Ref. Ares(2026)10955062 - 24/11/2026

Report on development of a Rural Youth Organisation in Romania, Spain and Slovakia

This document guides consortium members through the piloting and mentorship system by establishing a framework for monitoring and achieving defined quality standards. Through consistent monitoring, collection, and processing of feedback, national organisations can be successfully established and supported in the long term. Maintaining professional standards ensures consistency, effectiveness, and the sustainable development of quality benchmarks.

Co-funded by the European Union

Rural Youth Forward

Introduction & Background

1. Background of the Rural Youth Forward Project

The Rural Youth Forward (RYF) project aims to strengthen youth participation and representation in rural areas across Europe by supporting the development of sustainable national rural youth organisations. Within the project framework, experienced rural youth organisations provide mentorship and guidance to emerging organisations, enabling them to establish effective structures, programmes and partnerships.

As part of this process, the Slovenian Rural Youth Association (ZSPM) and the Austrian Rural Youth Organisation (LJÖ) acted as mentoring organisations, supporting three partner organizations at different stages of organisational development:

- ADA (Romania)
- VPMS (Slovakia)
- EPA! (Spain)

The mentorship process focused on strengthening existing organisational capacities, supporting strategic development, building effective governance structures and partnerships, and contributing to the development of sustainable national networks and programmes for rural youth.

2. Mentorship Framework and Methodology

The mentorship process was guided by two key project documents:

Definition and Monitoring of Quality Standards for Piloting and Mentorship Systems

This document provided the overall quality framework for the mentoring process. It defines the key developmental stages needed for establishing a sustainable national rural youth organisation and sets quality standards for monitoring progress. The framework includes:

- context analysis;
- identification of strategic partners;
- development of vision, mission and guiding principles;
- definition of responsibilities and governance structures;
- development of educational and leisure programmes;
- development of consulting and support services;
- feedback mechanisms and continuous improvement processes;
- risk and crisis management;
- knowledge management systems.

Checklist for Buddy Nations

The checklist served as a practical mentoring tool, ensuring that all essential topics were discussed during mentoring meetings. Particular attention was given to:

- demographic and social characteristics of rural areas;
- youth and agricultural policies;
- economic and labour market conditions;
- digitalisation and infrastructure;
- inclusiveness and sustainability;
- mapping of existing youth organisations;
- identification of strategic stakeholders and institutional partners.

Through regular mentoring meetings, progress reviews and exchange of experiences, the mentoring organisations supported the partner organisations in identifying challenges, defining priorities and taking concrete steps towards establishing or strengthening their national rural youth organisations.

3. Purpose of this report

This report documents the mentoring process carried out with partner organisations in Romania, Slovakia and Spain. It provides an overview of key development steps, mentoring activities, identified challenges, achieved progress and recommendations for future organisational development.

Mentorship Approach

1.Roles of Mentoring Organisations

The mentorship process was coordinated by the Slovenian Rural Youth Association (ZSPM) and the Austrian Rural Youth Organisation (LJÖ), which provided guidance and support to the partner organisations in Romania, Slovakia and Spain throughout their organisational development process.
The role of the mentoring organisations was to facilitate the establishment and strengthening of sustainable national rural youth organisations by sharing knowledge, good practices and practical experience. Support was provided in key areas such as context analysis, stakeholder mapping, organisational development, governance structures, programme planning and strategic orientation.
Through regular mentoring meetings, progress reviews and peer-learning activities, the mentors monitored the development of the partner organisations, provided feedback and assisted them in addressing challenges. The mentorship process was guided by the quality standards and recommendations defined within the project framework, ensuring a structured and consistent approach to organisational development.

2.Roles of Partner Organisations

The mentorship process brought together three partner organisations – ADA (Romania), VPMS (Slovakia) and EPA! (Spain) – each contributing its own experience, perspectives and priorities. The support was tailored to their respective needs, with a common focus on strengthening organisational development, expanding cooperation and enhancing their impact within the rural youth sector.

In Slovakia, the mentorship with VPMS focused on further consolidating its role as a national representative organisation for rural youth, strengthening its organisational capacities and expanding cooperation with national partners.
In Romania, ADA focused on further developing its Rural Platform, which brought together fifteen youth organisations to strengthen cooperation and exchange among organisations working with rural communities. The mentorship also addressed ways to better understand the needs of rural youth, support existing organisations and encourage their active involvement.
In Spain, La Bardal played an important role in connecting rural youth initiatives and encouraging closer cooperation among different actors. Through project activities and participatory processes, these connections gradually developed into a broader national initiative, ultimately leading to the establishment of EPA!.

