



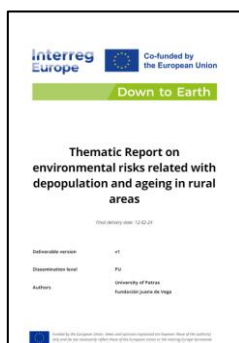
Co-funded by
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Down to Earth

Publication of first Thematic Report and outcomes of the first year the project

28 March 2024

Down to Earth first Thematic Report provides a set of common solutions to common challenges faced by rural areas across Europe regarding environmental risks related with depopulation and ageing population in rural areas, highlighting the need for comprehensive policies that address the multifaceted challenges of rural areas through a multi-level approach.



Following on the second **Down to Earth Study Visit** in Western Greece, we officially release Down to Earth **first Thematic Report**, which explores how the challenges related to the topic of **Year 1: “Environmental risks related with depopulation and ageing population in rural areas”**, are addressed in Down to Earth regions, and draws recommendations.

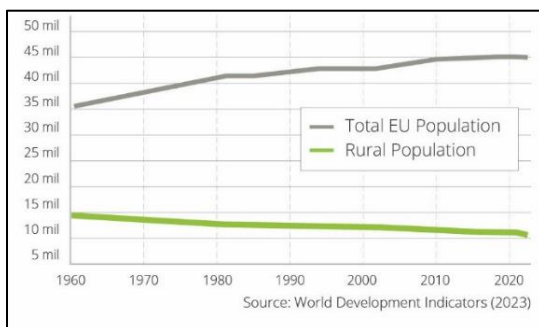


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The Thematic Report was first presented during a conference organised in Kalavryta, Western Greece on 13th February 2024, which featured local, regional and national stakeholders.

Depopulation trends and climate change in rural areas

While the overall population of the European Union continues to grow, a contrasting trend emerges in rural areas where populations are steadily declining. A decreasing and ageing population in rural areas influence the ability to mitigate environmental risks associated with climate change. Abandoned or underutilised agricultural land is more susceptible to



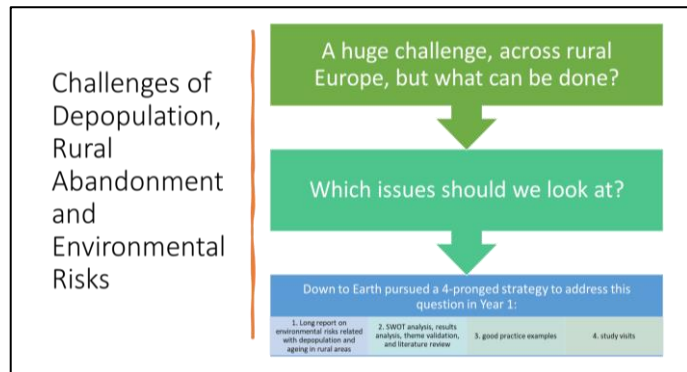
environmental degradation, soil erosion, and reduced biodiversity. Additionally, the dwindling population might result in decreased community engagement in environmental conservation efforts, hindering the implementation of sustainable practices.

A bottom-up, comparative analysis

Speaking at Down to Earth first Thematic Conference "Revitalisation and Resilience of Rural Areas facing challenges of depopulation and climate risks" on 13th February 2024 in Kalavryta, Western Greece, Ms. Tania Gesto Casás and Dr. Konstantinos Antonopoulos respectively from Down to Earth partners Fundación Juana de Vega and University of Patras, detailed the methodology behind the report and the main outcomes.



