



MINISTERO DELLE POLITICHE AGRICOLE  
ALIMENTARI E FORESTALI



# YOUNG PEOPLE PERCEPTION OF RURAL AREAS

A European survey carried out in eight Member States

**October 2012**

L'AGRICOLTURA A BENEFICIO DI TUTTI





## **YOUNG PEOPLE PERCEPTION OF RURAL AREAS**

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**Document drawn up under the National Rural Network activities – Working Groups: Youth –**

**MiPAAF – DISR**

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**Acknowledgements:**

The European Networks for Rural Development of: Belgium, Finland, France, Latvia, Malta, Netherlands, Poland and Sweden.

**Data gathering in Italy:**

Dr. Stefano Vaccari, General Director of the General Direction of Administrative Services at  
MiPAAF

Prof. Francesco Pennacchi, President of the Italian National Board of Deans of the Agricultural  
Faculties

Dr. Patrizia Marini, Coordinator of four High Schools for Agricultural Science  
Faculty of Agricultural Science of the Universities of Campobasso and Perugia;  
Faculty of Economics and Business of the University of Urbino;

Agricultural College of Riccia (Campobasso).

Agricultural College "A. Ciuffelli" of Todi;

Agricultural College "Emilio Sereni" of Rome;

Agricultural College "G. Ferraris" of Palmi;



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## 1. Preface

The project of carrying out a survey on young people's current perception of agriculture and life in rural areas was launched by the Italian National Rural Network at the 11<sup>th</sup> NRN meeting – European Network for Rural Development that took place in Bad Schandau – Germany. In a Europe where nearly 6% of farm managers is under 35 years of age, it is clear that, besides the structural problems linked to the generational change (difficulties in accessing credit and land, overwhelming red tape, fragmented information on EU funding and training opportunities, lack of services to children and families, etc.) there are issues affecting farmers and their life in rural areas, problems that are often due to a lack of information on the development that this world has had and is still having.

These are the reasons why the project of carrying out a “Survey on young people's perception of rural areas” was born. Addressing to students in their last two years of high school and to first-year university students, the project could rely on the participation of eight Member States: Netherlands, France, Italy, Finland, Belgium (Flemish Network), Poland, Latvia and Malta, to which Sweden was added in a preliminary phase. The aim of this survey was to provide a good picture on young people's perception of agriculture and rural areas in order to address problems and opportunities that may come from this areas (in terms of attractiveness, generational change, need to relate to others, services and quality of life), keeping in mind the real dynamics underpinning the world of young people and of the school.

Sociological investigations and media often tend to focus almost exclusively on urban life, while encouraging signals for young people have been coming from agriculture, despite the crisis: young people invest more in multifunctionality (agritourisms, educational farms) in sustainability (alternative energy) and in innovation, towards better farm performances<sup>1</sup>. In addition, according to recent data, the employment levels of young people in agriculture reveal a positive counter-trend compared to other sectors<sup>2</sup>. At the same time, the image of the farmer has radically changed having now both managerial and agricultural skills for a work where the high-tech component and the marketing and communication strategies play a key role.

This survey is therefore aimed at studying those aspects linked to the social dimension and to the quality of life that would otherwise remain outside the existing technical and economic analysis, thus introducing

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<sup>1</sup> European Commission - Generational Renewal in EU Agriculture: Statistical Background, Brief No. 6 – June 2012 and the National Rural Network: Multifunctionality in farms run by young farmers, December 2010.

<sup>2</sup> ISTAT Report “Employed and Unemployed”, first and second quarter 2012.

topics that may arouse curiosity and interest. The questionnaire is therefore provided with multiple-choice questions on aspects related to the perception of the role that agriculture will play in rural areas in the future (providing public goods and services or quality products only?). Young people were also asked to identify on a scale of 1-10 the main difficulties (land availability, inadequate income, administrative burdens, difficulties of sharing choice with partner) and advantages (adequate environment for families and children, less stressful lifestyle, etc.). Public services as well as recreational and multifunctional activities are also essential aspects to be considered.

By the mid-term of this project, sharing the questionnaire's topics and objectives, even through social networking tools, has been important to "weight" the questions appropriately, trying to catch common expectations and peculiar aspects but also taking into account diversities and trends of each Country (e.g. the concept of "rural area" linked to that of "agricultural work" according to different nuances). This is the case of concepts like "small town" or "big city" which vary considerably depending on the Member state; it is also the case of rural areas' "vocation" whose development depends on the farms' growth.

Each Member state participating in this survey has given an important contribution, by allowing to collect 1,563 interviews whose results could lead to a wide-ranging and interesting overview of what the "community" of young people in Europe thinks about agriculture and the future of rural areas.

The new CAP reform, thanks to the "Young farmers package" (the introduction of additional payment under the first pillar and thematic sub-programmes under the second pillar), can accompany and encourage the generational change process, which is clearly and closely related to the growth of rural areas' attractiveness and to the agricultural sector as a whole.

Knowing or just come close to knowing, through this survey, young Europeans' perception of the rural world, will definitely help institutions, organizations, associations and rural development stakeholders to better understand where to invest their energies and resources and where to merge young people's decisive enthusiasm in Europe 2020.

In addition to this introduction and to conclusions, the document consists of three chapters: the methodology that has been used, some data on the survey participants, the analysis of results. The annexes include the questionnaire and the construction, correction and calculation method of a common database.

## 2. Survey methodology

The definition of the survey involved all the National Networks participating in this project and was carried out according to the following steps:

- Identifying the survey objectives;
- Identifying the survey methodology and target population;
- Defining the questionnaire.

The Italian National Rural Network proceeded then to establish an information collection system and to verify the data consistency, creating a common database and processing the data that were collected.

### 2.1 Survey objectives

The overall objective of this survey was to provide a picture on young people's perception of agriculture and rural areas. The questionnaire was therefore aimed at studying young Europeans propensity to carry out their life project in a rural area, their knowledge of the rural world and their links with it, their future wish to become a farmer. For this purpose, it has been essential to analyse topics such as the quality of life in rural areas, the main issues affecting life in these areas and affecting young people willing to become farmers and, in conclusion, young people's future perceptions.

### 2.2 The type of survey and the target population

No specific budget was allocated for carrying out this project that could only rely on the activities carried out by the Member states participating in the initiative.

The first step consisted of identifying the survey tool and an Excel worksheet for the data collection. All the 9 Countries, including Italy, participated in this phase.

The target population consisted of students in their last two years of high school and first-year university students.

As for the way this survey was delivered, due to the fact that no specific budget was allocated, students were asked to self-complete the questionnaire using a hard copy or, in the case of Latvia, softcopies. Although this system allowed survey results to be received in real time, Latvia could not be included in the overall database since the Italian NRN

dealing with the processing of such data was provided with overall results instead of micro-data (see Annex 2).

Three Italian Universities were involved in this survey thanks to the cooperation of the Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture and the Coordinator of four High Schools for Agricultural Science. The questionnaires were completed by the students involved and the data entered in the worksheet agreed. The Italian schools and universities participating in this survey are the following:

- Faculty of Agricultural Science of the Universities of Campobasso and Perugia;
- Faculty of Economics and Business of the University of Urbino;
- Agricultural College “G. Ferraris” of Palmi;
- Agricultural College “A. Ciuffelli” of Todi;
- Agricultural College “Emilio Sereni” of Rome;
- Agricultural College of Riccia (Campobasso).

In addition, thanks to the activity of OIGA, during some of the information seminars carried out in 2012, nearly forty questionnaires were delivered and collected.

### 2.3 The questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of four sections (see Annex 1):

- I. The first section focuses on young people’s relationship with agriculture and rural areas: how this areas are perceived and defined (Ques. 1 and 2); how farming is considered in relation to rural areas (Ques. 3). Further questions try to understand respondents’ direct relationship with rural areas: where do you live? (Ques. 4), how often and why do you visit these areas (Ques. 4.1 and 4.2); what are the reasons driving people they know to live in rural areas.
- II. The second section focuses on young people’s perception of the quality of life in rural areas, identified on a scale of 1-10 (Ques. 5); how big should be the ideal place to live in (Ques. 6) and how young people would rate, on a scale of 1-10, the quality of life in rural areas compared to urban centers (Ques. 7). Which services are considered inadequate by those living in rural areas (Ques. 7.1) and which recreational facilities are considered particularly important to make rural areas more attractive to young people (Ques. 8).



- III. The third section focuses on young people's propensity to live and carry out a life or work project in rural areas, being it linked to any working activity (Ques. 9) or to farm management (Ques. 11). Students are also asked whether there any farmers in their family (Ques. 10). The last part of this section tries to understand difficulties (Ques. 12) and advantages (Ques. 13) of starting an agricultural business, what the most attractive sector (Ques. 14) and which the most strategic activities (e.g. processing practices, agritourism, direct sale, etc.) or production practices to carry out (Ques. 15).
- IV. The last section of the questionnaire focuses on young people's future perspectives on rural areas (Ques. 16) and farms (Ques. 17). In conclusion, students are asked to identify which are the policies they would suggest aimed at the development of agriculture and other rural businesses (Ques. 18).

The questionnaire includes one last section to be filled with the students' personal data: age, sex, Country of origin (region and city for Italian respondents only) and type of school / university attended.

### 3. The survey participants

A total of 1.563 interviews were carried out (their distribution per Country is shown in Table 3.1). In addition to the “Total” referring to the total number of respondents, a “Total\*” referring to the sum of weighted results was considered in a way that all Countries are given equal weight.

*Tab. 3.1 No. interviews by Country*

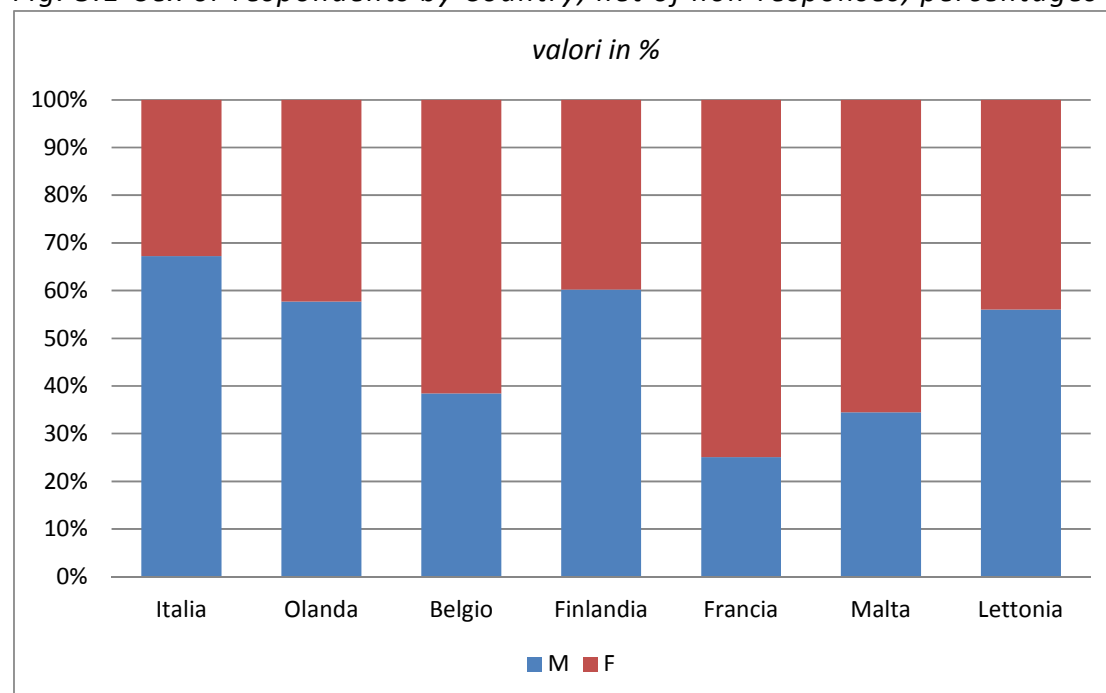
MS	No. interviews %	
Italy	623	39,9%
Latvia	273	17,5%
France	255	16,3%
Poland	203	13,0%
Finland	102	6,5%
Belgium	52	3,3%
Malta	29	1,9%
Netherland	26	1,7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.563</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

*Source: National Rural Network – Italy DB on data provided by the eight MS*

With regard to the sex of the respondents, Poland did not collect such data; in the other Countries the majority of respondents were male (53%), 44% were female and a 3% did not provide this information<sup>3</sup>. There is a prevalence of female respondents on the total in France, Malta and Belgium, in the rest of the Countries the converse is true.