Based on the guidance provided by the mentoring organisations, the partners worked on analysing their national contexts, identifying relevant stakeholders, defining their organisational objectives and strengthening their internal structures. Particular attention was given to assessing the needs of rural youth and adapting organisational approaches to the specific circumstances of each country.

Through regular meetings, self-assessment activities and exchange of experiences, the partner organisations contributed to the development of sustainable national rural youth organisations while building their capacities for future growth and representation of rural youth at national and European levels.

3. Mentorship Process

The mentorship process was based on regular communication, knowledge sharing and continuous support provided by the mentoring organisations. All activities were guided by the quality standards and recommendations developed within the Rural Youth Forward project.

Working Methodology

The mentorship followed a participatory approach, encouraging partner organisations to identify their own needs, challenges and development priorities while receiving guidance from the mentors. Discussions were structured around the key areas of organisational development defined in the project framework - Checklist for Buddy Nations.

Frequency of Meetings

Mentoring meetings were organised regularly throughout the project. The frequency and timing of meetings were adapted to the availability and needs of the partner organisations in order to provide meaningful support without creating an additional burden for participants.

Monitoring and Reporting Approach

Progress was monitored through regular discussions, reviews of completed tasks and follow-up on agreed actions. This enabled mentors to identify challenges early and provide targeted support where needed.

Exchange of Good Practices

An important part of the mentorship process was the exchange of good practices and experiences. Examples of successful approaches from Slovenia and Austria were shared with partner organisations and adapted to their national contexts.

Online Meetings and Sharing of Resources

Most mentoring activities were carried out through online meetings, complemented by regular e-mail communication. Various materials, templates, examples of good practices and supporting documents were shared with partner organisations to support their work between mentoring sessions.

Together, these activities ensured a structured and flexible mentorship process that contributed to the development of rural youth organisations in Romania, Slovakia and Spain.

Development of Rural Youth Organisation in Romania (ADA)

1. Initial Situation

At the beginning of the mentorship process, ADA was already actively engaged in the rural youth sector and cooperating with various youth organisations across Romania. Through the European Village project, the organisation established a Rural Platform aimed at connecting organisations working with rural communities and young people. The platform provided a foundation for future cooperation, networking and exchange of experiences among organisations interested in rural development and youth participation.

However, ADA identified several challenges, particularly related to maintaining the active involvement of organisations and encouraging long-term engagement. Administrative requirements linked to project applications and funding opportunities were recognised as one of the main barriers to participation for many organisations.

2. Mentorship Activities

The mentorship process focused on supporting ADA in strengthening its organisational network, developing strategies for youth engagement and exploring approaches for long-term organisational sustainability.

Regular online meetings provided opportunities to discuss ADA's current activities, organisational challenges and future plans. Particular attention was given to strengthening cooperation between rural youth organisations, encouraging active participation and facilitating knowledge exchange between organisations from different countries.

As part of the mentorship process, representatives of ADA participated in a dedicated exchange meeting where examples of organisational structures, local initiatives and youth engagement practices from Slovenia were presented. Representatives of ZSPM, together with local rural youth associations, shared practical experiences related to motivating members, organising activities, maintaining communication and building strong local organisations

Overview of the Mentorship Activities

- **Period of cooperation**: December 2025 - October 2026
- **Number of mentoring meetings**: 2
- **Main topics addressed**: strengthening the Rural Platform, cooperation between rural youth organisations, youth engagement, support for existing organisations and informal youth groups, and long-term organisational sustainability.
- **Documents and resources shared**: examples of organisational structures, local initiatives and youth engagement practices from Slovenia; practical experiences and approaches shared by ZSPM and Slovenian rural youth associations.
- **Main outcomes**: further development of the Rural Platform, engagement of fifteen youth organisations, preparation of a national research initiative on the needs of rural youth, and increased exchange of experiences with international partners.
- **Agreed next steps:** continued development of the Rural Platform, implementation of the planned research, strengthening the active participation of member organisations and creating further opportunities for networking and peer learning.

