

Newsletter No. 13, January 2022

Dear subscribers,

Time flies. It's already 2022, which marks the last year of our Jean Monnet Module participation. For the last months, we have lots of interesting events and publications planned, where we will present our research findings from the past 2.5 years to the public. I would be delighted to have many of you join our upcoming conferences, workshops, and seminars.

Past events:

But before we look at what 2022 has to offer, let's recap what we've done the past months.

Our conference on December 3rd, 2021 was a small highlight, as we managed to gather eight speakers from Germany, Iran, Italy and Japan who all shared their knowledge and valuable insights on how to revitalise the countryside.

The presenters ranged from local representatives of two German towns, a doctor developing an app to bring high-quality rheumatic care to the Japanese countryside, a businesswoman who started an ecological farm, and members of a Kobe-based NGO that tries to revive the countryside through organic farming, with community involvement.

Also in our JMM class on Entrepreneurship & Innovation in Rural Areas in the EU and Japan, we had lots of interesting guests speakers who shared insights into buying and refurbishing a house in the countryside, running a guesthouse in rural areas, and managing a company from a remote place – and many more topics. This was a great chance for students to get direct insights.

Future events:

The next months will be equally packed with interesting events. Our next big one – an academic conference on restructuring urban and rural growth – is planned for March 29th. We have several interesting speakers from Japan and Europe lined up. If you are interested in presenting, please send an email to schrade@kwansei.ac.jp

Reading suggestions:

For those interested in learning more about rural development in the EU and what the European Union does to promote a balanced growth of urban and rural areas, there

are plenty of publications online.

Here is interesting information by the European Commission.

https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/new-push-european-democracy/long-term-vision-rural-areas_en

I particularly liked the Eurobarometer 2020 survey that's presented there as it gives valuable insights on how people perceive the countryside to have changed – to the better and to the worse. What was most surprising for me is that most survey participants stated that there are fewer job opportunities in rural areas as compared to 10 years ago. Similarly, also there are more people who believe health care and educational facilities in the countryside got worse in the past decade than those stating the opposite (although the margin is very small for education).

What European see improving is mainly infrastructure, including high-speed internet and access to transportation as well as to leisure and cultural activities. On the one hand, this looks like a success of the EU's rural development policies, which have heavily promoted (and subsidised) infrastructure projects in the European countryside. On the other hand, it is quite disillusioning to see that despite many programmes to create employment in the countryside, people actually see a decline in job opportunities. Access to jobs, together with health and education, remain one of the biggest factors that could attract urbanites to the countryside or make countryside dwellers stay there. Thus, it is of utmost importance for the EU to make sure that people's basic necessities (including medical care) can be met, whether they live in the city or in rural areas. This might be one of the major issues the EU has to face (and stem) in the next decades.

So far from my side. I hope to see you all soon,

Anna

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