<sup>3</sup> 5% of the Italian male respondents and 9% of the Finnish ones did not provide information on their sex.

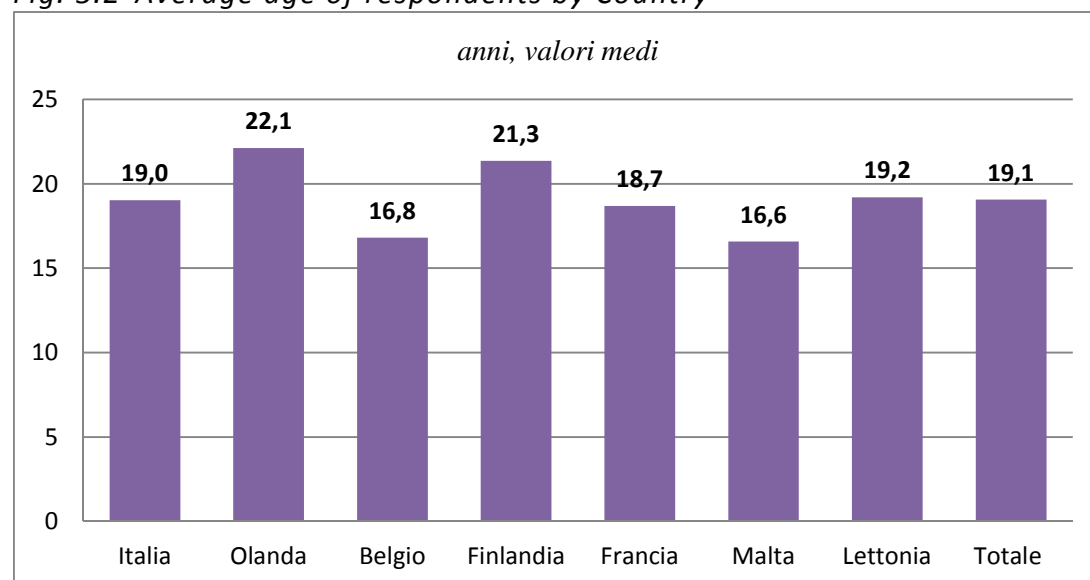
*Fig. 3.1 Sex of respondents by Country, net of non-responses, percentages*



*Source: National Rural Network - Italy processing on data provided by the eight MS*

The average age of respondents is 19 years<sup>4</sup>, this value does not include Poland, which did not collect this information. The range of variation in the average age is 5.5 years; the average age shifts from less than 17 years in Malta and Belgium to a little more than 22 years in Netherlands.

*Fig. 3.2 Average age of respondents by Country*

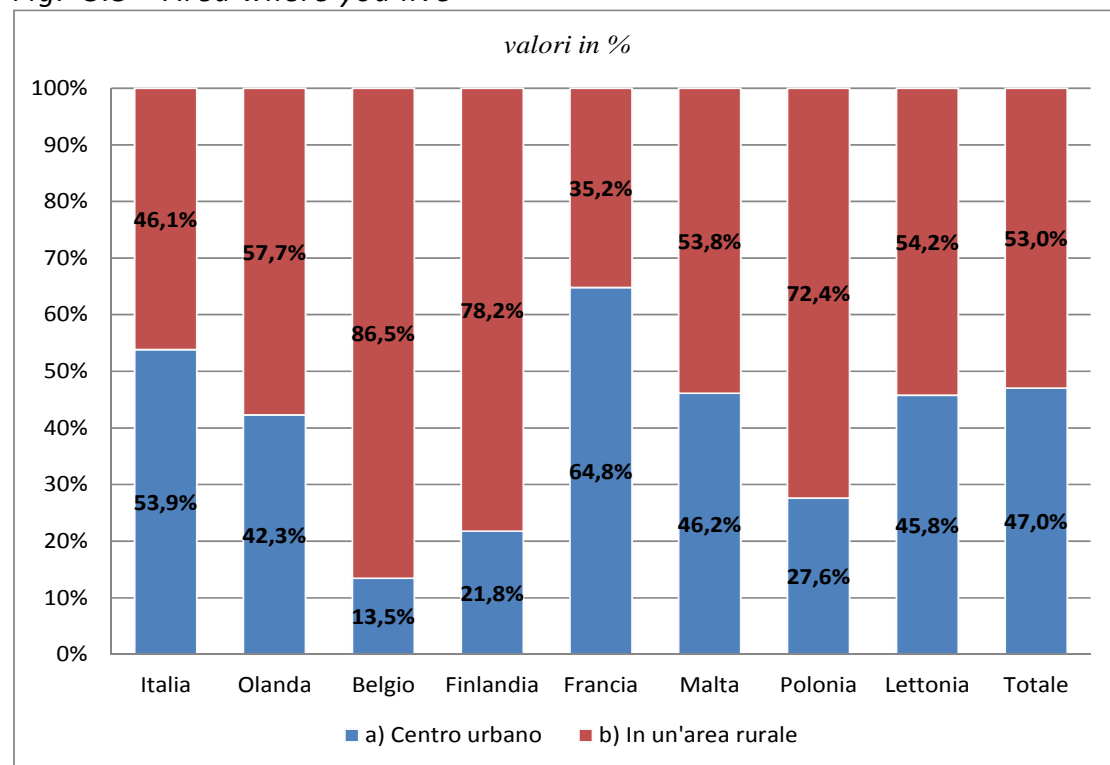


*Source: National Rural Network - Italy processing on data provided by the eight MS*

<sup>4</sup> See Annex 2 for the calculation method. There are no significant differences when examining the age of all respondents disaggregated by gender or by place where the young respondents live (rural or urban area).

The analysis of the type of area where young respondents live shows, net of non-responses (0.4% of the total), a nearly fair distribution between those living in a rural area (53%) and who lives in urban centers (47%). While in Belgium, Finland and Poland there is a high prevalence of people living in rural areas (more than 70%), in France the converse is true (see Fig. 3.3).

*Fig. 3.3 Area where you live*



*Source: National Rural Network - Italy processing on data provided by the eight MS*

## 4. Results<sup>5</sup>

While processing this data, it was necessary to carry out the harmonization of results sent by the eight MS and to choosing how to deal with missing and incomplete answers or those answers that were not completed according to instructions. Decisions on databases corrections and on data usage and analysis are described in Annex 2.

### 4.1 Young people's relationships with agriculture and rural areas

Nearly one third of young respondents<sup>6</sup> think of rural areas as “a place characterized by the equilibrium between man and nature” and a little less than one third as “a place where it would be nice to live in”<sup>7</sup>.

The analysis of results by Country<sup>8</sup> shows that the answer:

- “a place characterized by the equilibrium between man and nature” prevails in Italy, Netherlands, Belgium and Latvia;
- “a place where it would be nice to live in” prevails in Finland, Malta and Poland.

While processing this data by place where young respondents live, the analysis reveals that the more young people know about and live in rural areas the more they love them. The opinion that rural areas are a place where it would be nice to live in belongs, most of all, to those who live there (+16 percentage points). On the other hand, those living in urban centers think that rural areas are “a place too isolated for families or young people to live in” (this difference can be particularly noted in Italy, Netherlands and Malta) and “a place where it is hard to build relationships and whose community is closed”.

Young people living in urban centers tend to have more prejudices, while those living in a rural area think it is “a place where it would be nice to live in” and “a place where people's relationships are easier and sincere” (see Fig. 4.1).

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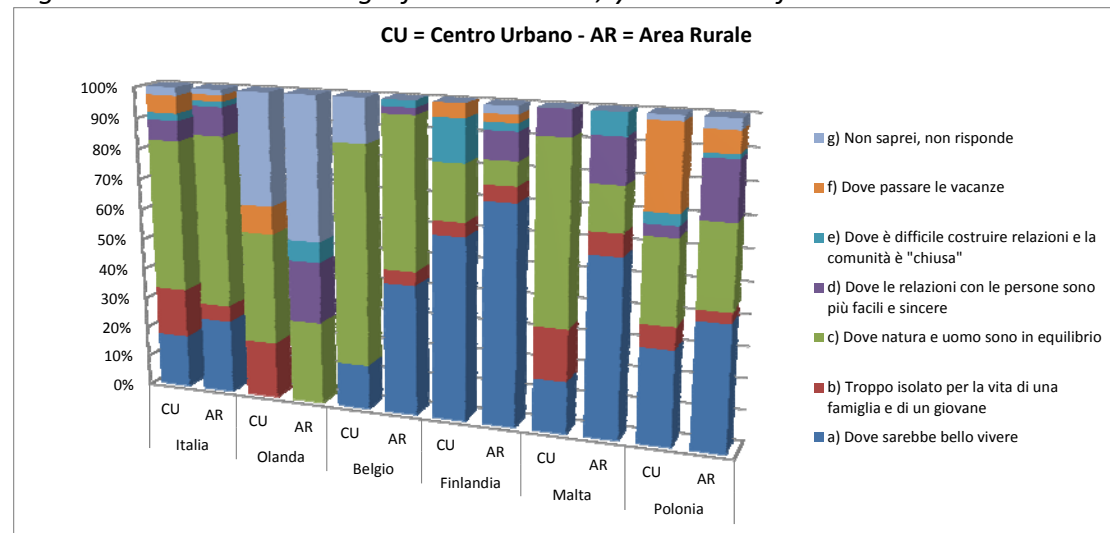
<sup>5</sup> See Annex 2 for the definition of Total and Total\*.

<sup>6</sup> 40% of the Total and 34% of the Total\* (See Annex 2 for definition of Total\*).

<sup>7</sup> 28% of the Total and 32% of the Total\* (See Annex 2 for definition of Total\*).

<sup>8</sup> Results sent by France could not be included: French students provided multiple answers where only one was allowed, this was most likely due to a mistranslation of the question completion instructions. Also in France, however, the two prevailing answers are the same as in the other Countries: “a place where it would be nice to live in” for 33% of respondents and “a place where nature and man are in equilibrium” for 22% of respondents.

Fig. 4.1 When thinking of a rural area, you think of...