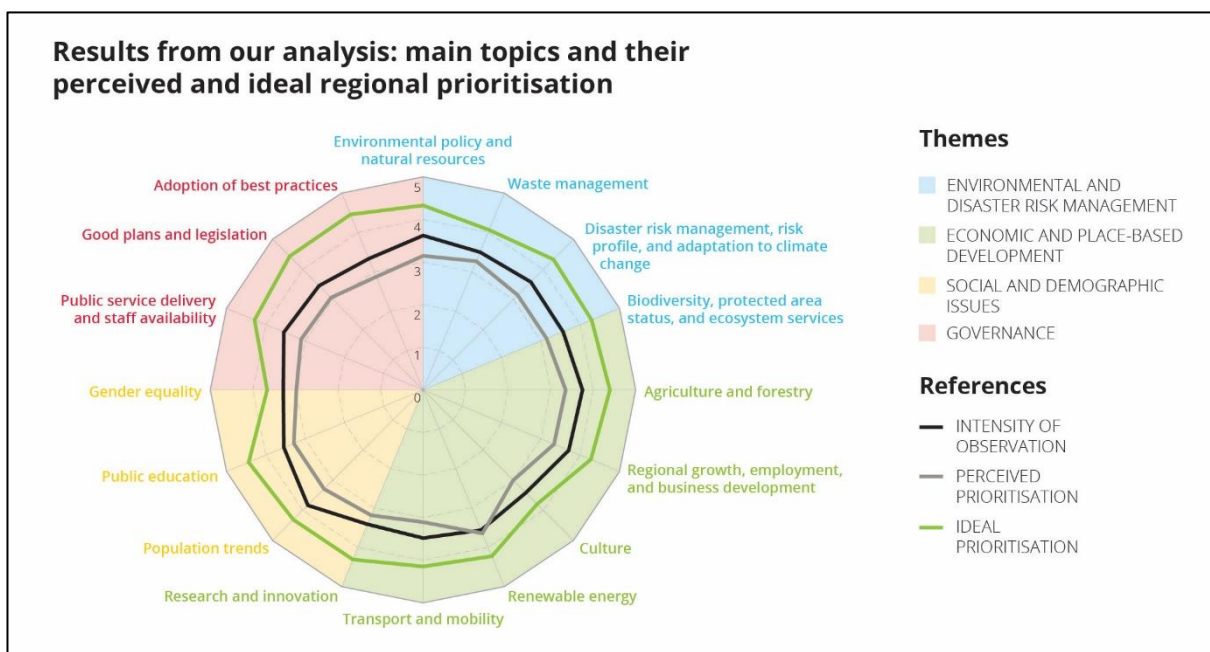
Down to Earth partners identified 12 good practices and over 100 proposals for improvement across various fields including social inclusion and economic development.



Drawing on Down to Earth regional partners’ experiences related to depopulation and the impacts of the climate crisis, our Thematic Report provides a comprehensive overview of the dynamics, examining the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats faced by these regions in relation to four main themes:

- Environmental and disaster risk management
- Economic and place-based development
- Social and demographic issues
- Governance

Each theme was divided into a number of topics, whose observation, perceived prioritisation and desired prioritisation were evaluated by Down to Earth stakeholders.



Recommendations

From the analysis, **six key lessons** emerged:

- Strategic planning for basic services,
- integrating primary productive sectors with sustainability initiatives,
- promoting multifunctionality for environmental and economic benefits,
- considering ecosystem services in decision-making,
- recognizing the value of cultural and leisure initiatives,
- prioritizing training and knowledge transfer for enhanced public policies



Head to Down to Earth webpage to discover the first Thematic Report on Environmental risks related with depopulation and ageing population in rural areas!

Link: <https://www.interregeurope.eu/down-to-earth/page/our-thematic-reports>



The Regional Reports prepared by each Down to Earth partner which served as the basis for the Thematic Report are also available on Down to Earth webpage!

Link: <https://www.interregeurope.eu/down-to-earth/page/our-regional-reports>

Stay tuned for updates from the project on our webpage and be sure to give us a follow on our social media accounts!

- **Webpage:** <https://www.interregeurope.eu/down-to-earth>
- **LinkedIn:** <https://www.linkedin.com/company/down-to-earth-eu>
- **Twitter:** https://twitter.com/Down2Earth_IRE

About Down To Earth

Down to Earth brings together a group of organizations from diverse European regions, each contributing their expertise in disaster risk reduction and rural development. Collectively, we firmly believe that retaining population and encouraging sustainable practices in key sectors are paramount to halting environmental deterioration and effectively mitigating risks.

Funded by **Interreg Europe**, our partnership will work in unison to identify and promote **win-win solutions**. Our primary focus lies in managing, maintaining, and enhancing practices, tools, instruments and strategies to reduce the risk and impact of environmental disasters. In doing so, we seek to create economic and social opportunities that will attract populations to rural areas.

Central to our approach is **mutual learning** through interregional exchange of experiences. By facilitating knowledge sharing among regional and local authorities, as well as relevant stakeholders from participating rural areas, we can enhance their capacity to address the challenges linked with **climate change** and **sustainable rural development!**

Down to Earth partners



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DE DESENVOLVEMENTO
RURAL

