



DIGITISATION: ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IMPACTS IN RURAL AREAS

National Analysis of Digitalisation Policies

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Round Table. The importance of policies for the digitalization of rural areas



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What's been analysed?

DESIRA partners have reviewed existing national (+regional) policies affecting digitalisation in rural areas with a two-fold approach:

1. How general Digitalisation policies impact on rural areas (e.g. national agendas)
2. How Agriculture and Rural development policies address digitalisation

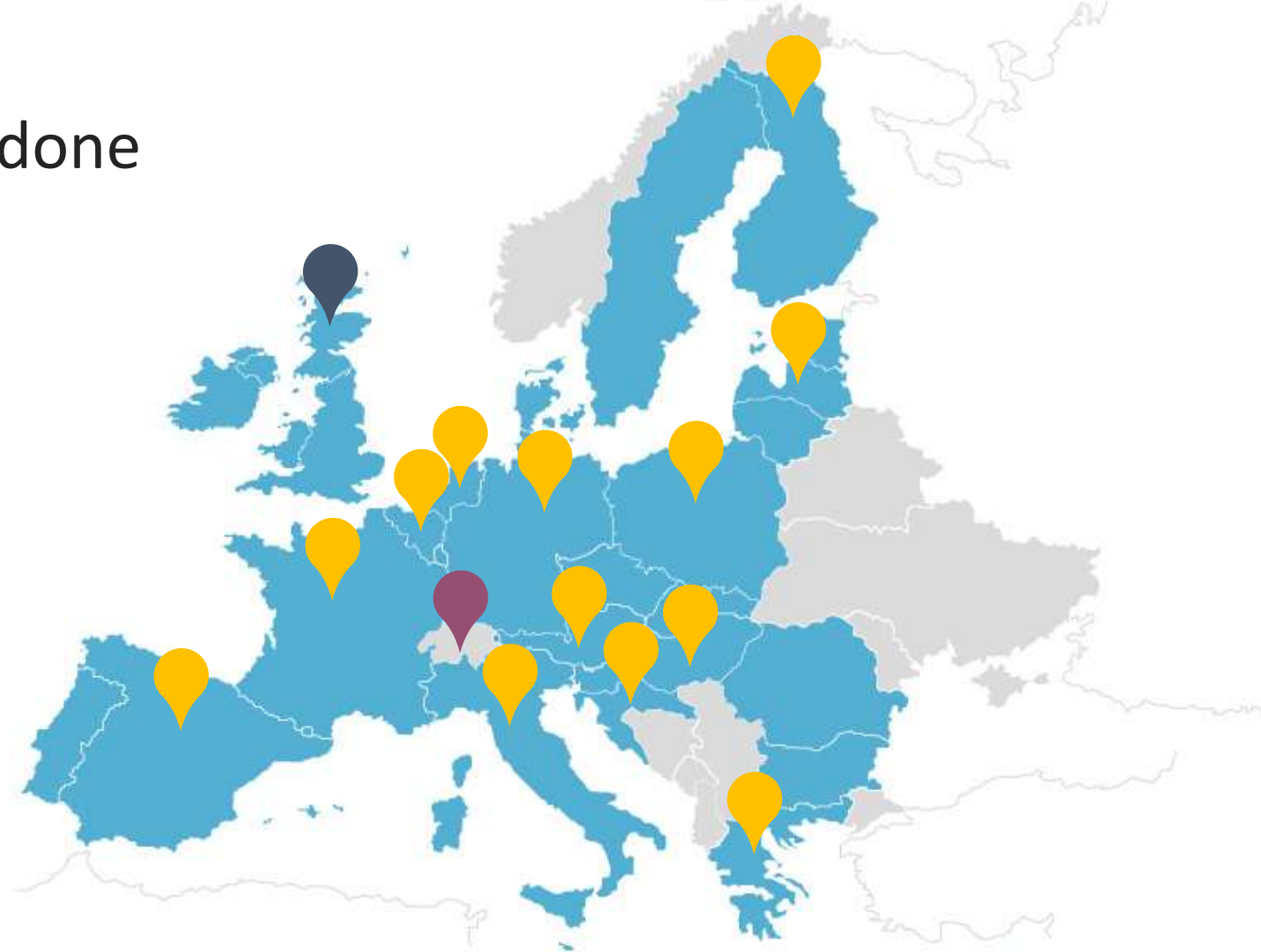
DESIRA approach to *Boost sustainable digitalisation of agriculture, forestry and rural areas* elaborated for the LTVRA