Source: National Rural Network - Italy processing on data provided by the eight MS

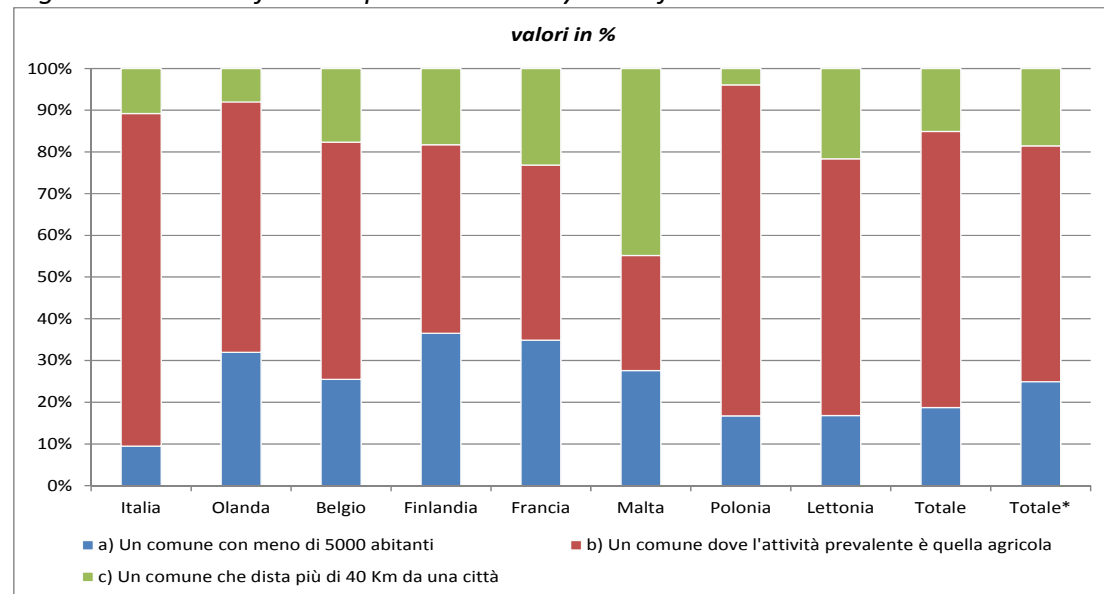
Rural areas' isolation and difficulties in terms of loss of autonomy and consequent work-life balance issues represent female respondents' most evident disadvantages; the overall percentage of those who believe rural areas are "a place too isolated for families or young people to live in" is 13% of female respondents compared to 9% of male respondents<sup>9</sup>.

Most of young people<sup>10</sup> define "rural" a place where the main activity being carried out is the agricultural activity (see Fig. 4.2), regardless of whether they live in urban or rural areas: this share reaches 80% in Italy and 79% in Poland. In other Countries such as France, Finland, Netherlands, Malta and Belgium, more than 20% of respondents define "rural" a place with less than 5000 inhabitants; in Malta young people define "rural" a place that is more than 40 Km far from the urban center.

<sup>9</sup> In Italy this gap nearly doubles, reaching 7 percentage points.

<sup>10</sup> 66% of all the respondents (56% of the corrected total) think of rural areas as "a place where the main activity being carried out is the agricultural activity".

Fig. 4.2 Which of these places would you define as “rural”?



Source: National Rural Network - Italy processing on data provided by the eight MS

The role of agriculture in maintaining rural areas is considered essential by 35% of respondents. This key role is mostly recognized by young people living in urban areas (42% versus 28% of those living in rural areas)<sup>11</sup>. An analysis of data by gender shows that more than one third of both sexes believe that one key activity in rural areas is agriculture.

Who lives in rural areas is more confident in the growth prospects of this sector: they think it plays an important and ever-growing role (36% of young people living in rural areas compared to 17% living in urban centers), while the opinion that this sector plays an important but declining role mostly belongs to those living in urban areas (36% compared to 30% of those living in rural areas) and to female respondents (41% versus 37% of male respondents) that do not think much of agriculture as their possible job horizon. On this last point, however, significant differences at MS level should be highlighted: in France and Belgium more than half of the respondents consider agriculture a declining sector, while the Italian, Dutch, Finnish and Maltese female respondents mostly think this sector plays an essential role.

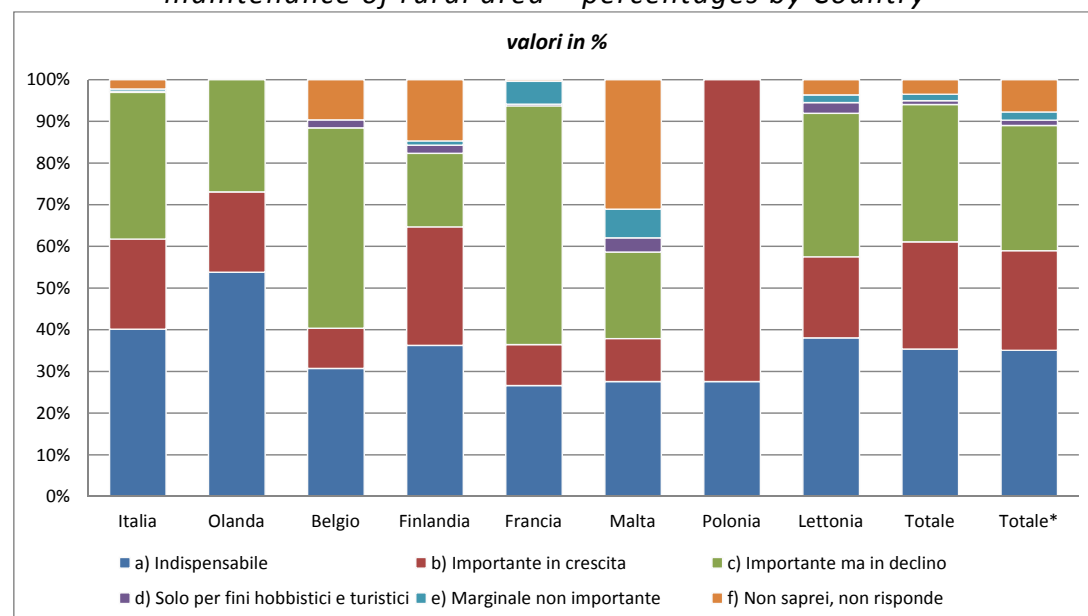
Looking at the response with the highest frequency by Country, the maintenance of rural areas is considered:

- ✓ “essential” in Netherlands (54%), Italy (40%), Latvia (38%) and Finland (36%);
- ✓ “important and ever-growing” in Poland (72%);

<sup>11</sup> Looking at the corrected totals, this difference is slightly reduced: 44% versus 32%.

- ✓ “important but declining” in France (57%) and Belgium (48%);
- ✓ while in Malta “don’t know” answers prevailed (31%).

**Fig. 4.3** *What do you think the role played by agriculture is in the maintenance of rural area – percentages by Country*



Source: National Rural Network - Italy processing on data provided by the eight MS

The survey was mainly conducted on young people living in rural areas (53% of the total), except for France where it was mainly conducted on young people living in urban areas (65%).

How much do young people living in urban centers know about rural areas? And how frequently do they visit these areas? More than half of young people living in urban centers visit rural areas at least once a month (68%), especially those from Belgium, Netherlands and France (see Fig. 4.4).

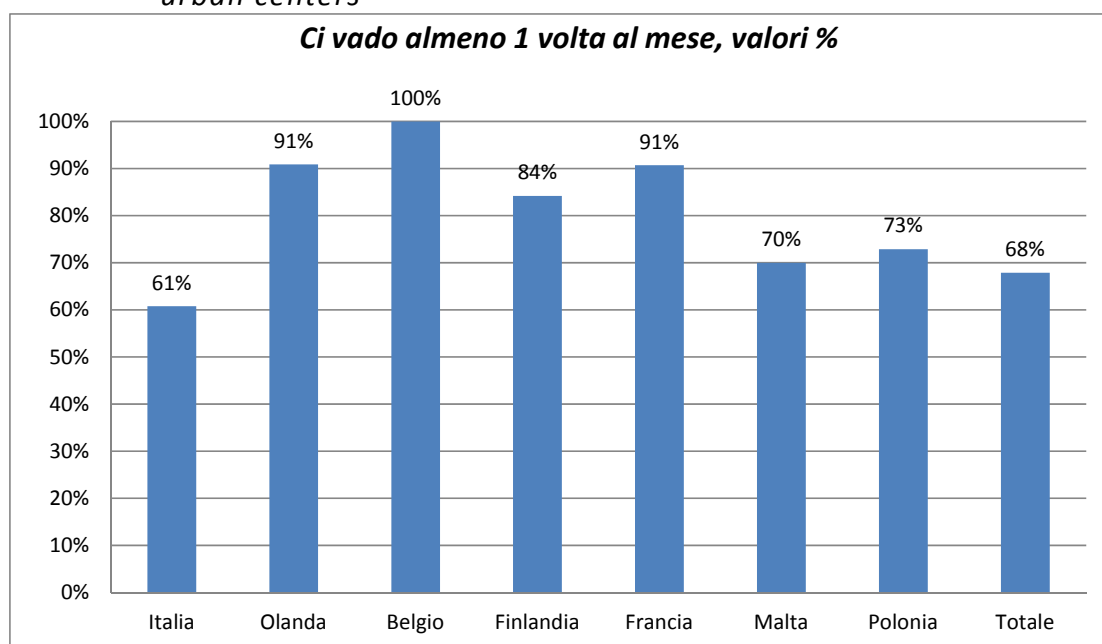
It is estimated that<sup>12</sup> young people living in urban centers visit rural areas, on average, almost one month a year (28 days); an analysis by Country reveals a large range of variation ranging from 45 days of French respondents to 24 days of Italian ones (see Fig. 4.4).

Are rural areas most visited by boys or girls? The estimate does not reveal significant differences (28 days for boys versus 27 for girls).

<sup>12</sup> See Annex 2 for the estimate calculation method.

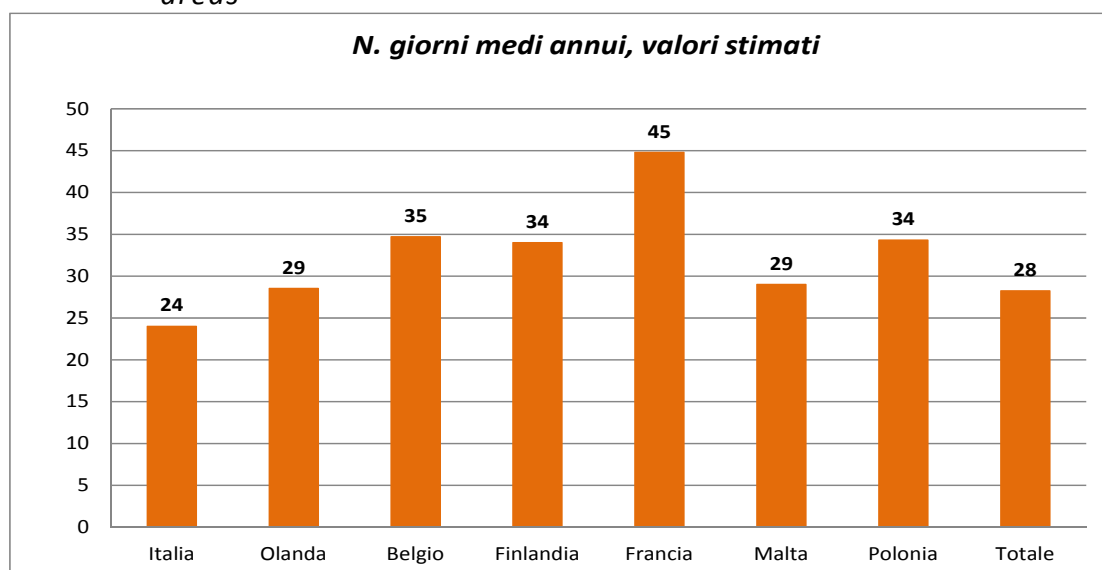


**Fig. 4.4** *How frequently are rural areas visited by young people living in urban centers*



Source: National Rural Network - Italy processing on data provided by the eight MS