3. Organisational Development and Key Initiatives

Rural Platform Development

A significant focus of ADA's work was the further development of its Rural Platform. The platform serves as a space for cooperation between organisations working with rural youth and aims to strengthen networking, exchange of experiences and joint activities at national level.

Understanding the Needs of Rural Youth

To better understand the situation of young people living in rural areas, ADA planned a national research process consisting of a questionnaire and focus groups. The research aimed to identify the needs of rural youth, understand the factors influencing their quality of life and explore what conditions would encourage young people to remain in or move to rural areas.

Strengthening Existing Organisations

Rather than focusing solely on the creation of new structures, ADA placed strong emphasis on supporting existing youth organisations and informal youth groups. Discussions during the mentorship process highlighted the importance of maintaining motivation, creating opportunities for cooperation and providing spaces for organisations to meet and exchange experiences.

4. Challenges Identified

Several challenges emerged during the mentorship process:

- maintaining the active engagement of member organisations;
- overcoming administrative burdens related to project applications and funding procedures;
- ensuring long-term motivation of volunteers and participating organisations;
- strengthening cooperation and communication between organisations operating in rural areas.

The exchange of experiences with Slovenian organisations provided practical examples of how local associations can maintain member engagement through educational, social and community-based activities.

5. Achievements

During the mentorship period, ADA demonstrated progress in several areas:

- further development of the Rural Platform as a national networking mechanism;
- Fifteen youth organisations have registered to participate in the initiative;
- preparation of a research initiative addressing the needs of rural youth;
- increased exchange of experiences with international partners;
- strengthening the understanding of good practices related to youth engagement and organisational development.

6. Recommendations for Further Development

Based on the discussions and mentoring activities, the following recommendations were identified:

- continue expanding and strengthening the Rural Platform as a space for cooperation and representation of rural youth organisations;
- implement the planned research and use its results to inform future activities and advocacy efforts;
- develop mechanisms that support active participation and long-term engagement of member organisations;
- create additional opportunities for networking and peer learning among organisations;
- continue exchanging experiences with established rural youth organisations at European level.

Development of Rural Youth Organisation in Slovakia (VPMS)

1. Initial Situation

Established in 2019, VPMS was already operating at the national level as an organisation representing and connecting rural youth in Slovakia. At the beginning of the mentorship process, the organisation had an established position within the Slovak rural youth sector and was actively working to strengthen its role as a national representative and umbrella platform for rural youth.

The main priorities were further professionalisation, strategic planning, strengthening governance structures, expanding the national network and increasing cooperation with rural municipalities, schools, youth organisations, public institutions and other stakeholders.

.

As a project-based organisation, VPMS continued to face challenges related to limited and irregular funding, as well as limited permanent staff capacity. The mentorship therefore focused not on establishing a new organisation, but on strengthening its existing structures, supporting its long-term development and expanding its capacity to represent rural youth at national and European levels.

2. Mentorship Process

The mentorship process focused on strengthening VPMS as an established national representative and umbrella platform for rural youth in Slovakia. The support provided by ZSPM contributed to the organisation's professionalisation, strategic planning, governance development and expansion of its national network.

Through mentoring meetings and exchanges of experience, the organisations addressed several key areas of organisational development, including:

- strategic planning and defining long-term organisational priorities;
- governance structures, organisational statutes and internal procedures;
- strengthening national partnerships and cooperation with relevant stakeholders;
- member engagement and the development of a broader national network;
- organisational sustainability, funding opportunities and long-term development.

ZSPM shared practical examples, strategic documents, organisational statutes and experiences from its own development as a national rural youth organisation. These resources provided VPMS with concrete inspiration and practical tools that could be adapted to the Slovak context.

The mentorship supported VPMS in reflecting on its organisational structures, strengthening its strategic direction and further developing its role in representing rural youth at national and European levels.

Overview of the Mentorship Activities

The mentorship between ZSPM and VPMS included:

- **Period of cooperation:** December 2025 - October 2026
- **Number of mentoring meetings:** 3
- **Main topics addressed:** strategic planning, governance, organisational development, stakeholder cooperation and organisational sustainability.
- **Documents and resources shared:** ZSPM strategic planning documents, organisational statutes and examples of internal organisational structures.
- **Main outcomes:** strengthened strategic orientation, improved understanding of governance arrangements, further development of the national partnership network and exchange of practical organisational tools.
- **Agreed next steps:** continued development and implementation of strategic priorities and further strengthening of sustainable partnerships.

