Ruraled

# SCENARIO MATRIX

**150 minutes**

## Objective

The RURALED SCENARIO MATRIX TOOL's objectiveis to identify and analyze different future scenarios related to a key local issue (e.g., urban development, climate change, sustainable mobility). Participants will explore how different uncertainties might shape the local territory and propose strategies for preparation and adaptation.
The objective is not to predict the future, but to be prepared for different possibilities!

## Tool Description

A Scenario Matrix is built using two key uncertainties, forming a 2x2 grid with four distinct scenarios. Each axis represents an uncertainty (e.g., market demand vs. regulatory environment).
The four quadrants represent different possible futures based on how these uncertainties evolve. Each scenario is then analyzed in terms of its implications, risks, and potential strategies.
This kind of tool must be used in the frame of a Scenario planning Workshop involving (ideal number) about 15-30 people, divided into 3-4 groups
This tools helps to:
·stimulate strategic thinking;
·Identify priorities for the area;
·Involve citizens and institutions in the decision-making process

Co-funded by
the European Union

Ruraled

## Connection of the tool with the module 2

Future literacy

The SCENARIO MATRIX is one of the tools/instruments used at local government level to support decision-making processes and increase citizen participation, involvement and awareness

The Scenario Matrix tool enhances Future Literacy in several ways:

**Exploring Multiple Scenarios:** *Instead of focusing on a single forecast, the Scenario Matrix encourages the creation of four distinct scenarios based on two key uncertainties. This exercise broadens the capacity to envision different futures and their implications.*

**Recognizing Uncertainties:** *Identifying critical variables (the axes of the matrix) is a core activity in Future Literacy. It helps participants better understand the forces driving change and develop a more open attitude towards uncertainty.*

**Developing Adaptive Strategies**: *In the final phase of the exercise, participants are asked to create strategies that are robust across multiple scenarios. This kind of planning is not based on certainties but on adaptive capacity, a key element of Future Literacy.*

**Reducing Future Bias:** *Using the Scenario Matrix avoids the risk of the "default future"—the tendency to believe that the future will simply be an extension of the present. This tool promotes a mindset that views the future as a series of possibilities, not as a fixed destiny*

Co-funded by the European Union

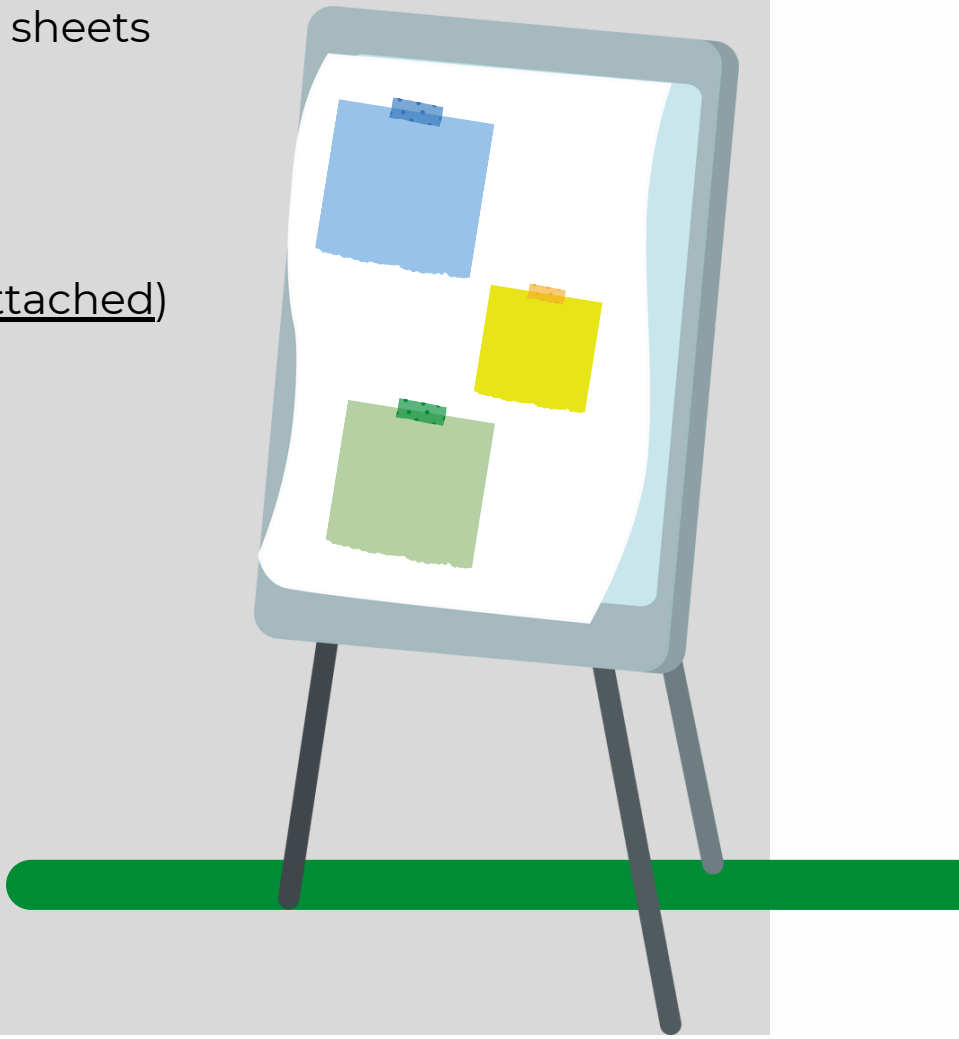
Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Ruraled