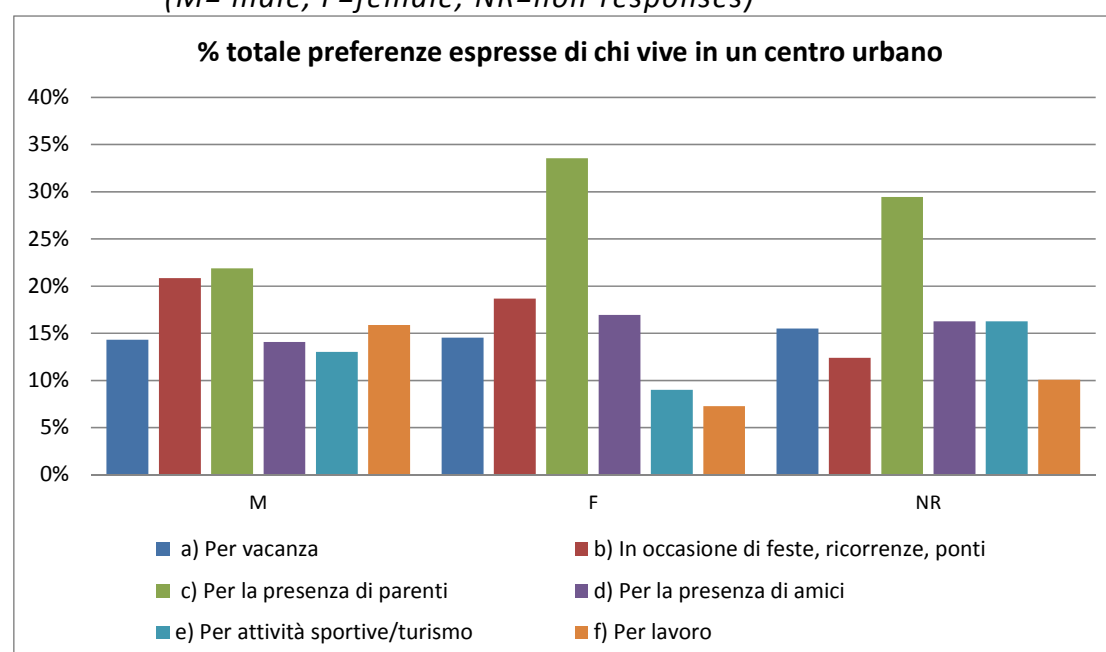
**Fig. 4.5** *Days/year that young people living in urban centers visit rural areas*



Source: National Rural Network - Italy processing on data provided by the eight MS

Young people living in urban centers mostly visit rural areas because of the presence of their relatives (27% of preferences, 34% of female respondents; see Fig. 4.6) or on special occasions, parties, long weekends (19%). The analysis of results by Country reveals completely different reasons why French young people visit rural areas: friends (33%) and holidays (21%) are the main factors attracting them.

**Fig. 4.6** Why do you choose to visit a rural area? Percentages by gender (M= male, F=female; NR=non-responses)



Source: National Rural Network - Italy processing on data provided by the eight MS

As for the reasons why young people's acquaintances live in a rural area, 38% of respondents did not answer to the question or did not know what reason to give; 39% of respondents think the reason is mostly related to a choice, while 20% to a "tradition". Interestingly, the response "from necessity" is given only by 4% of respondents, reaching 7% only in Latvia and Poland, where the agricultural production is much more important than in the other Countries.

## 4.2 Perception of quality of life in rural areas

In order to measure the perception of quality of life in rural areas, the following indicators were used:

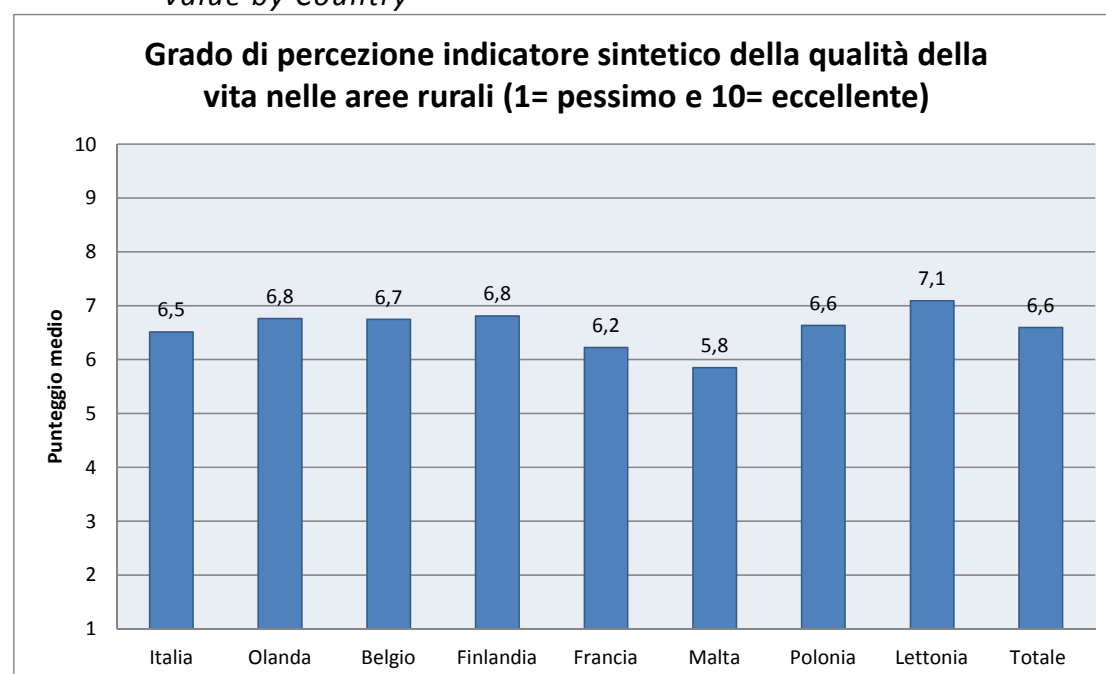
- a) The cost of living;
- b) Quietness/safety of the people and territory;
- c) Social life;
- d) The environment where children are growing;
- e) Closeness to nature;
- f) Low levels of pollution;
- g) No traffic;
- h) Road links and means of public transportation;
- i) Schools;
- j) Recreational and extra-curricular activities;

- k) Communication systems;
- l) Internet access.

Young respondents were asked to rate each indicator 1-10 where 1 means “very bad” and 10 “excellent”.

The decision taken was to calculate an overall indicator giving each one equal weight. In almost all the Countries, young people considered the quality of life in rural areas at least acceptable, except for Malta with a little less than 6 points out of 10 and Latvia with a little more than 7 points out of 10 (see Fig. 4.7).

*Fig. 4.7 The quality of life in rural areas; synthetic indicator average value by Country*



*Source: National Rural Network - Italy processing on data provided by the eight MS*

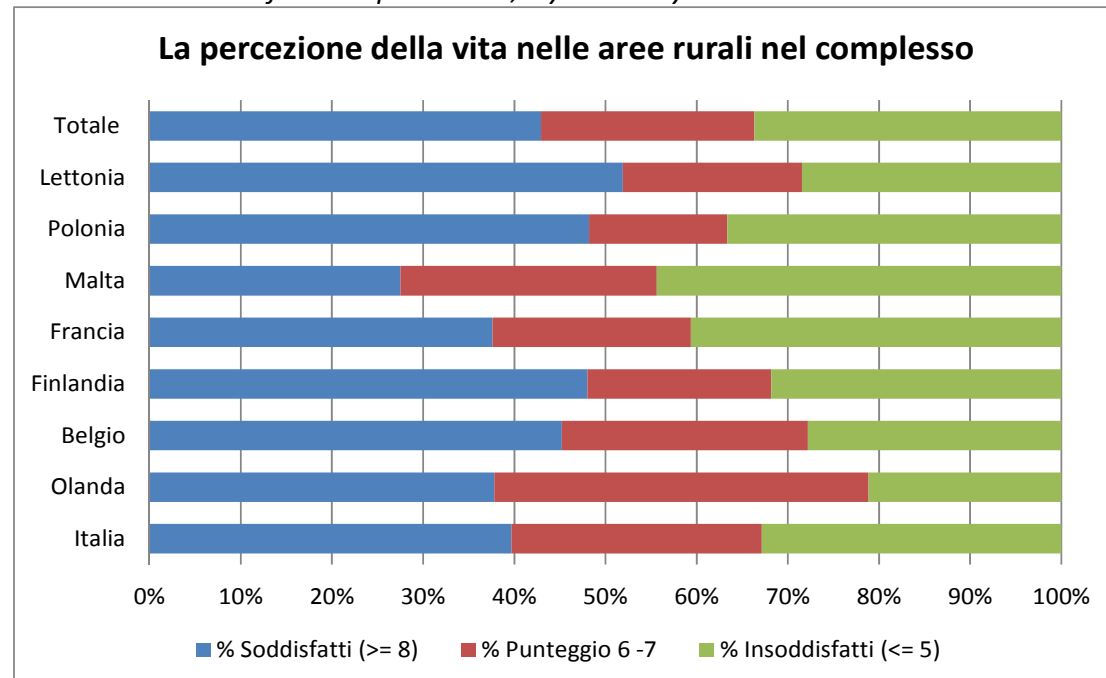
Interestingly, who lives in a rural area expresses a slightly more positive opinion of the quality of life (6.6 points out of 10) compared to those living in urban areas (6.4 points out of 10), if such perception is measured through the synthetic indicator.

43% of respondents have an excellent perception of rural areas<sup>13</sup>, in fact, this share corresponds to those who gave to the indicators considered on the whole a score of at least 8 points out of 10. The analysis of results by Country shows that young people from Latvia, Poland and Finland are those who best consider the quality of life in rural areas by giving a score of at least 8 points to all the indicators taken as a whole (see Fig. 4.8). A

<sup>13</sup> This share rises to 66% if all the “more than acceptable” opinions are considered

gender analysis of the synthetic indicator of quality of life in rural areas, does not reveal significant differences<sup>14</sup>.

*Fig. 4.8 The quality of life in rural areas: percentage of satisfied and unsatisfied respondents, by Country*

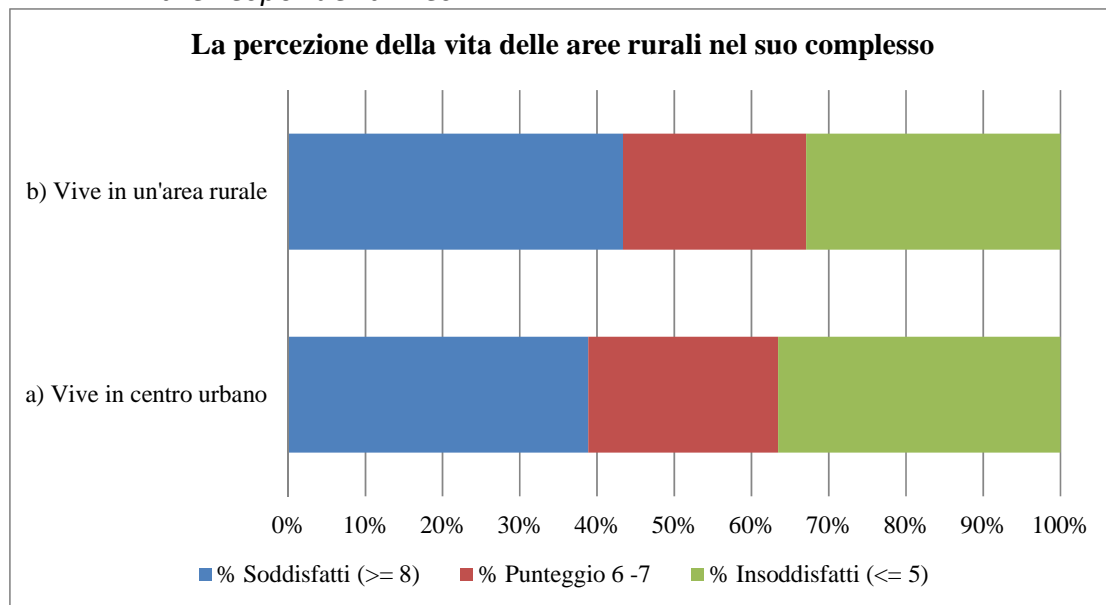


Source: National Rural Network - Italy processing on data provided by the eight MS

If one considers the area where the respondent lives, the above mentioned higher level of satisfaction of those living in rural areas is confirmed; the share of those whose perception is excellent belongs to male respondents living in rural areas: 43% compared to 39% of those living in urban centers (see Fig. 4.9).