3.Key Development Areas

Strengthening the National Representative and Umbrella Role

VPMS has continued to strengthen its position as a national representative and umbrella platform for rural youth in Slovakia. Building on its established role, the organisation has focused on expanding cooperation with rural municipalities, schools, youth organisations, public institutions and other stakeholders working with or for rural communities.

In 2025, VPMS reviewed its statutes and governance arrangements in light of changes in the national framework for youth work. The review provided an opportunity to assess whether its existing organisational structure, objectives and activities remained in line with the updated requirements. Based on this assessment, VPMS concluded that no formal changes to its statutes were necessary, as its existing arrangements were considered sufficiently aligned with the new framework.

Strategic Planning and Organisational Development

Strategic planning became one of the central topics of the mentorship process. VPMS worked on developing and refining its organisational strategy, recognising its importance for setting priorities, guiding future development and strengthening applications for funding opportunities, particularly within Erasmus+ programmes.

Throughout the process, ZSPM shared its own experiences with strategy development and provided examples of strategic documents that could serve as inspiration. VPMS also actively involved newly engaged members and students in shaping the future direction of the organisation.

The mentorship contributed to strengthening VPMS's strategic approach to organisational development. Through the exchange of experiences with ZSPM, VPMS gained practical insights into strategic planning processes, organisational priorities, member engagement and the development of sustainable organisational structures. The shared materials and examples served as a basis for further reflection on the organisation's strategic direction and future development.

Strengthening National and International Cooperation

VPMS significantly strengthened its national and international cooperation during the reporting period. At the national level, the organisation expanded its cooperation with rural municipalities, schools, youth organisations, public institutions and other stakeholders working in the field of rural development and youth participation.

VPMS also increased its involvement in national youth policy processes. The organisation became a member of the Youth Council of Slovakia and joined the steering group at the Ministry of Education, strengthening its role in representing rural youth in national policy discussions.

At the European level, VPMS progressed from observer status to approved national membership in Rural Youth Europe (RYE), with full membership set to take effect on 1 January 2027. This represents an important milestone in the organisation's international development and creates new opportunities for cooperation, networking and knowledge exchange with rural youth organisations across Europe.

Partnerships and Sustainability

The mentorship process also addressed questions related to long-term sustainability and funding. VPMS highlighted the challenges of operating without long-term financial partners and relying primarily on project-based funding. Discussions therefore explored different approaches to sponsorships, partnerships and cooperation with organisations and companies connected to the agricultural sector.

4. Main Challenges

Several challenges influenced the development of VPMS during the mentorship process:

- adapting to changes in national legislation and organisational requirements;
- limited human resources available for organisational development;
- dependence on project-based funding;
- Although cooperation with rural youth actors has expanded substantially, VPMS still needs to formalise and systematise its national membership and partnership network;
- balancing administrative and strategic work with the implementation of activities for young people.

Despite these challenges, VPMS demonstrated a strong commitment to organisational development and the long-term strengthening of rural youth representation in Slovakia.

5. Key Outcomes and Recommendations

The mentorship process contributed to strengthening VPMS as an established national representative and umbrella platform for rural youth in Slovakia. Building on its existing organisational structures, VPMS made significant progress in professionalisation, strategic planning, governance development and the expansion of its national network.

Key achievements during the reporting period include:

- VPMS strengthened its cooperation with rural municipalities, schools, youth organisations, public institutions and other rural stakeholders.
- In 2025, VPMS implemented more than 40 activities, involved over 2,600 young people and managed more than nine active projects.
- VPMS organised the European Rural Youth Summit 2025 in Valča and launched the European Youth Village programme in Slovakia.
- Through European Youth Village, VPMS now provides structured mentoring to local youth teams and supports cooperation between young people and local authorities.
- VPMS expanded its involvement in national youth policy processes and became a member of the Youth Council of Slovakia and a member of the steering group at the Ministry of Education.
- VPMS progressed from observer status to approved national membership in Rural Youth Europe, effective from 1 January 2027.
- The European Rural Youth Summit 2025 also received national recognition within the European Charlemagne Youth Prize.

Despite this progress, VPMS continues to face challenges related to project-based funding, limited permanent staff capacity and the need to further formalise its national network.

For future development, it is recommended that VPMS continue strengthening its national partnerships, implement its strategic priorities, develop sustainable funding mechanisms and maintain its active involvement in national and European youth policy processes.