National policy analysis



15 national policy analysis done

-  **EU**
-  **Non-EU**
-  **Ex-EU**



What's been analysed?

1. National context for digitalisation

- Access to broadband, % of connected territory
- Differences between urban/rural
- Digital divide

Some common sources:

- DESI
- NRI
- Women in Digital Scoreboard

2. European Digital Policies

How have they influenced digitalisation of rural areas

3. National (Regional or local) Policies boosting digitalisation

4. Private strategies, if any

National policy analysis



Varied profiles

- Within EU, ex-EU & outside EU
- Geographical spread
- From highly rural to mostly urban countries
- Federal states, centralised
- Different approaches to digitalisation policies
- Different access to public data about digitalisation

How has digitalisation been addressed?



1st phase: connectivity, infrastructure | 2nd phase: usage

Different strategies

- National digitalisation strategies (majority)
 - E.g. France's first digital plan 1998, Swiss first strategy in 2020
 - Finland, DESI top 1 country, doesn't have a comprehensive digital strategy
- Regional digital strategies (e.g. Flemish digital strategy)

How has RURAL digitalisation been addressed?



Different strategies

- Dedicated policies (e.g., Spain, Hungary or Greece)
- Included in general digitalisation strategies (e.g., Latvia's Digital Transformation Guidelines)
- Included in other strategies (e.g., Italian strategy for Inner areas and others; Austria's Master Plan for Rural Areas)