<sup>14</sup> The overall indicator of rural areas perception level reaches 6.6 points for male respondents, and 6.4 points for female respondents.

**Fig. 4.9** *The quality of life in rural areas: average score by area where the respondent lives*



*Source: National Rural Network - Italy processing on data provided by the eight MS*

The analysis of the average results achieved by each indicator reveals that the closeness to nature is the factor that most of all affects positively the quality of life (on average, 8.9 points out of 10), followed by the environment where children grow (on average, 7.8 points out of 10) and by the quietness/safety of the people and territory (on average, 7.7 points out of 10). Interestingly, 85% of young people give to “closeness to nature” a score of at least 8 points out of 10 and this percentage reaches 63% in the case of “environment where children grow”. In almost all the Countries that took part in this survey, closeness to nature is the factor which is mainly considered positive; the only exception is Malta where the lack of traffic is first placed. The analysis of each indicator by gender does not reveal significant differences between male and female respondents; it can be noted that male respondents have a stronger positive perception due to two aspects: the low levels of pollution (+0.8 percentage points compared to female respondents) and the lack of traffic (+1.1 percentage points compared to female respondents).

The share of respondents on the total number of those who expressed to be very satisfied (score of at least 8 points out of 10) is higher than 50% also in relation to the indicators on low levels of pollution (62%, the highest percentage occurs in Italy with 72%) and lack of traffic (58%, the highest percentage occurs in Italy with 76%). Looking at those cases where the gender of respondents was expressed, the highest percentage of very satisfied respondents belongs to boys (62%) more than to girls (58%).

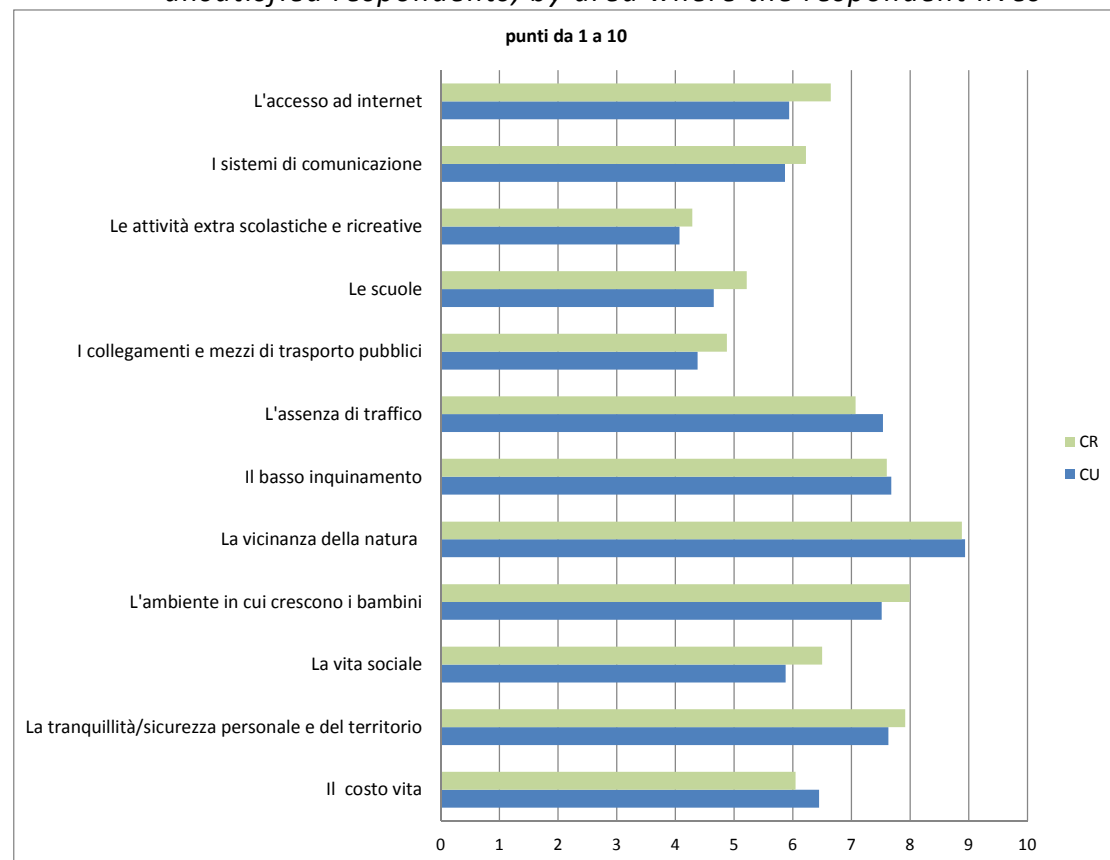
On the other hand, the factor that most of all affects negatively the overall score is related to the low level and / or quality offered by extra-curricular and recreational activities: young people give this indicator an average

score of 4.4 points out of 10, and together with “road links and means of public transportation” (on average 4.8 points out of 10) as well as “schools” (on average 5.2 points out of 10), they can be considered the only three inadequate factors. The percentage of respondents giving a score lower than 6 points out of 10 is: 68% in relation to the indicator on extra-curricular and recreational activities, 60% for road links and public transportation and 54% for schools.

Also in this case, an analysis by Country confirms that the most negative factor in almost all the Countries is related to extra-curricular and recreational activities, except for France and Malta where the most negative factors are road links and means of public transportation (on average 3.7 points out of 10) as well as schools (on average 4.3 points out of 10), respectively.

Young people living in urban areas express a more negative opinion on the quality of life in rural areas (on average, less than 6 points out of 10) due to a larger number of aspects (see Fig. 4.10).

*Fig. 4.10 The quality of life in rural areas: share of satisfied and unsatisfied respondents, by area where the respondent lives*



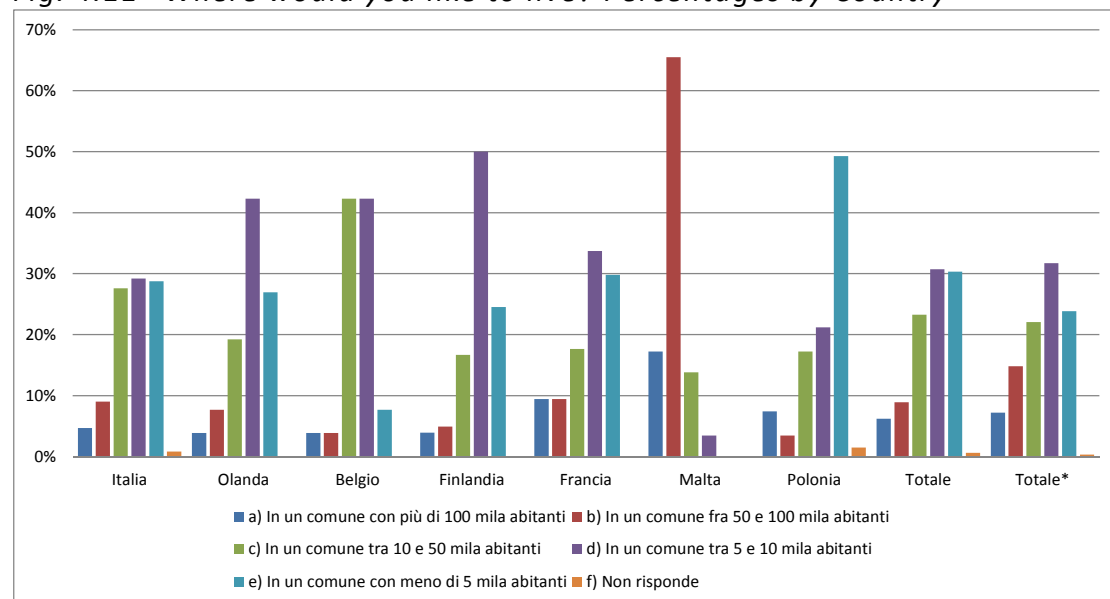
Source: National Rural Network - Italy processing on data provided by the eight MS

Who lives in urban areas considers inadequate, even if not that much, the following aspects: social life, communication systems and the Internet access. The perception on the three aspects of quality of life (extra-curricular and recreational activities; road links and public transport; schools) that have been judged negatively by both male and female respondents is not acceptable and also worse among those who live in urban centers than among those living in the rural areas.

Young respondents think the ideal place to live in is a municipality with less than 10,000 inhabitants (61% of the total, decreasing to 56% if considering the weighted total; see Fig. 4.11)<sup>15</sup>. With the exception of Malta, where the majority of respondents prefer to live in a municipality with more than 50,000 inhabitants, in all the other Countries the majority of young people choose a town with less than 10,000 inhabitants.

Young people living in rural areas prefer to live in small towns more than those living in urban areas, confirming the link between knowledge and appreciation of the rural world (+14 percentage points with respect to town with less than 5,000 inhabitants).

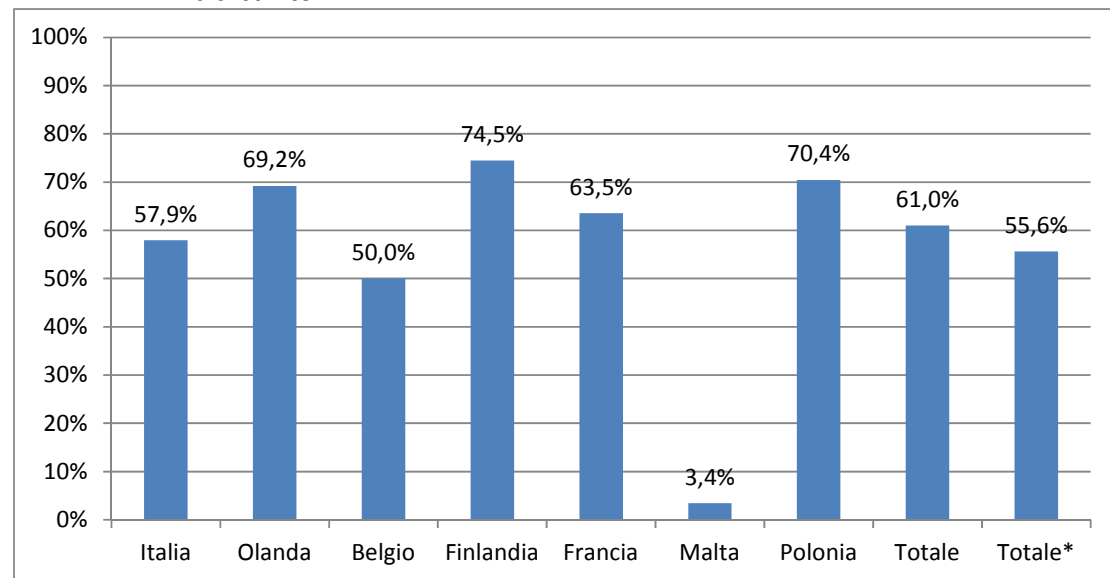
*Fig. 4.11 Where would you like to live? Percentages by Country*



Source: National Rural Network - Italy processing on data provided by the eight MS

<sup>15</sup> As for the size of the ideal place to live in, there are no gender differences.

