

**Title:** Seeds of Succession

**Convenors:** Adriana Borsellino, [adriana.borsellino@ruralityoutheurope.com](mailto:adriana.borsellino@ruralityoutheurope.com) and Anja Fortuna, [anja.fortuna@ruralityoutheurope.com](mailto:anja.fortuna@ruralityoutheurope.com)

**Topic:** Across Europe, the agricultural workforce is increasingly aging, while younger generations face a number of social, economic, and structural barriers that limit their entry into the sector. In many family farms, children or other relatives are considered the natural heirs of the farm, but taking over is neither automatic nor simple. Farm succession is more than a legal or financial process: it is shaped by family expectations and dynamics, gender roles, emotional ties, access to land and credit, and the quality of life offered by farming. While many young relatives already contribute as informal workers to the farm, the step towards full responsibility often involves difficult decisions, including the willingness to take on financial risk, navigate generational tensions, and weigh farming against more secure or appealing career alternatives.

**Sub-themes:**

- Intergenerational transfer of farm knowledge, land, and responsibilities
- Motivations and barriers for young people to take over family farms
- Generational Renewal (Policies and support systems influencing generational renewal)
- Attractiveness of farming (rural areas, working conditions, economic vulnerability of farming etc..)
- Technology & Innovation
- Social environment for enhancing the incentives to stay, invest and thrive in rural areas, beyond the professional life (access to education, health, culture, leisure etc.).

This WG engages with several key themes. It explores both the **attractiveness of agricultural work (Theme I)** and the **dynamics of agricultural work (Theme IV)**, by examining the motivations and barriers young people face when considering a future on the family farm, which includes adapting to current challenges, changes in societal demands and social issues (e.g. climate change, digitalisation, healthy food, work-life balance etc). It contributes to understanding **knowledge, skills, and education (Theme III)** through discussions on intergenerational learning, the transmission of farming expertise and new innovative methods of farming. Finally, the WG links to **agricultural workforce development systems (Theme VI)** by considering policy, support mechanisms, and institutional frameworks that influence young people's entry and long-term engagement in farming.

**Aims:** This WG aims to create an interactive space for sharing and reflecting on the experiences of young family members working on farms and engaging in succession processes. It provides a space for reflection on how farm succession unfolds in practice, what enables or hinders youth involvement, and how this process can be better supported. Bringing together diverse perspectives, the WG will examine both shared patterns and contextual differences, with attention to the roles young family members play on the farm. By fostering open dialogue and exchange, the workshop seeks to generate new perspectives, build connections, and

collectively explore pathways to better support and empower the next generation of farmers in sustaining family farms and revitalising rural communities.

**Format: Workshop** - The WG will be organised as an interactive workshop across one or two 1.5-hour sessions, depending on interest and participation. The format is designed to encourage active dialogue, mutual learning, and collaborative reflection through different breakout groups. The aim is to make the discussion as intergenerational as possible. We will foster dialogue between different generations, creating space for both older farmers and younger family members to exchange experiences, expectations, and visions for the future of farming. Where possible, we will explore ways to bring in the voices of rural youth and young farmers, to understand the realities and challenges of young family members working on farms and taking over the family enterprise.