

parlons graphiques

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Resilience, Labour and Migration Trends in the EU-27

Tendances en matière de résilience, de travail et de migration dans l'UE-27

Resilienz-, Arbeits- und Migrationstrends in der EU-27

This article investigates the implications of regional developments in employment and net migration to meet the challenge of ensuring the resilience of rural areas.

Regional employment

In 2010, the agricultural sector of the EU-27 employed 10.06 million annual working units (AWU), while by 2018 it had decreased to 8.96 million AWU (Eurostat, 2020). This is equivalent to a yearly decrease of 1.4 per cent and can be partly explained by developments in technology that decrease labour demand. Regardless of the decreasing agricultural labour demand, finding suitable workers remains challenging. Especially during peak seasons, the limited availability of workers may constrain rural resilience by potentially limiting production.

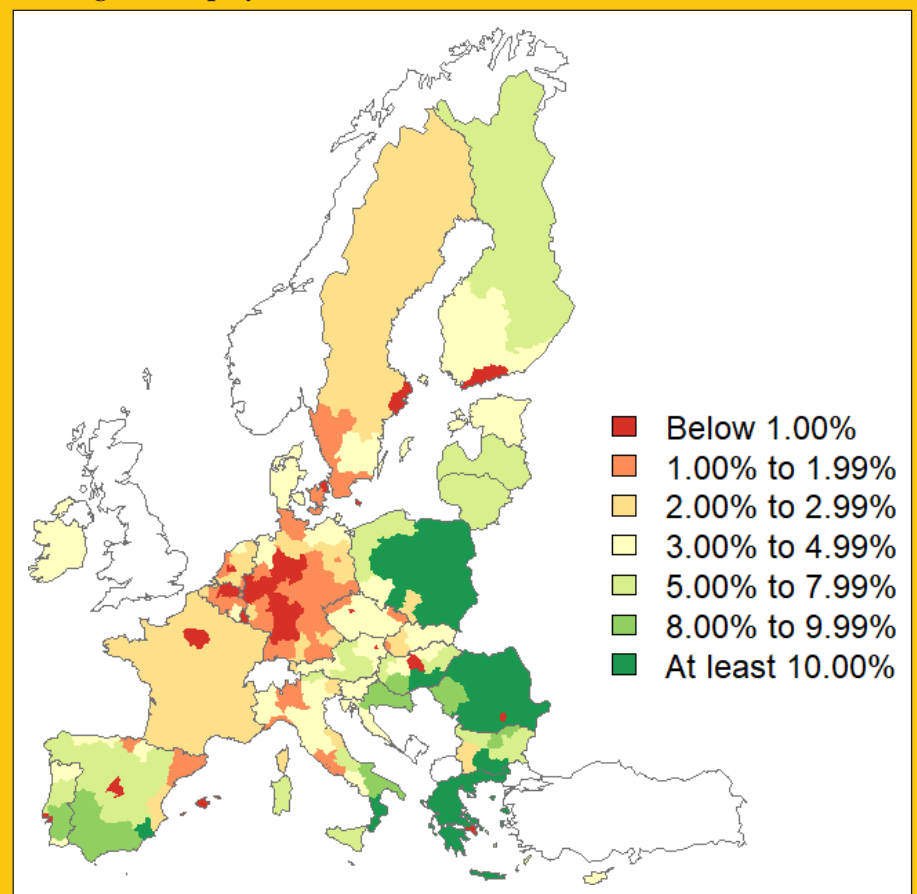
Figure 1 presents the regional employment of agriculture, forestry, and fishing (AFF) as a percentage of total employment in 2016. Self-employed and family labour is included in these statistics, and agriculture represents 90 per cent of AFF employment. AFF represents a larger share of total jobs in Eastern Member States with lower labour costs (i.e. Greece, Poland and

Romania), while it provides fewer jobs in Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands. In these countries, higher costs of labour and technological progress have reduced labour demand.