*Fig. 4.12 The ideal place to live in is a municipality of less than 10,000 inhabitants*



Source: National Rural Network - Italy processing on data provided by the eight MS.

Being 6 the rate given to the quality of urban life, young people were asked to assess the quality of life in rural areas. The overall results show that young people think that living in rural areas is better than living in urban centers (average score of 7.2 points out of 10, more than 53% of respondents give at least a score equal to 8 points out of 10). This is what young respondents from all the Countries think (see Fig. 4.13)<sup>16</sup>, regardless of gender (7.7 points for male respondents and 7.3 points out of 10 for female respondents).

However, there is a 19% of young people who think that living in rural areas is worse than living in urban centers, giving a score below 6 points out of 10; it is in Poland and Malta where this percentage is higher (38%)<sup>17</sup>.

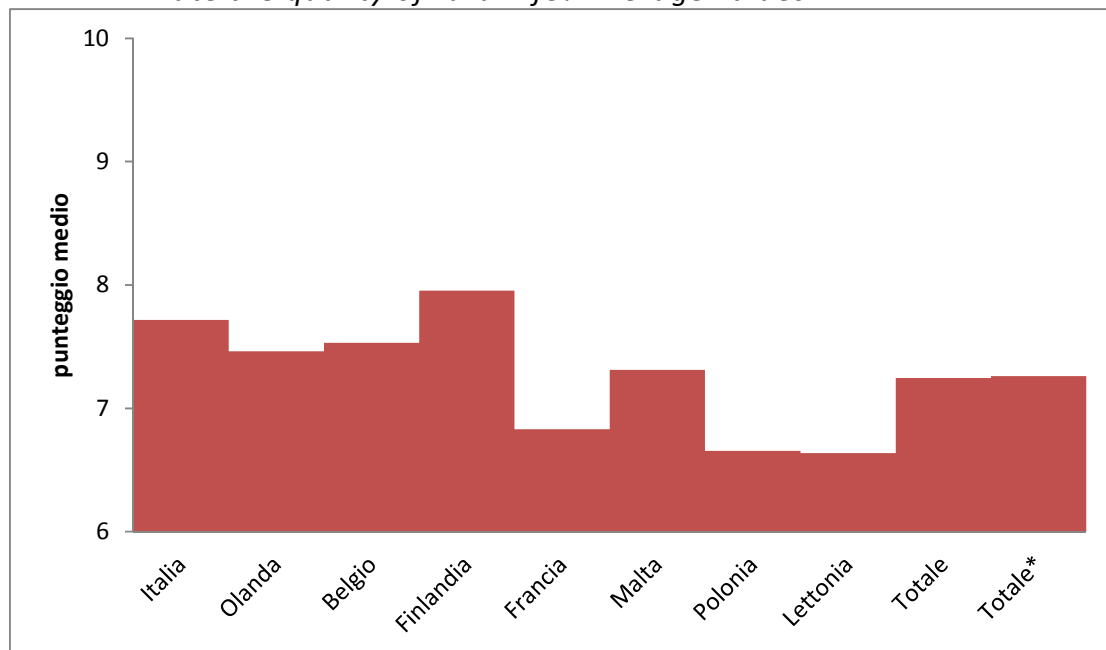
The analysis of results by place where the respondent lives shows, also in this case, a greater appreciation by young people living in rural areas compared to those who live in urban centers (7.7 points compared to 7.1 points out of 10, respectively).

<sup>16</sup> Young people from Finland and Italy are those giving the highest average score to the quality of life in rural areas: 8.0 and 7.7 points out of 10, respectively.

<sup>17</sup> A gender analysis of the results shows that 17% of girls and 11% of boys would prefer to live in urban centres; much higher is the share of those who did not indicate gender (29%). Please note that for some of the countries we do not have any gender indication; in this regard, young people from Poland and Latvia wish more than the others to live in urban areas (38% and 24% respectively give a score lower than 6 points out of 10).



*Fig. 4.13 If 6 is the rate given to the quality of urban life, how would you rate the quality of rural life? Average values*



Source: National Rural Network - Italy processing on data provided by the eight MS

Despite their positive opinion, young people living in rural areas are critical about some of the public services available to these areas. On average, each respondent considers inadequate 4 different types of public services.

According to young respondents' opinion, the most inadequate services are: recreational and meeting places (cinemas, pubs, gym centers, discos, etc. (58% of young people's preferences, net of non-responses, are related to extra-curricular and recreational activities); hospital care and health services (57%); public transportation (49%); high school / university (44%).

As for the services that young people tend to consider highly inadequate, differences by gender and Country need to be underlined (see Fig. 4.14). The percentage of preferences shows that:

- ✓ Extra-curricular and recreational activities represent the first critical factor in Netherlands (23%), Latvia (15%), Italy (22%; at the same level there is public transportation) and France (22%; at the same level there is high schools and universities);
- ✓ High schools and universities are at first place in Belgium (34%) and Malta (16%), while for young people from Poland the most critical aspect is related to hospital care and health services (20%);
- ✓ Female respondents think the most inadequate service provided in rural areas is related to high schools and universities (16%); for male respondents it is related to extra-curricular and

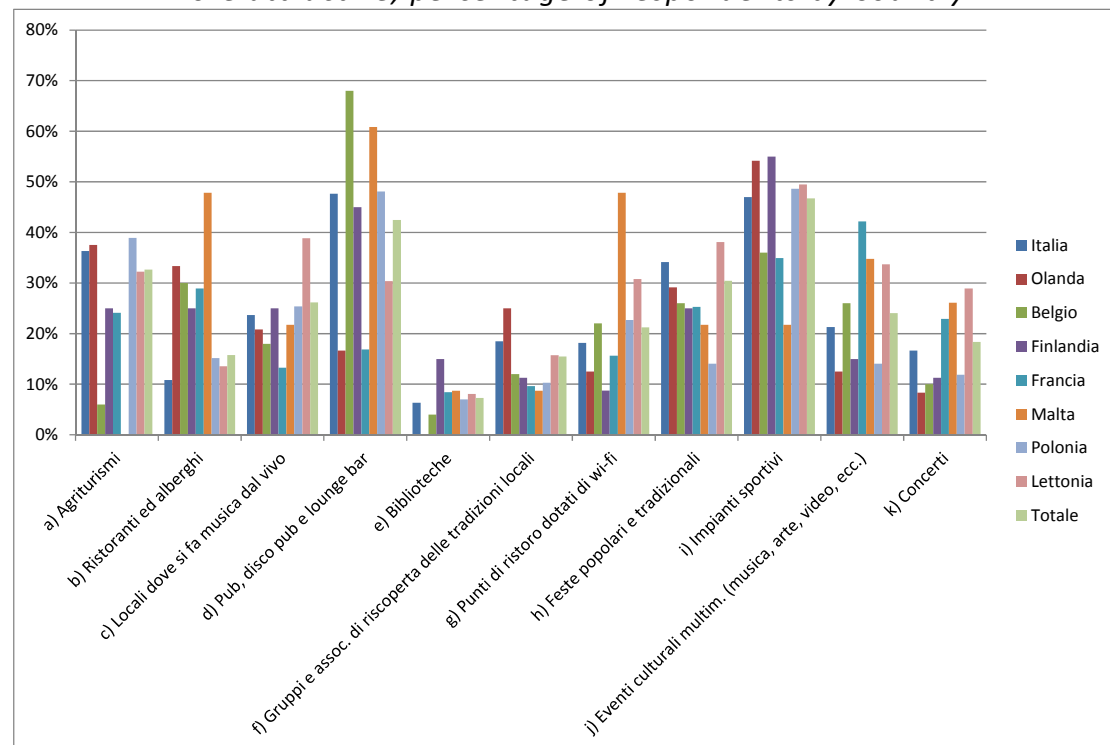
educational activities (18%); both of them think it is related to hospital care and health services.

What kind of recreational facilities would be considered more important by young respondents in order to make rural areas more attractive? According to young people, the most important factor is the presence of sporting facilities (47% of respondents); pubs, disco-pubs and lounge bars (42%); agritourisms (33%); traditional and popular festivals (30%) and live music places (26%).

An analysis of data by gender has revealed different level of perceptions: boys would focus more than girls on sporting facilities (49% of respondents, +9 percentage points compared to the girls), on pubs (46%, +2 percentage points) and on agritourisms (34%, +8 percentage points). Girls instead would focus more than boys on cultural aspects (libraries, cultural events, concerts) and traditions (popular festivals, groups to rediscover one's own territory).

In conclusion, with regard to the place where the respondent lives, young people living in rural areas consider of particular importance, more than who lives in urban centers, the presence of meeting places such as pubs, disco pubs and lounge bar (+3 percentage points) live music places (+2 percentage points) and as sporting facilities (+1 percentage point).

*Fig. 4.14 The most important recreational facilities to make rural areas more attractive, percentage of respondents by Country*

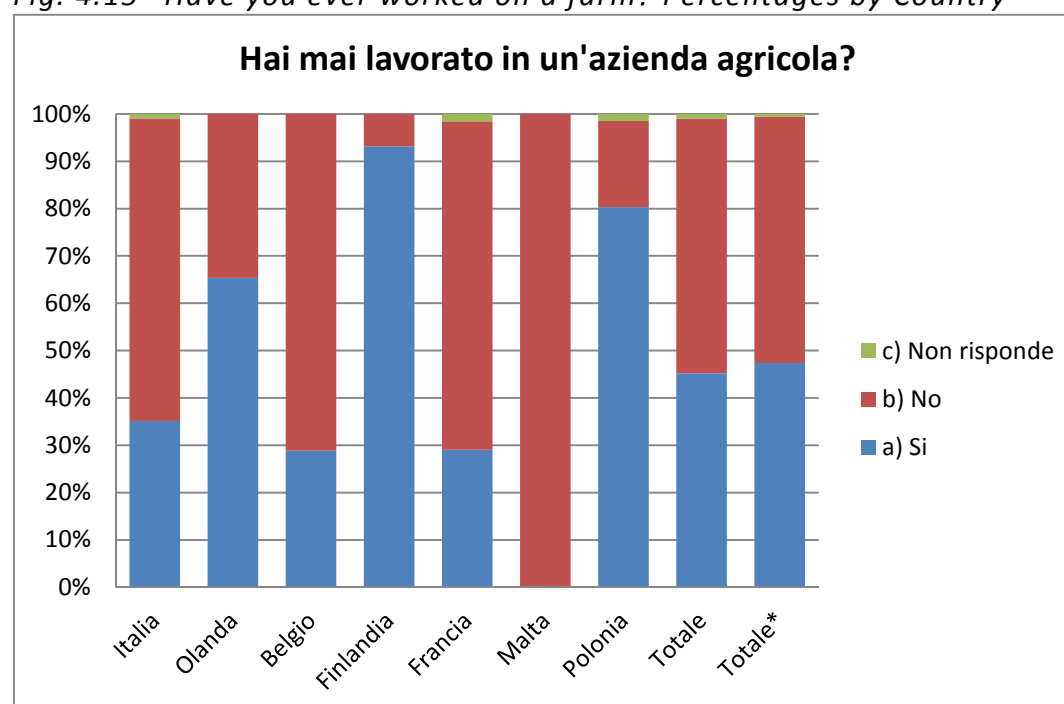


Source: National Rural Network - Italy processing on data provided by the eight MS

### 4.3 Employment: willingness and difficulties of carrying out a work activity in a rural area and starting an agricultural business

More than 60%<sup>18</sup> of respondents have considered the idea of carrying out a work activity in a rural area. Less than half of young respondents (45%<sup>19</sup>) would like to become a farmer; these percentages increase significantly if taking into account young people living in rural areas (compared to those who live in urban areas, +8 percentage points with respect to their propensity to start their work activity in a rural area and +21 percentage points with respect to their propensity to become a farmer). The majority of respondents (54%), however, have never worked on a farm<sup>20</sup>; this situation is turning round if one takes into consideration those who live in rural areas: in this case 58% of respondents have had at least one work experience on a farm.