Development of Rural Youth Organisation in Spain (EPA!)

1. Initial Situation

At the beginning of the mentorship process, EPA! was already operating as a national platform for rural youth organisations in Spain. The organisation had established itself as a recognised actor in the rural youth sector, becoming an observer member of the National Youth Council of Spain and participating in an interministerial working group on rural youth issues. In addition, EPA! provided support and guidance to informal rural youth groups, helping them strengthen their activities and potentially become part of the wider network in the future.

Despite these achievements, EPA! identified several organisational development needs, particularly regarding long-term financial sustainability, organisational capacity and the establishment of stable structures that would enable the organisation to continue growing and supporting rural youth effectively.

2. Mentorship Process

The mentorship process focused on organisational sustainability, funding structures and strengthening EPA!'s organisational capacity. Through regular exchanges with Rural Youth Austria (LJÖ), EPA! explored different approaches to organisational development, public funding, sponsorships and governance.
Discussions were guided by the organisational development checklist, which helped identify EPA!'s current strengths, challenges and areas where additional support or inspiration from established organisations could be beneficial. Topics such as organisational structures, communication, public visibility and long-term sustainability formed an important part of the mentoring process.

Overview of the Mentorship Activities:

- **Period of cooperation**: December 2025 - October 2026
- **Number of mentoring meetings**: 1
- **Main topics addressed**: organisational sustainability, funding structures, governance, organisational capacity, development of professional support structures, advocacy and external partnerships.
- **Documents and resources shared**: organisational development checklist, sponsorship templates and practical examples from Rural Youth Austria related to structural funding, sponsorships and organisational development.
- **Main outcomes**: improved understanding of possible structural funding and sponsorship models, identification of organisational development priorities, exchange of practical tools and approaches, and preparation of a support letter advocating stable, multiannual structural funding for EPA!.
- **Agreed next steps**: continued advocacy for stable structural funding, further development of organisational and coordination capacities, exploration of sponsorship opportunities and strengthening of partnerships with relevant stakeholders.

3.Key Development Areas

Strengthening Organisational Sustainability

One of the key topics discussed during the mentorship process was the importance of stable structural funding. EPA! highlighted the challenges of ensuring long-term organisational sustainability, particularly regarding the financing of local groups and the creation of a paid secretariat or coordination structure.

Drawing on its experience, Rural Youth Austria (LJÖ) shared examples of how structural funding contributes to organisational continuity, professionalisation and the ability to provide consistent support to local initiatives. The discussions emphasised that sustainable youth organisations require reliable structures, qualified staff and long-term planning opportunities beyond project-based funding.

Strengthening Advocacy and Recognition

An important aspect of EPA!'s development was its growing role as a representative body for rural youth in Spain. The organisation was actively involved in policy discussions and contributed to initiatives addressing the future of rural areas and young people.

As part of the mentorship process, Rural Youth Austria (LJÖ) prepared a formal support letter addressed to the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. The letter highlighted EPA!'s contribution to rural youth participation, local engagement and rural development, while advocating for stable, multiannual structural funding for the organisation.

Development of Organisational Structures

The mentorship process also addressed organisational structures and the establishment of a professional support system within EPA!. Discussions focused on the role of paid secretariat positions and the importance of dedicated staff in ensuring continuity, coordination and long-term organisational development.

EPA! also reflected on its current organisational structures and future development needs through the organisational development checklist, which served as a tool for identifying priorities and opportunities for improvement.

Sponsorships and External Partnerships

In addition to public funding, sponsorship opportunities were explored as a possible avenue for strengthening EPA!'s sustainability. Rural Youth Austria (LJÖ) provided examples and templates used in its cooperation with sponsors, enabling EPA! to draw inspiration for developing its own sponsorship approach and partnerships.

4.Main Challenges

Several challenges were identified during the mentorship process:

- securing stable and long-term structural funding;
- establishing dedicated coordination and secretariat capacities;
- strengthening organisational sustainability beyond project-based funding;
- ensuring sufficient resources to support local rural youth initiatives;
- balancing organisational growth with available financial and human resources.

The discussions with Rural Youth Austria provided valuable examples of how these challenges can be addressed through diversified funding sources, strong organisational structures and long-term planning.

