



## Recommendation 1530 (2001)<sup>1</sup>

# Situation and prospects of young people in rural areas

Parliamentary Assembly

1. For a long time the Assembly has been recommending measures to help rural areas and in particular young people living there, for example in its [Recommendation 776 \(1976\)](#) on the situation of rural and agricultural youth in Europe.
2. Although progress has been made, young people living in rural areas in Europe still encounter many difficulties, especially as a result of urbanisation and rural decline. This is particularly true in central and eastern European countries, which are experiencing even greater imbalances owing to the vast socioeconomic changes currently taking place.
3. The Assembly stresses the need to give young people and their representative organisations a greater say, at both national and European levels, in the preparation of youth or rural development policies that concern them. It is likewise necessary to improve the co-ordination of national policies in these fields, so as to avoid incompatibilities and increase the positive impact of the measures recommended.
4. The problems encountered by young farmers and young people living in the countryside mainly concern difficulties (financial, fiscal and legal) in setting up in business, the inefficiency and inadequacy of training, high unemployment, the lack of alternative jobs and the traditional shortcomings of rural areas as regards infrastructure and services, not to mention the often negative image of farming and a lower standard of living.
5. The Assembly considers it urgent to change this state of affairs, otherwise living conditions will become even more difficult for rural populations, in particular young people. The socioeconomic development of European countries in various fields (education, health, communications and transport, etc.), the modernisation of lifestyles in rural areas and the increased appeal of rural areas resulting from the new activities that could be developed there would make it possible to offer better opportunities to young people who live in rural areas and would like to build a future there.
6. The Assembly therefore recommends that the Committee of Ministers:
  - 6.1. instruct the European Youth Centre and the European Steering Committee for Youth to foster activities of relevance to young people in rural areas and in particular:
    - a. devise and implement a European strategy reconciling the needs of both youth policy and rural development policy;
    - b. take stock of, support and promote member states' innovatory rural education and training programmes;
  - 6.2. invite the governments of member states to:
    - a. consult rural youth organisations on the drafting of rural and youth policies, particularly where the setting up and implementation of education and training programmes are concerned;

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1. Assembly debate on 29 June 2001 (24th Sitting) (see [Doc. 9099](#), report of the Committee on the Environment and Agriculture, rapporteur: Mr Korkeaoja). Text adopted by the Assembly on 29 June 2001 (24th Sitting).



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- b.* pay particular attention to the problems of young farmers, making it easier for them to set up in farming, providing training appropriate to their needs, helping to improve the public image of farming and introducing increased tax relief for those acquiring or developing farms;
- c.* ensure that educational and training opportunities in rural areas are maintained and developed and that opportunities for further study are not found only in urban areas. Priority must be given to keeping rural primary and secondary schools open;
- d.* take steps to develop distance learning in rural areas, promote access to the latest technology and encourage the establishment of businesses in the countryside;
- e.* train teachers specialising in educational fields adapted to the needs of rural areas;
- f.* introduce a training programme for young managers of small and medium-sized businesses in the countryside;
- g.* provide support, including financial support, for the development of rural youth organisations, with particular emphasis on youth organisation programmes and projects to promote rural development;
- h.* instruct local authorities in rural areas and their associations to set up pilot development projects (i.e. involving businesspeople in the provision of training and mentoring for the young, setting up youth business centres providing equipment for a given period (seedbeds for rural enterprises) and offering grants to companies that employ young people, etc.);
- i.* encourage young people to participate in local political life in rural areas (through consultation, encouragement to participate in decisions concerning them, youth councils, etc.);
- j.* encourage job creation in rural areas by means of support programmes for people wishing to retire, making it easier to transmit skills and transfer operations and ownership;
- k.* promote new activities and help young people to find alternative employment in the countryside;
- l.* encourage the development of communications, transport and new information technologies in rural areas, especially the most remote ones;
- m.* promote sustainable agriculture and rural development and encourage local initiatives for a better protection of nature and the environment.