Fig. 4.15 Have you ever worked on a farm? Percentages by Country



Source: National Rural Network - Italy processing on data provided by the eight MS

The analysis of disaggregated results by Country and gender shows that:

- ✓ The male respondents' propensity to carry out a work activity in a rural area is greater than female respondents (71% versus 61%); as well as greater is their experience in this sector (50% versus 25%) and their propensity to become a farmer (60% versus 27%); the gender gap increases if one considers their current work experience

<sup>18</sup> 68% of respondents and 61% of the total\*.

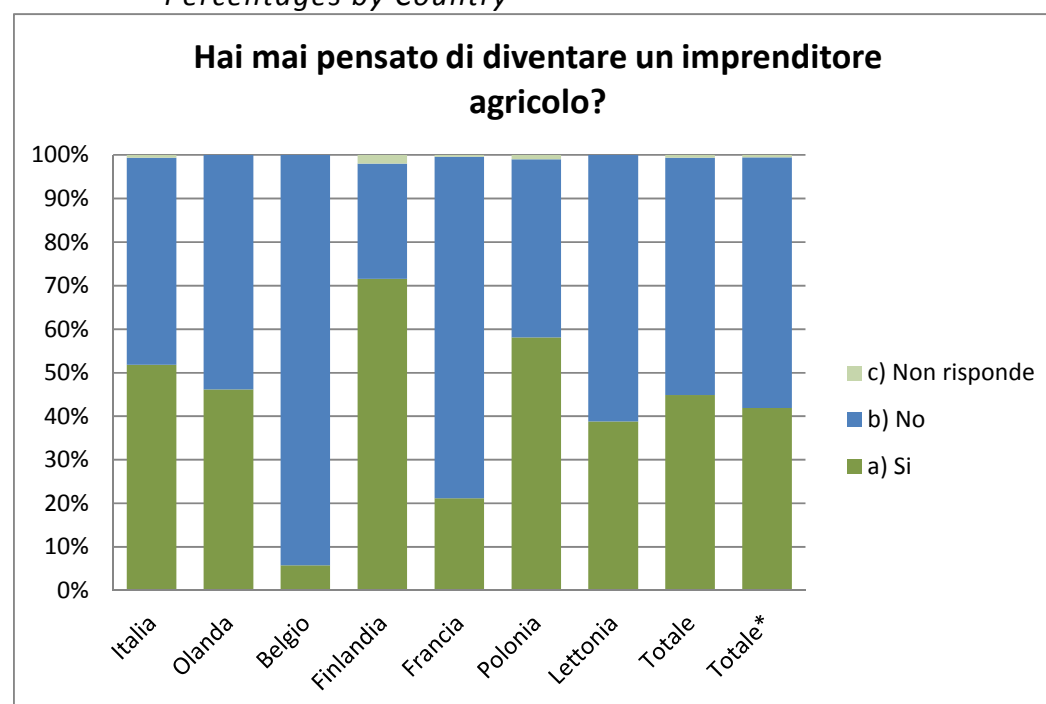
<sup>19</sup> 42% of the total\*.

<sup>20</sup> This question was not included in the questionnaire of Latvia.

compared to the work experience they wish for their future, in all the countries with the exception of Netherlands;

- ✓ The Countries where young people's propensity to carry out a work activity in a rural area is lower than 60% are Belgium (35%) and Malta where none of the respondents want to work in these areas in the future, although it should be noted that the majority of the respondents did not answer this question; almost half of the boys (49%) and the majority of girls (73%) have no experience in the agricultural sector (see Fig. 4.15). The surprising lack of experience occurs in Italy where the major field of study of most of the high schools and universities involved in this project is agricultural related: 53% of boys and 84% of girls say they have never worked on a farm. The differences among the Member States involved are significant if one considers the share of those who have had at least one experience is prevailing in half of the Countries: Finland (93%), Poland (80%), Netherlands (65%) and Latvia (50%). It can be assumed that the work experience on the farm was perceived by the young Finnish respondents as positive because Finland seems to be the Country with the highest share of those who would like to become farm managers (72%); the same happens in Poland, with a share of 58%. Interestingly, in those Countries where young people have no experience in the agricultural sector, there is a lower propensity to become a farmer; the only exception is Italy where, although the share of young people with some experience in the field is lower than the average, the percentage of those who want to become farm managers is rather higher than the average of respondents. Taking into account the interviews carried out and the type of ongoing studies, it must be said that our Country is probably suffering from a lower propensity of young people to approach the working world, even though it is only referred to summertime or short periods, before the completion of their studies.

*Fig. 4.16 Have you ever considered to working as a farmer manager?  
Percentages by Country*



*Source: National Rural Network - Italy processing on data provided by the eight MS*

Most of the young respondents willing to carry out in a rural area a work activity other the agricultural one, as well as a job related to the processing and packaging of food, would like to find a job in the field of health and social care, related to professional, scientific and technical activities, in the field of tourist accommodation and food service and in the field of information and communication technology. Most of the young respondents want to carry out their work activity as self-employed managers (54%); girls are mostly willing to work as a salaried employee probably due to their fear of being not able to reconcile family life and work such as the agricultural work, highly time consuming. They are mostly young people living in rural areas that want to carry out a self-employed activity (+17 percentage points compared to those living in urban areas), being aware that these areas need young promoters of entrepreneurial and development activities.

One third of the respondents (33%) do not have any relatives working in the agricultural field, while 27% of respondents think their involvement in this sector is due to the former presence of their parents and the percentage rises to 39% if considering grandparents<sup>21</sup>.

As might be expected, the links between family and agriculture are stronger for those who live in rural areas: the share of young respondents living in these areas but not having parents, grandparents or relatives

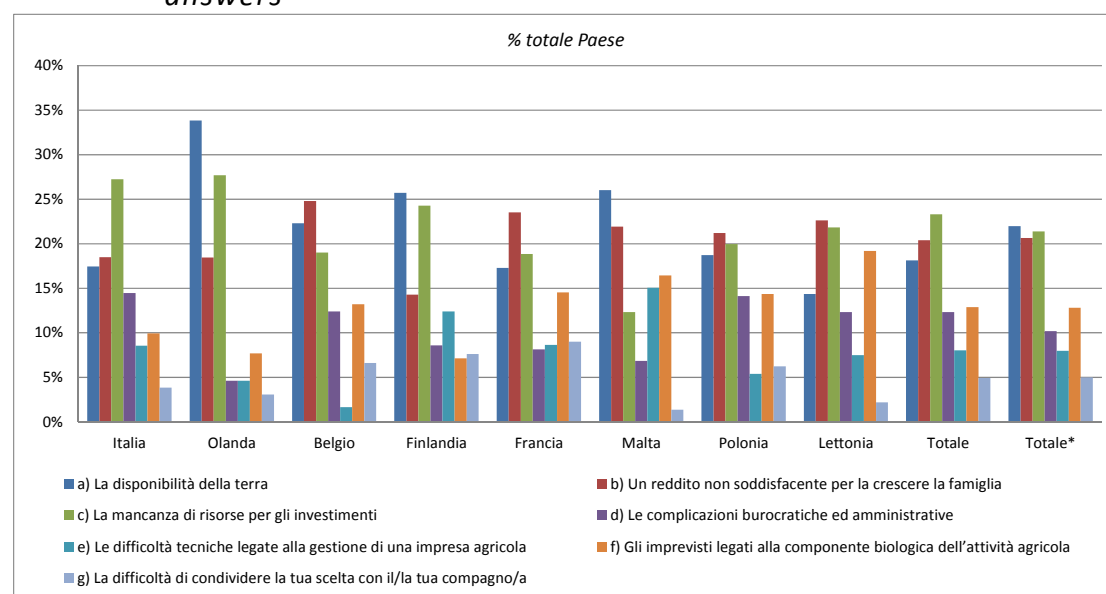
<sup>21</sup> This percentage does not include Latvia.

working in the agricultural sector reaches 21% compared to 36% of those living in urban areas.

Young people's main difficulties of starting an agricultural business are<sup>22</sup>: the lack of investments resources (57% of respondents, 23% of preferences; see Fig. 4.17), inadequate income to meet the family needs (50%, 20% of preferences) and land availability (44%, 18% of preferences).

An analysis by Country reveals the following three elements as the main difficulties of starting an agricultural business: while the lack of resources for investments is the main limiting factor for young people in Italy (66% of respondents), land availability is the main difficulty for young people in Netherlands (85%), Malta (66%) and Finland (56%); inadequate income to meet the family needs is instead the main limiting element for new generations in France (67%), Belgium (58%), Latvia (53%) and Poland (51%). Although these elements are considered the most important limiting factors by all of the Countries, exception needs to be made for Latvia where the most important limiting factor for young people is linked to the agricultural activities' contingencies such as natural disasters, damages caused by pests, etc. A gender analysis of such results shows that it is the lack of resources for investment the main limiting factor for both male and female respondents, as well as for those living in urban or rural areas.

*Fig. 4.17 Main difficulties of starting an agricultural business – max 3 answers*



Source: National Rural Network - Italy processing on data provided by the eight MS

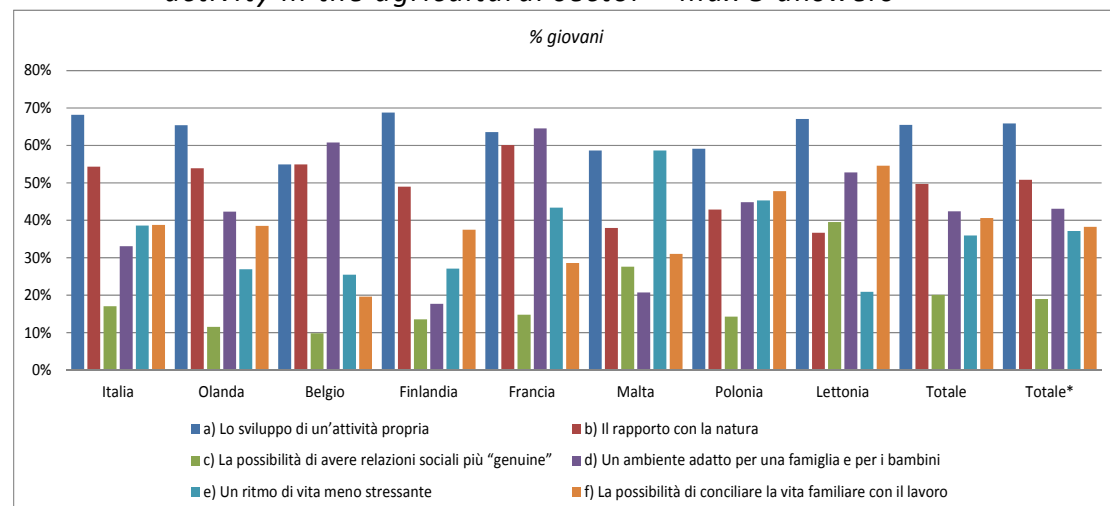
<sup>22</sup> Every young person identify, on average, 2.4 different difficulties related to starting an agricultural business.

