Ruraled

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

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INTRODUCTION

Rural communities today face extraordinary opportunities and complex challenges shaped by digital transformation, sustainability pressures and ever-changing social dynamics. The RURALED project equips adult learners, local leaders and policy-makers with the concepts, competences and collaborative approaches needed to navigate this evolving landscape.

Below you'll find a curated glossary of key terms (drawn from EU frameworks, Smart Village methodologies, and RURALED's own tools and case studies) that underpin our training modules, participatory workshops and strategic roadmaps.

Whether you're just beginning to explore Smart Village ideas or you're already piloting innovations in your community, this glossary will help you speak the same language, bridge sectors, and design inclusive, future-ready solutions.

Dive in to discover the building blocks of co-creation, foresight, governance, and capacity building that drive resilient, empowered rural development across Europe.

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Smart terms

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Smart Village — An EU concept promoting social and technological innovations for rural development, integrating digital, energy, mobility, governance, and skills to foster resilient communities

Smart services — Services that leverage technology and data to enhance efficiency, personalization, and overall user experience.

Smart Village Strategy — A holistic model combining digital, social, and governance innovations to enhance rural quality of life, with a particular focus on participation, equity, and environmental sustainability

Smart technologies — Devices and systems that use sensors, connectivity, and software to gather, analyse, and act on data.

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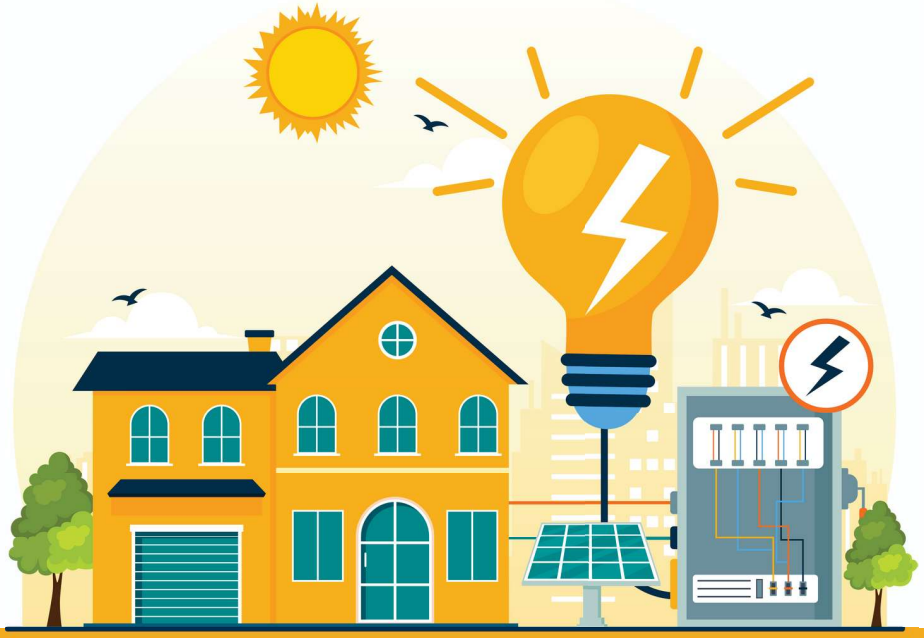
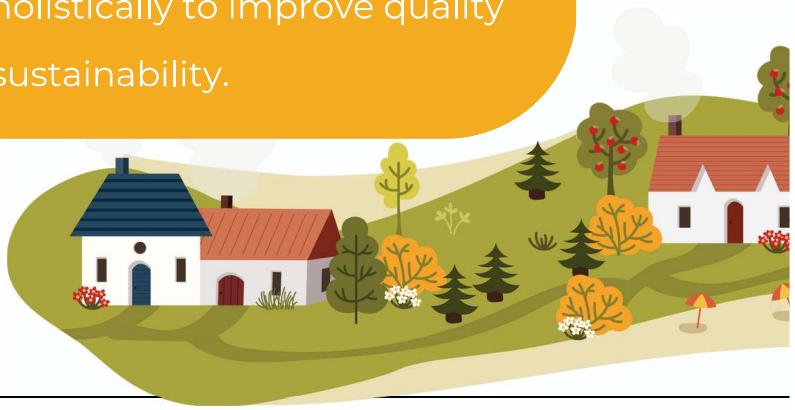
Smart energy / Smart grids

Intelligent energy systems that monitor, predict, and manage energy demand and distribution efficiently.



