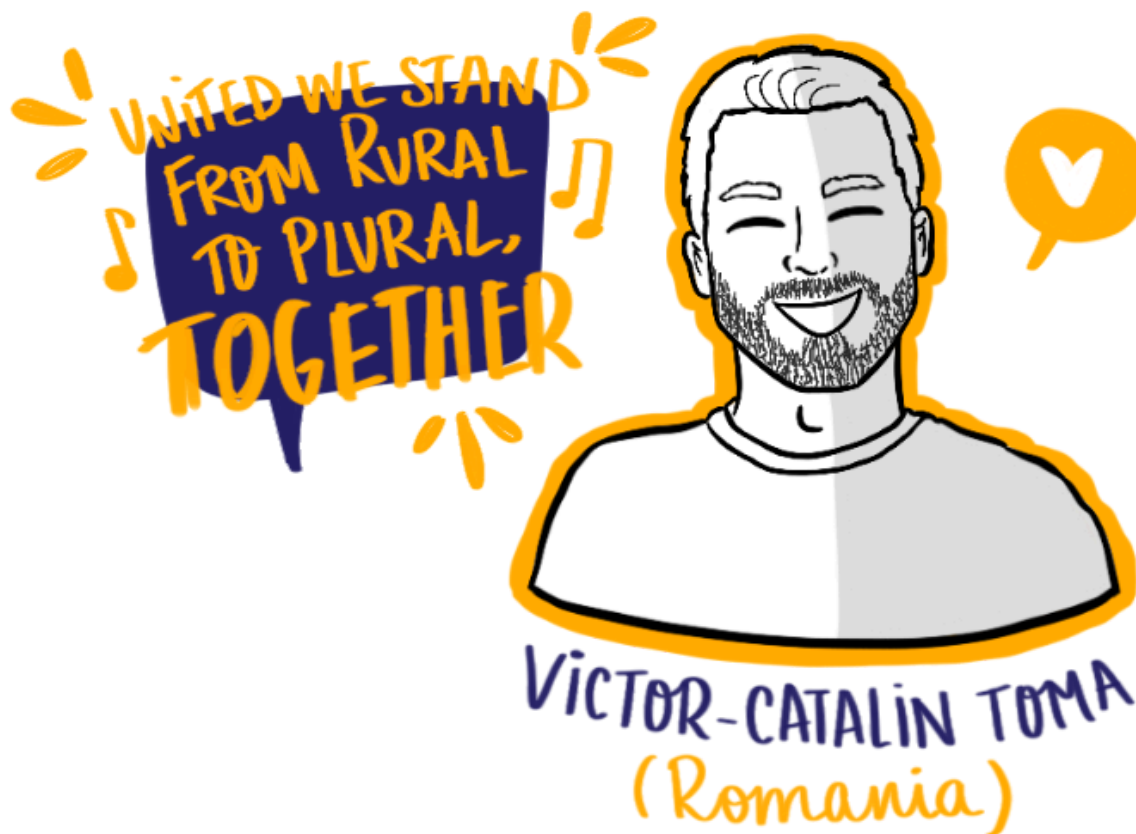


**Event Dates:**

- 5 February (13h CET) > **ID Talks EGL** - Find out what is Europe Goes Local, its need, scope and vision. Discover important tools for the quality development of local youth work. What is the European charter on local youth work about? Let's discover together how local youth policy can support inclusion and get an insight into the state of play of municipal youth work in Europe. Guest speakers: **Judit Balogh**, EGL, Belgium · **Jonas Agdur**, Sweden & **Marko Kovacic**, Croatia
- 19 February (13h CET) > **ID Talks Village** – Young people living in small rural communities are often overlooked and the local youth work offer is rarely accessible for them. At the same time, limited resources invested in small communities could have a significant, visible impact. Come and discuss the (dis)advantages and peculiarities of youth work development in a village. What does inclusion mean in such a context? Where do rural and international youth work intersect? Guest speaker: **Victor-Catalin Toma**, International Village, Romania
- 5 March (13h CET) > **ID Talks Town** – What is the key to an efficient local youth work strategy in a mid-size town? What do you need to take into account and how can you get all stakeholders on board? We discuss the most important issues young people are facing and how local youth work can address them. Find out about the specifics of municipal youth work development in Eastern Partnership countries, where youth work practice are not always backed by policies. Guest speaker: **Artur Najaryan** and **Mariam Poghosyan**, Armenia
- 19 March (13h CET) > **ID Talks Metropolis** – Is it possible to provide “local” youth work in a “global” capital? Find out how you accommodate the needs and expectations of over 300,000 young people, and make them feel seen and heard. The city of Paris is keeping inclusion and diversity at the heart of its youth work practice, using the European charter on local youth work as a guideline to manage the complexity of youth work in a metropolitan area. Guest speaker: **Thomas Rogé**, France
- 2 April (13h CET) > **ID Talks Quality Label** – Discover how you can create a more systematic approach towards municipal youth work. What is quality youth work and how can young people with fewer opportunities access and benefit from it? With the “child-friendly city” label, Bataljong is setting a standard for municipalities in Flanders, Belgium. At the same time, this quality label could be adapted and replicated in other countries. Why not yours? Guest speaker: **Marte Ingels**, Bataljong, Belgium-FL

## ID Talks: Village

*Young people living in small rural communities are often overlooked and the local youth work offer is rarely accessible for them.*