5.Key Outcomes and Recommendations

The mentorship process confirmed EPA!'s important role in representing and supporting rural youth in Spain. The organisation demonstrated a strong commitment to advocacy, networking and the development of opportunities for young people living in rural areas. Through the exchange with Rural Youth Austria, EPA! gained additional insights into organisational sustainability, structural funding models and sponsorship development.

A significant outcome of the mentorship process was the preparation of a formal support letter by Rural Youth Austria (LJÖ), endorsing EPA! and recommending stable structural funding from the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. This support strengthened EPA!'s efforts to secure long-term recognition and sustainability.

For future development, it is recommended that EPA! continue advocating for stable structural funding, further strengthen its organisational capacities, expand partnerships with relevant stakeholders and explore additional sponsorship opportunities. Continued participation in national and international policy processes will further reinforce its role as a key representative of rural youth in Spain.

Cross-country Comparison and Lessons Learned

1. Common Challenges

Although the partner organisations operated in different national contexts, several common challenges emerged throughout the mentorship process.

A key challenge identified by all organisations was ensuring long-term organisational sustainability. While ADA focused on maintaining the active engagement of member organisations and informal groups, VPMS faced challenges related to limited human resources and project-based funding, and EPA! was seeking stable structural funding and the establishment of a permanent secretariat structure.
Another common challenge was strengthening organisational networks and cooperation between rural youth organisations and stakeholders. All three organisations recognised the importance of building partnerships, improving communication and increasing the visibility of their activities at both national and international levels.

Furthermore, all partners highlighted the need to ensure that their activities remain relevant to the needs of rural youth and that young people are actively involved in shaping the future of their organisations.

2. Different National Contexts

Despite these common challenges, each organisation operated within a distinct national context and therefore prioritised different areas of development.

In Romania, ADA focused primarily on strengthening cooperation between rural youth organisations and developing the Rural Platform as a national networking mechanism. The organisation also prioritised understanding the needs of rural youth through planned research activities and supporting existing organisations operating in rural areas.

In Slovakia, VPMS focused on strengthening its established position as a national representative and umbrella platform for rural youth. The mentorship supported the organisation's further professionalisation, strategic planning, governance development and expansion of its national network. Significant progress was achieved in strengthening cooperation with rural municipalities, schools, youth organisations and public institutions, as well as increasing VPMS's involvement in national youth policy processes. The organisation also expanded its activities, launched the European Youth Village programme and strengthened its European cooperation through its progression towards full membership in Rural Youth Europe.

In Spain, EPA! already operated as a recognised national platform and was more focused on strengthening its organisational sustainability, securing structural funding and increasing its institutional recognition. Particular attention was given to developing stable organisational structures and professional support capacities.

These differences demonstrate that there is no single model for developing rural youth organisations. Instead, development priorities must reflect the specific needs, capacities and external conditions of each country.

3. Good Practices Identified During Mentorship

The mentorship process facilitated a valuable exchange of experiences and good practices among participating organisations.

Several good practices were identified throughout the cooperation:

- creating platforms and networks that enable cooperation between rural youth organisations, as demonstrated by ADA's Rural Platform;
- investing in strategic planning and organisational development to strengthen the long-term direction, governance and sustainability of national rural youth organisations, as demonstrated by VPMS;
- developing local youth participation through structured mentoring programmes that connect young people with local authorities and support their active involvement in community development, as demonstrated by the European Youth Village programme in Slovakia;
- actively participating in national and international policy processes to strengthen the voice of rural youth, as demonstrated by EPA!'s involvement in national youth structures and working groups;
- providing young people with meaningful opportunities for participation, responsibility and skills development through local and national activities;
- maintaining regular communication, peer learning and international cooperation as tools for organisational growth and capacity building.

The mentoring organisations also shared practical examples related to strategic planning, organisational statutes, sponsorship models, member engagement and communication, which proved useful for the partner organisations in addressing their specific development needs.

Mentorship Outputs:

- Sharing of ZSPM strategic planning documents with VPMS.
- Sharing of organisational statutes as examples of governance structures.
- Sharing of sponsorship templates by Rural Youth Austria (LJÖ) with EPA!.
- Preparation of a support letter advocating structural funding for EPA!.
- Exchange of examples regarding member engagement and local organisational structures through presentations of Slovenian rural youth organisations.
- Sharing of experiences related to strategic planning, sponsorships, governance and communication.