Current situation

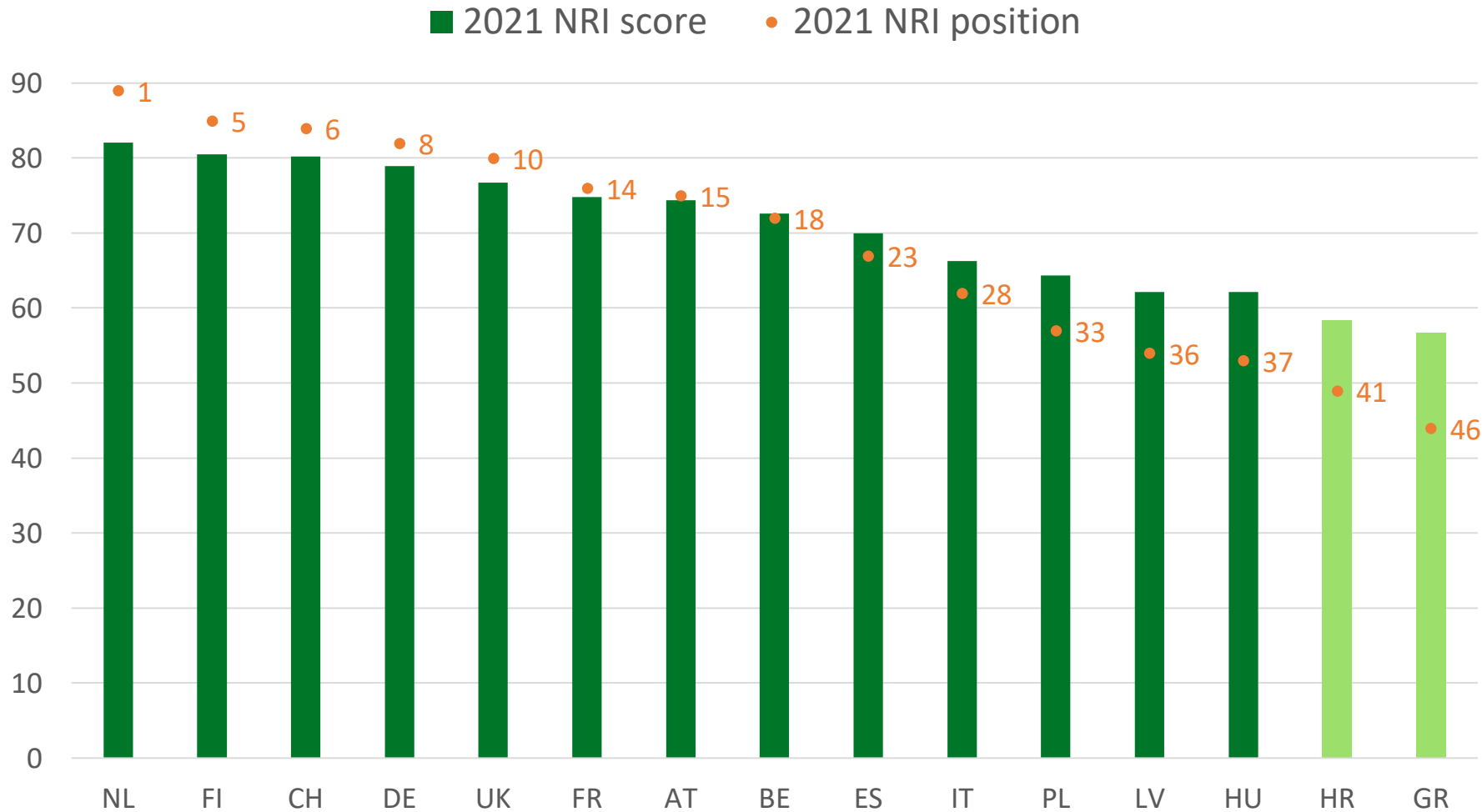


- Cross-country analysis is difficult (data availability)
- Digitalisation has spread across all EU countries and sectors (economic, political, etc.)
- Significant EU and national investments



#DESIEU #DigitalEU

Current situation



Network Readiness Index (130 economies)
- All in the 1st quartile, but HR and GR

Current situation

- Digitalisation in rural areas has evolved significantly, although:
 - ≠ starting points, digitalisation not linked to economic status (Germany, right above average performance)
 - All countries report urban-rural gap
 - Gender, age, disability and education gap (= rural demographic)
 - Pan-European adoption gap (30% Hungarian farmers use computers mainly for banking and e-administration; 79% of French farmers use the Internet in farming activities)
- COVID-19 pandemic unearthed weaknesses in the system and broaden the digital gaps

Current situation - Connectivity

- % rural areas remain unconnected (unprofitable investments)
 - Min 0.5% Netherlands
 - 20% of Scottish rural areas no 4G coverage
- Alternative strategies to connect rural areas:
 - Private-public partnerships investments
 - Community-led broadband scheme (e.g. Scotland)
- Connectivity might not be linked
 - to rurality (Hungary 99% rural and Spain 84% rural, in the top 5 countries for 100Mbps or higher coverage)
 - To high level of adoption, much less in rural areas

Current situation – adoption





- Adoption relies also on skills and ‘safe’ data environment
- All countries implement strategies to tackle different dimensions of digital divide (access, skills, sector, etc.)
- Strategies to improve e-health, e-education, e-government, boosted by COVID-19
- Cybersecurity strategies exist in almost all countries (none reported for Latvia)
- Data openness uneven (e.g. high for Spain, low for Greece, Hungary)

Take-on messages



- Disparities in the approach to rural digitalisation of different countries.
 - Rural digitalisation is a complex issue (different dimensions involved, different starting points, different readiness level)
- Data availability varies among countries
- Connectivity and digital skills should go in parallel
- Opportunity to align rural digital strategies with national/EU ones
- Coordination of national digital strategies

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