### GUEST SPEAKER: VICTOR-CATALIN TOMA

**Victor** has spent the last 15 years focusing on building communities and empower young people. He began volunteering in high school and continued through college, progressively taking on leadership roles and eventually founding the Active Development Association (ADA). Today, he coordinates multiple national and international projects; he is a trainer, coach, mentor, and community organizer. With a decade of experience shaping youth policies, he now leads the European Youth Village program—Romania’s largest rural youth movement—fulfilling his lifelong dream of driving positive change in rural communities.



Young people from rural communities are often perceived solely as “young farmers” and as the primary custodians of age-old traditions and customs. This narrow perspective overlooks the complexity of their identities and needs. While intersectionality in public policies highlights the importance of seeing young people in their full diversity, public authorities too frequently maintain an overly simplistic view of rural youth. Local communities and authorities struggle to respond in real time to young people’s needs; often, young voices go unheard, and policy decisions affecting them are made without their input. However, young people from rural areas need—and deserve—to be seen, listened to, supported, and promoted.

Rural youth often struggle with limited access to good education and training because many schools in these areas are underfunded and use outdated resources. They also have fewer study programs to choose from. Poor transport options make things even harder, as many villages do not have reliable or affordable public transportation. This cuts young people off from educational institutions, workplaces, and chances to socialize. Adding to these problems is the lack of youth-friendly spaces, such as community centers, sports facilities, or libraries, as well as low financial support from local authorities, leaving young people without the resources they need to organize or join local activities.





Another major issue is low representation in decision-making. Rural youth often feel ignored by policy-makers, and harmful stereotypes can label them as less motivated or capable. Their difficulties are made worse by the digital divide, since slow or no internet blocks access to online education, remote work, and modern ways to communicate. Basic public services—like healthcare, mental health support, or counseling—are also hard to reach, especially for young people with disabilities or other specific needs, who may already feel invisible in their communities.

Job shortages force many young people to leave their villages or even go abroad, taking away the energy and skills that could help rural areas grow. Those who stay often face low-paying, unstable work or lack the support to start their own businesses, keeping them in ongoing economic insecurity. These challenges are felt even more strongly by marginalized groups—such as Roma youth, LGBTQ+ youth, and youth with disabilities—underlining the urgent need for fair and inclusive approaches to help all young people in Romania's countryside.

IN ROMANIA,  
**60%**  
OF YOUNG PEOPLE  
AGED 14-18 Y.O.  
COME FROM  
**RURAL**  
AREAS

The infographic features the text 'IN ROMANIA, 60% OF YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 14-18 Y.O. COME FROM RURAL AREAS'. The number '60%' is large and stylized, with a leaf icon inside the zero. The word 'RURAL' is in a bold, blocky font, and 'AREAS' is in a simpler, spaced-out font. There are decorative elements like a small house icon, stars, and a cluster of blue circles in the bottom right corner.