Regional net migration

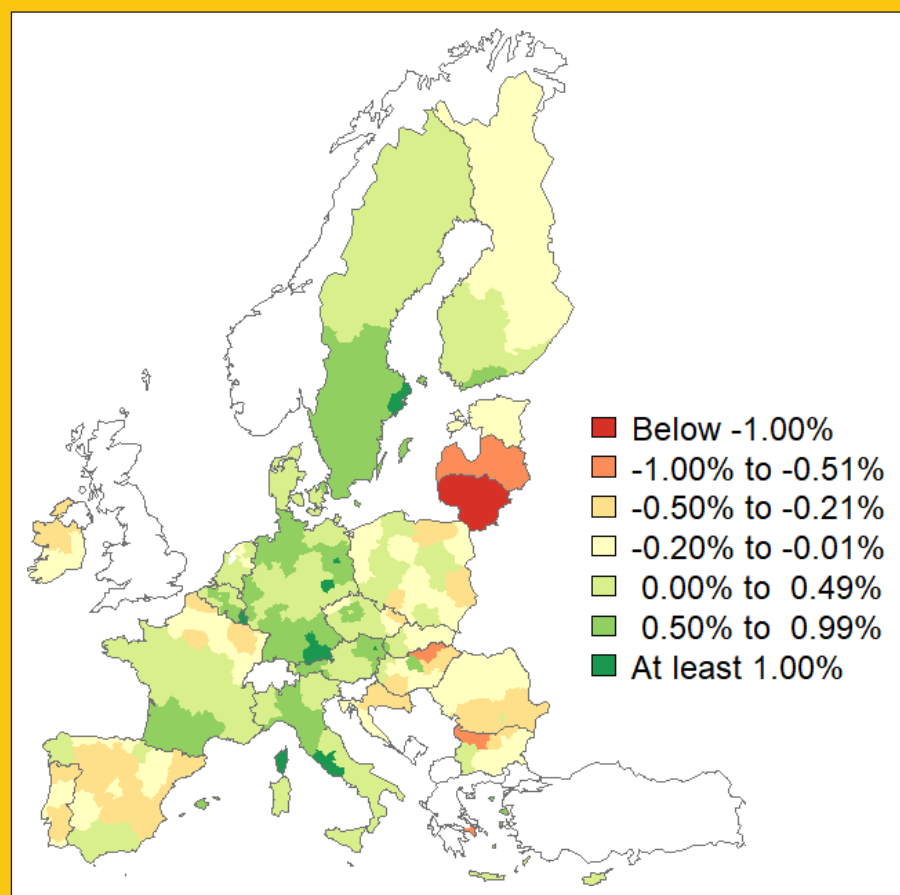
Figure 2 presents the average yearly net migration rates over the period 2010–2016. Negative values occur when emigration exceeds immigration, indicating that more people are leaving

Figure 1: Employment in agriculture, forestry, and fishing as a percentage of total regional employment, 2016



Source: Eurostat (2020), calculated based on online data code lfst_r_lfe2en2.

Figure 2: Average yearly net migration as a percentage of total population, 2010–2016



Source: Eurostat (2020), calculated based on online data code tgs00099.

than entering a region and vice versa for positive values. Negative net migration rates are mostly observed in Eastern and Southern European regions. Positive net migration rates are found in Western and Northern Europe, except in Ireland.

Implications for resilience

A comparison between Figures 1 and 2 shows that negative net

migration rates occur more often in predominantly rural areas where AFF represents a larger proportion of the total employment, while positive net migration rates are mostly observed in urban areas. In general, this illustrates a trend of urbanisation, as shifts occur from rural to urban areas. A continuation of this trend would result in shrinking rural areas that are potentially less attractive for

residence, which constrains the resilience of rural areas (Meuwissen *et al.*, 2019).

Another future challenge in rural areas is the potential decrease in the permanent or family AFF labour force caused by persistent negative net migration rates. Especially for agriculture, this could limit production and hamper the resilience of rural economies and communities. To prevent (young) inhabitants from emigrating to urban areas, offering attractive AFF job opportunities is key. For instance, by providing learning opportunities and education on how to use new technologies, such as precision agriculture. This way, skilled young workers could complement the more experienced workforce and help to overcome labour shortages.

Stimulating young entrants to become new farm or business owners is of utmost importance to ensure attractive and viable rural areas. However, limited access to capital and land restrains the younger generation from entering AFF. European policymakers could stimulate young entrants to AFF by reducing the financial risks related to succession or stimulating innovative and alternative business models. An increased interest of the younger generation to enter or to continue working in AFF is key to ensuring a viable and resilient future of rural areas (Pitson *et al.*, 2020).

Further Reading

- Eurostat (2020). Database –General and Regional Statistics. Available online at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database> (Accessed: 22 May 2020).
- Meuwissen, M.P.M., Feindt, P., Speigel, A. *et al.* (2019). A framework to assess the resilience of farming systems. *Agricultural Systems*, 176: 102656.
- Pitson, C., Appel, F., Balmann, A. *et al.* (2020). Shifting the focus from “more” to “more successful” generational renewal. Available online at: https://surefarmproject.eu/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/D3.7_English.pdf (Accessed 29 June 2020).

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