## Resource materials

The Scenario Matrix Tool needs:

- Flip charts or large sheets
- Markers
- Post-it notes
- Screen with slides
- Guidance sheet (attached)



Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

## How to apply the tool

Exercise Structure- introduction

The exercise can be organized in two ways, depending on the chosen approach:

**Option 1: Each group develops only one scenario (more detailed)**

Each group works on a single quadrant of the matrix and describes it in detail.

At the end, there will be four distinct scenarios, each analyzed in depth.

When to choose this option?

- If there are many participants.
- If the goal is to explore each scenario in depth.
- If time is limited and avoiding overlap is important.

**Option 2: Each group develops all four scenarios**

Each group works on the entire matrix, developing all four scenarios.

At the end, different interpretations of the same scenarios are compared.

When to choose this option?

- If there are fewer participants or smaller groups.
- If the goal is to gather different perspectives on the same scenarios.
- If the focus is on open discussion.

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

## How to apply the tool

**Step 1: Defining the Topic (15 min)**

Identify the MAIN TOPIC for the scenario planning exercise.
Examples:
- The future of mobility in our city
- How climate change will affect our territory
- Scenarios for local economic development

**Step 2: Identifying Key Uncertainties (30 min)**

Identify two main uncertainties that can influence the chosen topic. They must be important and unpredictable variables.
Examples:
•Availability of public funding (high vs. low)
•Level of technological innovation (slow vs. fast)
•Citizen participation (active vs. passive)

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

## How to apply the tool

**Step 3: Creating the Scenario Matrix (30 min)**

What to do?

a) Draw a 2x2 matrix: Create a grid with two axes, horizontal and vertical. The horizontal axis (X) represents the first key uncertainty.
The vertical axis (Y) represents the second key uncertainty.

b) Define the Axis Extremes: Assign the two opposite poles of the uncertainties to each end of the axes.
Example: X-axis: "Citizen Participation" (Low ↔ High);
Y-axis: "Technological Development" (Slow ↔ Fast)

c) Create the Four Quadrants: Each quadrant represents a uniqueintersection of the two uncertainties. You can assign provisional titles to the quadrants, but this is not mandatory at this stage.