## Rural youth ecosystems and the European Youth Village program

We see villages as “youth ecosystems,” where young people are at the heart of everything. This ecosystem includes a shared vision or policy framework, the people working with youth, the actual youth activities, the spaces and infrastructure they use, the structures or groups that represent youth, and the funding that makes everything possible.

In many Romanian villages, however, these pieces are missing or undeveloped. Community leaders usually do not involve young people in creating a long-term vision, and there is no clear youth strategy. Local authorities have limited knowledge about youth work, and because of this, they often think they are already doing enough for their young residents. Meanwhile, there is a shortage of people trained in youth work, few non-formal activities, and very little access to counselling or accurate information. Most villages also lack youth centers or other friendly spaces for learning, community activities, or simply spending free time constructively. On top of this, young people are not encouraged to form organizations or groups, and there are no local forums where they can share ideas with decision-makers. Even if they want to start their own initiatives, they often do not know what funding exists or how to get it. Local budgets rarely include money specifically for youth activities, and authorities do not see how vital it is to invest in their young citizens.

### RURAL YOUTH ECOSYSTEMS



#VISION #HUMAN RESOURCES #FUNDING  
#INFRASTRUCTURE #YOUTH WORK

"IT IS IMPORTANT TO TRAIN YOUNG PEOPLE TO TAKE ON ROLES THAT DO NOT EXIST IN THE VILLAGE"

When we developed the European Youth Village program, we tried to tailor a program that is using villages' most important resources – the young people.

The European Youth Village program was born out of a simple but powerful idea: if young people lead community initiatives in their own villages, they can create immediate, visible results. We started by mapping out the unique needs and dreams of rural youth, because solutions that work in big cities might be meaningless in small villages.

Our vision is to develop local youth ecosystems—where youth, local authorities, and stakeholders all collaborate to make their community more inclusive, dynamic, and future-ready.

Everything started with a title: the title of the European Youth Village of the year, which is awarded to villages that demonstrate a commitment to significantly enhancing the lives of their youth by addressing local challenges and aligning with the program's main priorities. The title is granted for one year, during which the awarded village works to implement a detailed action plan driven by youth participation and leadership. This initiative not only boosts youth involvement in local processes but also fosters a culture of participative democracy and community development.

To get the European Youth Village title, the application process involves young people, with the support of local authorities, planning and submitting their village's application, ensuring that the initiative is youth-led and that local authorities support and share in the young people's efforts.

When a village becomes a European Youth Village, it gains a strong platform to build a supportive local youth ecosystem, where young people, local authorities, schools, and other community members work together more effectively. This environment encourages open dialogue, leads to youth-centered policies, and creates more spaces and activities that help young people grow. By strengthening these relationships, young people feel more confident to share their ideas, and decision-makers become more open to listening and including them in community projects.



A second major advantage is the increased visibility and recognition that comes with the title. The community's efforts to involve and celebrate its young members gain attention on local, national, and sometimes even international levels. This spotlight can inspire other organizations or funding bodies to invest in youth-led programs and activities. On top of this, holding the European Youth Village title brings better access to resources, such as training, workshops, and funding opportunities, giving young leaders the tools they need to make real change. With support in areas like project management, mentorship, and networking, young people are better equipped to create and sustain community projects that benefit everyone in the village.

During their time as a European Youth Village, young people often organize a wide variety of initiatives, such as non-formal education festivals, workshops, and training sessions on topics they find important; information and awareness campaigns; cultural events like reading clubs and youth-led performances; sports competitions; and support services that include mental health assistance. They might also create career orientation activities, host hackathon-style challenges, set up game nights, hold community meetings, and conduct youth consultations or street debates. These engagements often lead to debates and meetings with decision-makers, the formation of Youth Forums, the development of local youth strategies, and advocacy campaigns to tackle local issues such as improving transportation or increasing budget allocations for youth. In some cases, these efforts culminate in the establishment of a dedicated youth center, helping to cement a supportive and proactive environment for young people.