Smart rural communities

Rural areas that apply smart village principles holistically to improve quality of life and sustainability.



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Participation, Society *and* Social Innovation

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Futures Literacy

The capacity to use our understanding of trends, uncertainties, and imagination to prepare for and shape possible futures. It combines a 'predictive' knowledge of megatrends with an 'imaginative' component to define preferred futures and transition strategies

Participatory governance

Decision-making processes that actively involve citizens and stakeholders in shaping policies and actions.

Rural Transformation

The reorganization of society in a given space, rather than about a space that empties as people and economic activity move away.

Resilience

The ability to adapt to and recover from challenging situations, maintaining well-being and bouncing back from adversity.

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Bottom-Up Approaches

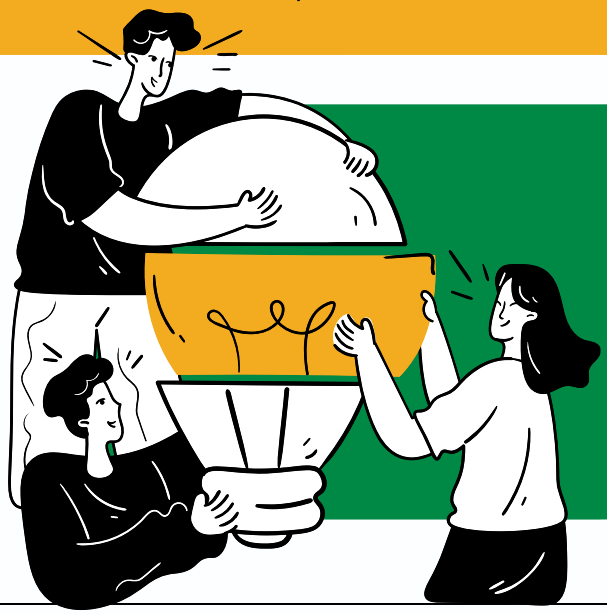
Development processes driven by local actors and communities rather than top-down directives.

Community resilience

The capacity of a community to respond to and recover from crises while maintaining its core functions.

Adult Education

Lifelong learning activities aimed at adults, in formal, non-formal, or informal settings, designed to develop personal, social, and professional competences in rural communities



Co-Creation

Collaborative design processes where residents, local authorities, and experts jointly develop visions and solutions for their village's future

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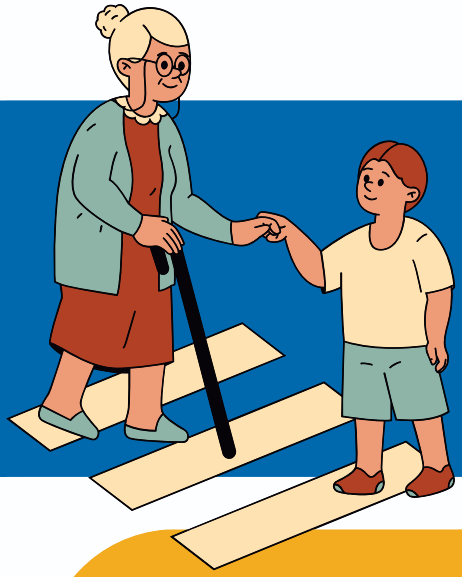
AKIS

The network of organisations and individuals (researchers, extension services, educators, policymakers, NGOs, cooperatives, agribusinesses, etc.) that generate, share and apply agricultural knowledge and innovations in rural areas

Common good-orientated approaches

Strategies that prioritize social, environmental, and communal benefits over individual profit.