Each quadrant represents a possible future scenario

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

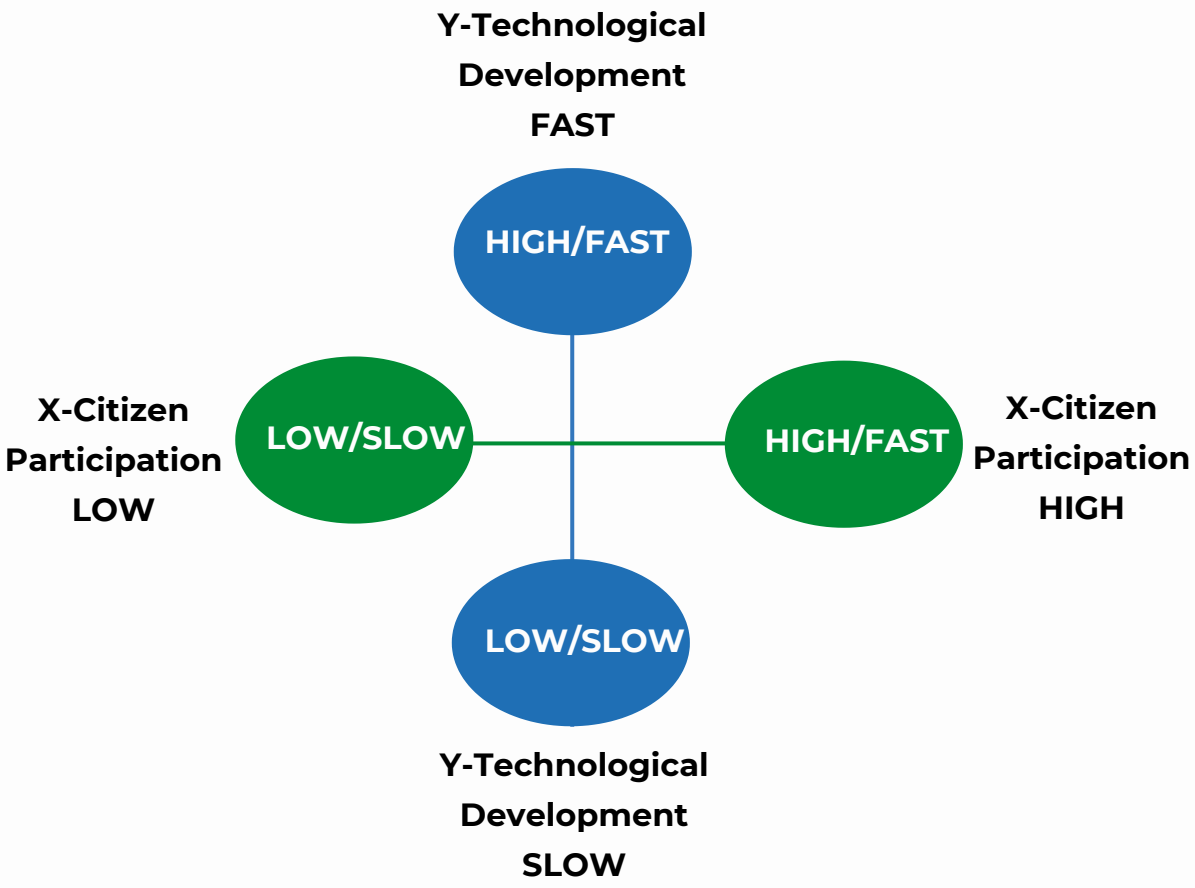
Ruraled

## How to apply the tool

**Step 3: Example**

X-axis: "Citizen Participation" (Low ↔ High)

Y-axis: "Technological Development" (Slow ↔ Fast)




**Practical Tip:**

If possible, use a flip chart or a projected slide so all participants can see the matrix while ideas are being developed.

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Ruraled

## How to apply the tool

### Step 4: Describing the Scenarios (40 min)

Key questions for each scenario:
What events characterize this future?
What challenges and opportunities emerge?
Who are the key players?

After creating the Scenario Matrix in Step 3, each group moves on to Step 4, where they use the Guidance Sheet to describe their assigned scenario(s) in detail. The Guidance Sheet then serves as an operational tool to collect all the information needed to characterise each scenario in a structured manner, answering key questions and facilitating presentation and discussion in next step.

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Ruraled

## Scenario Guidance Sheet

**To be filled in for each of the 4 scenarios of the matrix**

Group: _____ / Scenario Name: _____

1. Scenario Description
   - What events and changes characterize this future?
   - What happens at the local and global level?
   - Who are the main actors and how do they behave?
2. Challenges and Risks
   - What problems arise for citizens, businesses, and institutions?
   - What impacts could this scenario have on local policies?
   - What critical events could influence it?
3. Opportunities and Positive Aspects
   - What development and innovation opportunities emerge?
   - Which sectors or groups benefit from this scenario?
   - What are the positive aspects of this scenario?
4. Action Strategies
   - What can we do today to prepare for this future?
   - What actions could mitigate the risks?
   - How can institutions, citizens, and businesses adapt?

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

## How to apply the tool

**Step 5: Discussion and Strategies (30-40 min)**

The goal of the final phase is to facilitate an open discussion among participants to share and compare the scenarios developed by each group, evaluate the potential impacts, risks, and opportunities of each scenario, and identify concrete strategies and actions to improve resilience and preparedness.

What to Do:

a) Group Presentations (10-15 min): Each group presents its scenario(s) using the completed Scenario Guidance Sheet, and highlight key elements such as: main events and changes in the scenario; potential challenges and risks; opportunities and positive aspects; suggested strategies for action.

b) Facilitated Discussion (15-20 min): Encourage an open dialogue where participants can ask questions and provide feedback; compare similarities and differences between the scenarios; use guiding questions to deepen the analysis (e.g. What are the common risks identified across different scenarios? Which opportunities appear most promising? How might different stakeholders respond to each scenario?)

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

## How to apply the tool

**c**) Strategy Development (10 min): Collaboratively brainstorm and list practical actions to prepare for each scenario.
Identify short-term (immediate actions) and long-term (strategic planning) measures.
Prioritize actions based on feasibility and impact.

Tips for Success:

- Use a whiteboard or flip chart to visually organize ideas during the discussion.
- Apply voting techniques (e.g., dot voting, SLIDO) to prioritize actions if needed.
- ·he facilitator should keep the discussion focused and ensure every voice is heard.

Expected Outcome:

- A clear set of strategic actions tailored to the most likely or challenging scenarios.
- Increased awareness among participants of potential future challenges.
- Strengthened collaboration and alignment among stakeholders.

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Ruraled

## What to learn

xWhat participants or decision-makers can gain from the analysis of different scenarios?

**Identify Critical Uncertainties:**
Understand which key uncertainties might influence the future context.
*Example: "If public funding decreases, what will be the impact on our growth strategies?"*

**Recognize Opportunities and Risks:**
Explore potential opportunities that emerge in specific scenarios and anticipate risks.
*Example: "Which scenarios present the best opportunities for innovation?"*

**Evaluate the Robustness of Strategies:**
Test how effective current strategies are across different scenarios and identify possible improvements.
*Example: "Is our strategy flexible enough to adapt to unexpected scenarios?"*

**Develop Adaptive Capacity:**
Learn how organizations or communities can adapt to significant changes.
*Example: "What should we do today to be better prepared for the future?*

**Facilitate Strategic Thinking:**
Encourage participants to think systemically and long-term, considering different perspectives.

CC BY-SA 4.0 DEED

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.