COLLABORATION  
BETWEEN YOUTH,  
LOCAL AUTHORITIES  
& STAKEHOLDERS



Yet, European Youth Village is more than just a title and our intervention plan is focused on more levels. While we support young people in developing long term visions for their villages and youth strategies, we do focus on developing youth policies at national and European levels. In 2022, after 2 years of research, we officially launched the White Charter of Rural Youth, which sets the vision and priorities for the rural communities that various levels of public authorities should constantly follow. The white charter aims to empower rural youth to be active, visible, and involved in community decisions. It focuses on improving their access to quality education, ensuring inclusive schools, and giving them better access to local resources, social services, and opportunities to grow. The Charter also fights social exclusion and discrimination, while strengthening the rural youth ecosystem by supporting youth groups and creating strategic ways for them to engage locally and internationally.

The program also includes the Rural Youth Awards, which celebrate achievements in rural youth work, and the Informal Network of Rural Youth (RITM Network), which enhances youth representation in decision-making processes. Additionally, the NGO Rural Platform provides support to youth organizations, while the Rural Youth National Day foster advocacy and visibility for rural youth issues. Further support is provided through the European Youth Villages Alumni Network, the EU values ambassadors, and the Rural Newsroom, ensuring ongoing engagement, promotion of EU values, and media representation of rural youth perspectives.



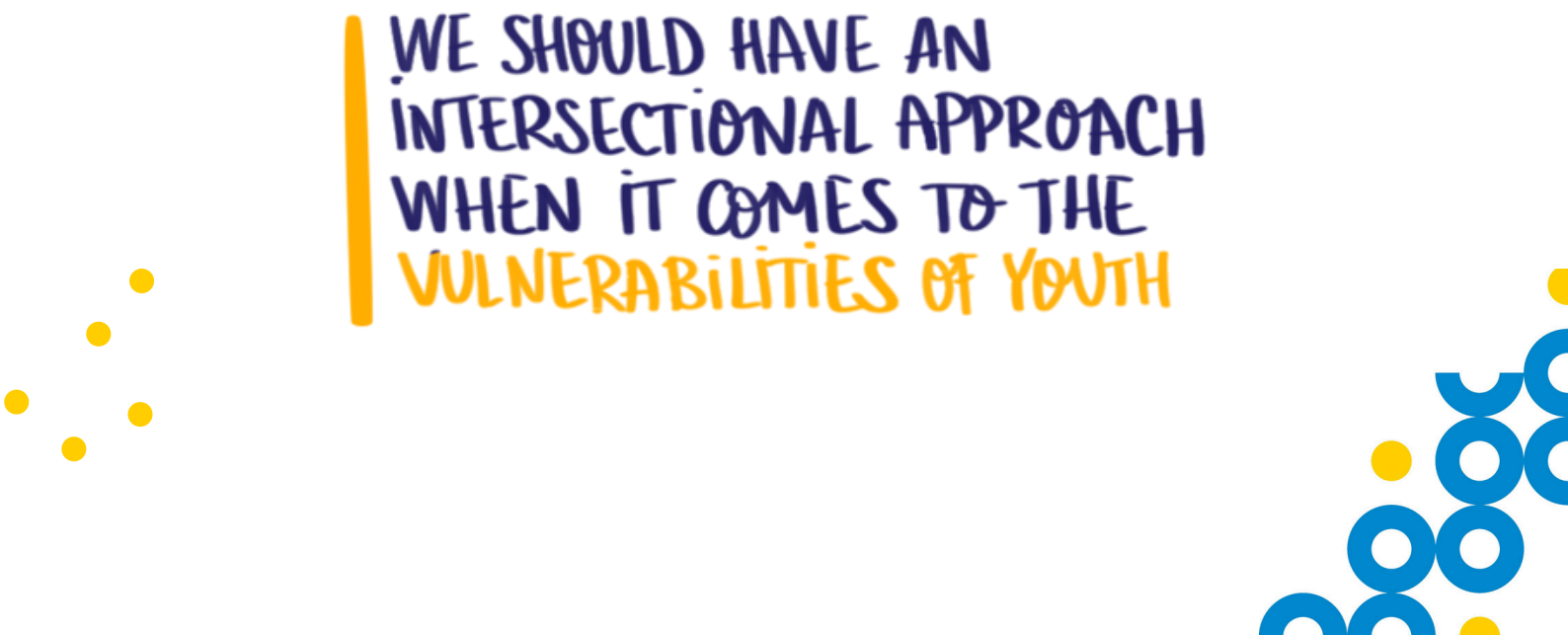
## Local challenges in rural youth work

Organizing activities in rural areas and collaborating with local decision-makers can be demanding. Even when young people have strong ideas, they often struggle to find funding or practical support from local authorities. Securing financial resources is vital for maintaining momentum and building trust over the long term, yet this can be hard to achieve in a setting where funds and expertise are limited.