4. Key Success Factors for Establishing Rural Youth Organisations

Based on the mentorship process, several factors were identified as particularly important for the successful development of rural youth organisations.

First, a clear organisational vision and strategic direction provide an important foundation for sustainable growth and long-term planning. This was especially evident in the organisational development process of VPMS.

Second, strong partnerships and networks contribute significantly to organisational development. Cooperation with youth organisations, public institutions, agricultural stakeholders and international networks provides access to resources, expertise and new opportunities.

Third, meaningful youth participation remains essential. Organisations that create opportunities for young people to contribute, take responsibility and actively shape activities are more likely to maintain engagement and ensure long-term relevance.

Finally, stable organisational structures and adequate financial resources are crucial for sustainability. While volunteer commitment remains highly valuable, the mentorship process demonstrated the importance of organisational continuity, dedicated coordination capacities and diversified funding sources.

Overall, the mentorship process confirmed that rural youth organisations develop most successfully when they combine strong local engagement, clear strategic direction, effective partnerships and a commitment to continuous organisational learning and improvement.

Conclusions and Recommendations

1. Overall Impact of the Mentorship Process

The mentorship process conducted within the Rural Youth Forward project provided valuable support for the development and strengthening of rural youth organisations in Romania, Slovakia and Spain. Through regular exchanges, peer learning and practical guidance, the partner organisations were supported in addressing their specific organisational challenges and identifying opportunities for further development.

The process demonstrated that mentorship can play an important role in strengthening organisational capacities, facilitating strategic reflection and encouraging the exchange of practical solutions between organisations operating in different national contexts. At the same time, it confirmed that rural youth organisations across Europe face many similar challenges, including securing sustainable funding, maintaining youth engagement, strengthening cooperation networks and ensuring long-term organisational stability.

The mentorship activities contributed not only to the development of the individual partner organisations but also to stronger international cooperation and a broader understanding of the diverse realities facing rural youth across Europe.

2. Recommendations for Future National Rural Youth Organisations

Based on the experiences gathered during the mentorship process, several recommendations can be made for organisations seeking to strengthen rural youth representation and participation at the national level:

- develop a clear vision, mission and strategic direction to guide future development;
- invest in building strong partnerships with youth organisations, rural stakeholders, public authorities and educational institutions;
- actively involve young people in decision-making processes and organisational activities;
- establish effective communication channels and create opportunities for regular exchange between members and partner organisations;
- strengthen organisational sustainability through diversified funding sources and long-term planning;
- continuously assess the needs of rural youth and adapt activities accordingly;
- promote cooperation and knowledge-sharing between local, national and international organisations.

The experience of ADA, VPMS and EPA! further demonstrated that successful rural youth organisations are built gradually through continuous learning, active stakeholder engagement and strong commitment from both volunteers and organisational leaders.

3. Recommendations for Future European Mentorship Initiatives

The mentorship activities implemented within the Rural Youth Forward project highlighted the value of international cooperation and peer learning between rural youth organisations. Future European mentorship initiatives should continue building on this approach and further facilitate exchanges between established and emerging organisations.

Particular attention should be given to:

- providing flexible and needs-based mentoring tailored to the specific context of each organisation;
- combining strategic discussions with practical examples, templates and tools that organisations can directly apply;
- creating opportunities for peer learning and direct exchanges between local and national organisations;
- supporting organisations in areas such as governance, strategic planning, funding, advocacy and stakeholder engagement;
- encouraging long-term cooperation and networking beyond the duration of individual projects;
- documenting and sharing good practices that can inspire future generations of rural youth leaders.

Overall, the Rural Youth Forward mentorship process demonstrated that cooperation, mutual support and knowledge exchange can significantly contribute to the development of strong and sustainable rural youth organisations. By investing in people, partnerships and organisational capacities, rural youth organisations can play an increasingly important role in strengthening rural communities and ensuring that young people remain active participants in shaping the future of rural areas.

Acknowledgement: This project has received funding from the European Union's EACEA under grant agreement No 101185214.

Legal disclaimer: 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.

Copyright © Rural Youth Europe
Reproduction of the content of this material is permitted with source attribution.
November *2026*

Co-funded by the European Union

Rural Youth Forward

Rural Youth Europe

land jugend österreich

ADA Dezvoltare Activa

LABA RDAL

ZSPM zveza slovenske podeželske mladine

Vidiecky parlament mladých na Slovensku
Slovak Rural Youth Parliament