Intergenerational cooperation

Collaboration and knowledge exchange between different age groups to strengthen community ties.

Social Innovation

New social practices that address community needs more effectively than existing solutions.

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Competences *and* Education

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EntreComp The EU Entrepreneurship Competence Framework, outlining 15 entrepreneurial skills and attitudes, which RURALED maps to Smart Village needs

GreenComp The EU Sustainability Competence Framework, defining the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed for environmental stewardship, integrated into RURALED's WP2 and WP3

DigComp The EU's Digital Competence Framework detailing key digital skills for citizens (information literacy, communication, content creation, safety, problem-solving), mapped by RURALED in WP2

LifeComp The EU Personal, Social, and Learning-to-Learn Competence Framework, addressing resilience, self-management, and collaboration skills, integrated into RURALED analyses

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Technology *and* Infrastructure

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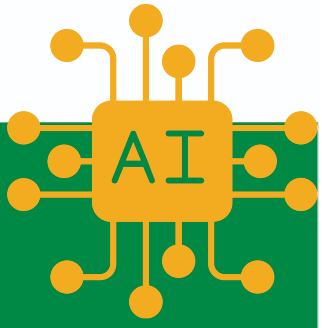

Artificial Intelligence (AI) — The simulation of human intelligence in machines to perform tasks such as learning, decision-making, and problem-solving.

Augmented Reality (AR) — Technology that overlays digital information onto the real world to enhance user interaction and experiences.

Virtual Reality — Immersive digital environments that simulate real or imagined settings, often used for training or education

Digitalisation — The integration of digital technologies into daily life and services to improve efficiency and access, e.g. using a digital camera for taking pictures

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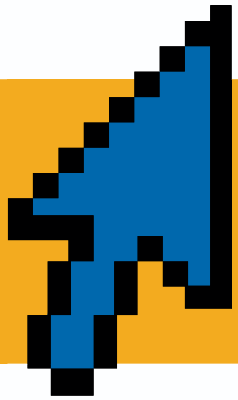

Digitization

The process of converting analog information into digital form, e.g. scanning a picture for having the information in a digital format.

Digital Twin

A virtual representation of a real-world physical system like a village or watershed that is continuously updated with real-time data (air quality, weather, land-use). It allows users to simulate, monitor, and optimize processes or infrastructure or warn in the case of hazards (fires, floods, etc).

Internet of Things (IoT)

A network of connected devices and sensors that collect and exchange data to automate and optimize systems.

Sustainable agricultural technologies

Range of innovations designed to enhance food production while minimizing environmental impact and promoting resource efficiency.

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Digital Divide

The gap in access to and use of digital technologies between urban and rural areas. RURALED addresses this by developing training and tools to boost digital readiness, resilience, and capacity

Digital inclusion

Efforts to ensure all people have access to digital tools, skills, and opportunities, regardless of background (economic, knowledge, social etc.).

Edge Computing

Processing data locally, near its source, to enable faster, more reliable real-time decisions in rural communities.

Broadband infrastructure

The physical network of cables, equipment, and wireless technologies that enable high-speed internet access, also known as broadband.

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Regional Economy, Governance, Sustainability *and* Circularity

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Sharing economy

An economic model based on sharing access to goods and services, often via digital platforms.

Incubator

An institution or program that supports the growth of new businesses or social enterprises.

Local Action Groups (LEADER)

Partnerships of local actors that implement rural development strategies with EU support.

Local development strategies

Plans created by local communities to guide their sustainable economic and social development.

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Endogenous development

Development rooted in local assets, capacities, and identity, rather than external inputs.

Maker Space

A collaborative workspace equipped with tools and technology for creative and technical experimentation (DIY or prototyping) or a limited small (series) production.

Shared Factory

A production facility offering shared equipment and infrastructure for temporary small-scale production.

X as a service

A model where services (e.g., software, mobility, energy) are offered on-demand via digital platforms instead of ownership.

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