Another challenge is overcoming scepticism and bureaucracy. Young people frequently deal with slow administrative processes when trying to secure permits, book public venues, or schedule meetings with local officials. Shifting perceptions that teenagers are too inexperienced for serious community work often requires repeated success stories and plenty of patience.

Building and retaining a committed volunteer team can also be tough. Many young people juggle school, work, family duties, or even move to larger cities for further opportunities. Strong leadership, regular communication (both online and offline), and a supportive network are key to keeping everyone motivated and informed. Generational gaps further complicate things, as older community members may be hesitant to embrace modern methods like digital campaigns or non-formal festivals. Openness, respect for local customs, and clear explanations of how fresh ideas can enhance existing traditions are essential here.

At the same time, youth populations in villages are far from uniform, and activities must be tailored to different needs, ages, backgrounds, and experiences. True inclusion means acknowledging the unique challenges of groups like Roma youth, LGBTQ+ youth, and those with disabilities, so that everyone can participate meaningfully. Finally, once a village has earned the European Youth Village title, there can be an immediate surge of energy and interest, but it is crucial to have a plan for keeping that momentum going. Establishing local structures, such as youth councils or regular consultative meetings, ensures that young people remain engaged and that their voices continue to influence the community long after the title year ends.



WE SHOULD HAVE AN  
INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH  
WHEN IT COMES TO THE  
VULNERABILITIES OF YOUTH

## Practical ways to foster inclusion in rural areas and reach out to young people

Beyond all the program's components, one of the most meaningful achievements of the European Youth Village has been the creation of a safe, inclusive community in which rural youth can truly belong. By taking part in the program, young people found a support network that values them and makes them feel seen and heard. Real inclusion, however, requires more than open invitations—it means understanding and tackling the specific barriers they face and working with them to reshape their local environment.

For anyone seeking to empower rural youth, it is crucial to recognize that practical issues like transportation, internet access, and costs often prevent them from fully participating. Meeting young people where they are—be it at school, a local store, or even knocking on doors—helps ensure they can actively take part in community decisions. Everyone has a role to play, whether as a youth worker, volunteer, or teacher, by listening attentively, giving young people leadership opportunities, and pushing for the resources they need. It also helps to directly ask them about their challenges and ambitions, rather than assuming what they might be. Starting small but celebrating early wins, such as a short cleanup event or a mini-festival, quickly builds momentum and shows the community the positive impact youth can have.

It is equally important to keep conversations going through regular youth councils or informal meetings with local decision-makers, trusting young people to generate their own solutions rather than taking a “saviour” approach. Combining tradition with fresh perspectives can open doors for modern, eco-friendly festivals or digital skills workshops rooted in local customs. Finally, including local officials in youth-led events and giving them a chance to see the potential of rural youth firsthand can lead to more consistent support and pave the way for needed resources.



## Conclusion

Rural areas in Romania have immense potential to become thriving environments for young people—places where their ideas are valued, their talents cultivated, and their well-being prioritized. The European Youth Village program shows what can be achieved when communities and decision-makers commit to making youth a central part of local development. However, our work is far from over. Real change requires continued engagement from local leaders, national and European policymakers, educators, and the youth themselves. Let us invest in the resources, training, and inclusive spaces needed for rural youth to flourish. By actively involving them in decision-making and supporting their leadership, we can unlock fresh perspectives and sustainable solutions that enrich both the young generation and the villages they call home. Now is the time for all of us—institutions, organizations, and individuals—to take meaningful steps together, ensuring that no rural young person is left behind.





## EDITORIAL INFORMATION

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***On behalf of the SALTO Inclusion & Diversity!***