The agricultural sector is appreciated because it allows you to start a business of your own (26%), to develop a relationship with nature (20%) and to work in an adequate environment for families and children (17%). The main positive expectation for all the young respondents of all the Countries involved is the link between agriculture and the opportunity to start one's own business, except for France and Belgium where this factor is at second position, while the main positive aspect is the adequate environment for families and children (see Fig. 4.18).

Female respondents mostly appreciate the opportunity to work in an adequate environment for families and children (+15 percentage points compared to male respondents) and the relationship with nature (+7 percentage points compared to male respondents).

Male respondents living in urban areas appreciate more than those living in rural areas the opportunity to develop a relationship with nature (+3 percentage points) along with a less stressful lifestyle (+2 percentage points), while it is less important for them the opportunity to reconcile work and family life (-3 percentage points), the adequate environment for families and children (-1 percentage point) and the opportunity to start a business of their own (-1 percentage point).

*Fig. 4.18 Positive expectations related to the carrying out of a work activity in the agricultural sector – max 3 answers*



Source: National Rural Network - Italy processing on data provided by the eight MS

The sectors young respondents would choose are the following:

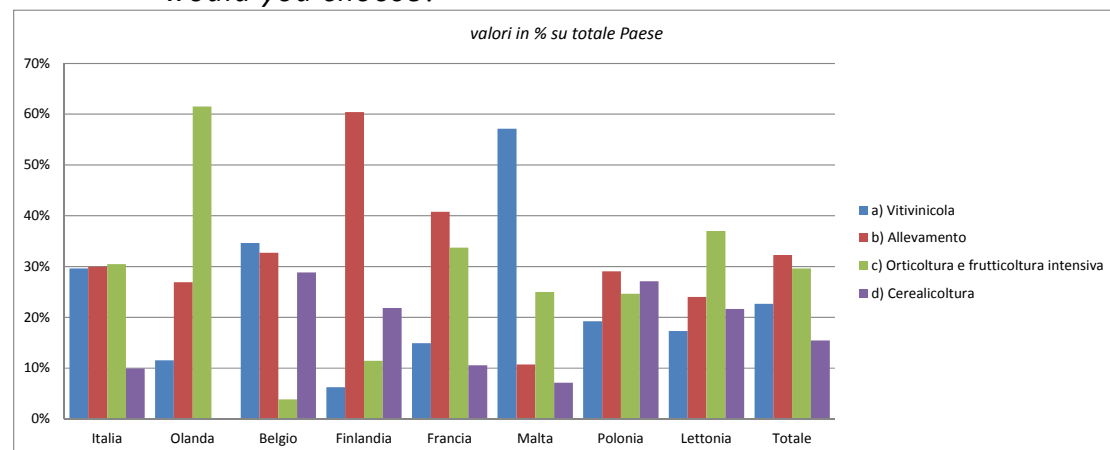
- First: stock-farming sector, which is the most favoured (32%);
- Second: intensive horticulture and fruit growing sector (30%);
- Third: wine sector (23%);
- Last: cereals sector, which is the less favoured (15%).

The wine sector as well as the horticulture and fruit growing sector are the most favoured for those who live in urban areas; who lives in rural areas, instead, prefer the stock-farming and cereals sectors.

An analysis of the distribution of preferences of young people by Country (see Fig. 4.19) reveals a clear preference for stock-farming sector by young respondents from Finland (60%), which is the same clear preference expressed by young people from Netherlands for horticulture and fruit growing sector (62%) and by young respondents from Malta for wine sector (57%). On the other hand, young respondents from Poland and Latvia would choose all four sectors; in the other Countries such as Italy and Belgium, preferences are fairly evenly distributed on three sectors out of four. In Italy, the less favoured sector is that of cereals (10%), while in Belgium that of horticulture and fruit growing (4%). Young people from France would mostly choose two sectors out of four (stock-farming and horticulture).

However, the most favoured sector, regardless of gender, is that of stock-farming, followed by that of wine and intensive horticulture and fruit growing which are at second place according to male and female respondents, respectively.

*Fig. 4.19 If starting an agricultural business, which of the following sector would you choose?*



Source: National Rural Network - Italy processing on data provided by the eight MS

In their decision to start an agricultural business, it would be important for young people the opportunity to carry out the following activity:

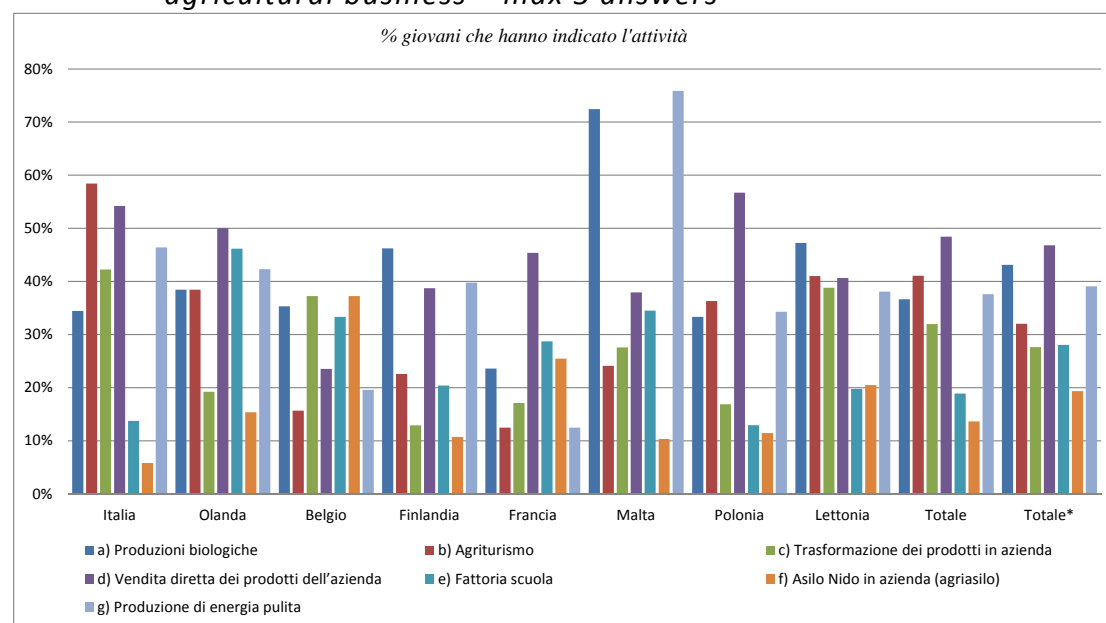
- Direct sale of farm products (48% of respondents): 57% of young respondents from Poland, 54% from Italy and 50% from Netherlands;
- A complementary activity such as the agritourism activity (41% of respondents): it is considered the most important activity by the



young Italian respondents and it is identified as a key action by 58% of respondents;

- Organic farming (37% of respondents, this percentage rises to 44%, being second in terms of importance if the total is weighted in a way that all Countries are given equal weight, regardless of the number of interviews that have been carried out; see Total\* in Fig. 4.20). Interestingly, the majority of young people from Malta (72%) consider particularly important to focus on organic farming;
- An analysis of results by gender shows that direct sale of farm products represent a priority activity for both genders, followed by organic farming and agritourism for female and male respondents, respectively;
- Young people living in rural areas would prefer more than those living in urban center the following activities: organic farming (+3 percentage points), direct sale (+1 percentage point) and green energy production (+1 percentage point); on the other hand, those who live in urban centers would more focus to develop their farm's multifunctionality (+3 percentage points for educational farm and + 2 percentage points for agritourism activity).

*Fig. 4.20 Activities considered to be important in the decision to start an agricultural business – max 3 answers*



Source: National Rural Network - Italy processing on data provided by the eight MS

#### 4.4 Future perspectives on rural areas

The last part of the questionnaire aims at identifying young people's perception on the future of rural areas.

How will rural areas be in the future? Young respondents were asked to express up to three answers on a priority scale<sup>23</sup>.

The analysis of results reveals a basically positive perception of the rural areas among young people (see Fig. 4.21): the most common opinion is that rural areas are considered a "place offering the opportunity of living far from the urban chaos and where to develop one's own life and work project "(31% of weighted preferences<sup>24</sup>). This response is the most important according to both male and female respondents living in both urban and rural areas and in all the Countries involved, except for Netherlands where young respondents consider rural areas a "a place where all distances with urban areas and markets will be shortened thanks to internet access and where investments will be profitable" (30% of preferences), thus highlighting the key role that digital innovation is now playing and would play in the future.

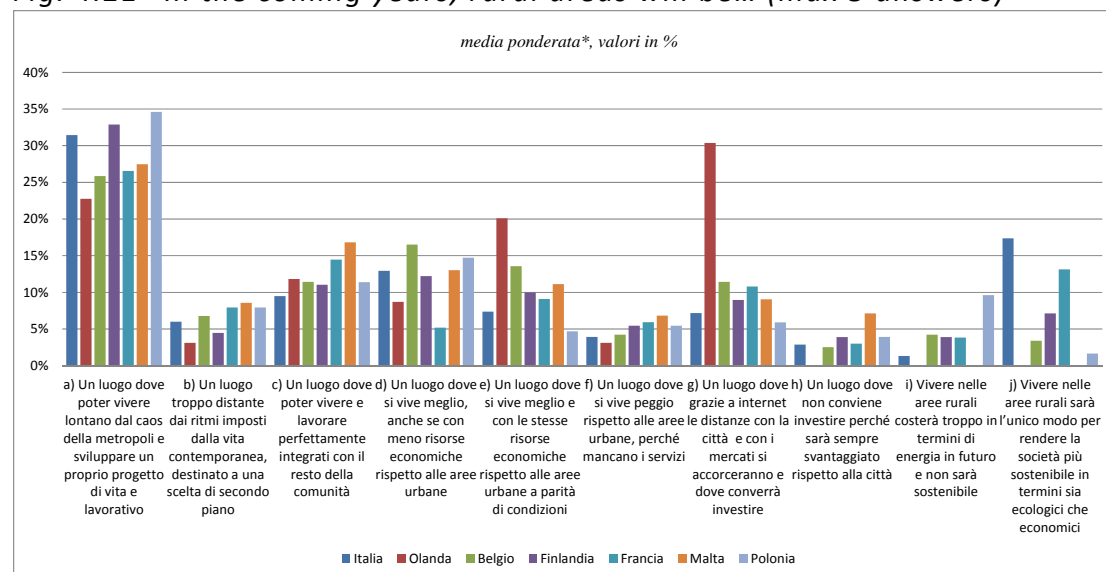
Young people (especially Italians) recognize to rural areas an important role in terms of environmental sustainability: 12% of weighted preferences consider that "rural living is the only way to make the society more sustainable in both ecological, economic and social aspects"; this is the second answer in terms of importance expressed by both male and female respondents.

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<sup>23</sup> Results from Latvia could not be included since aggregated and non-comparable data were provided (the average number of preferences per respondent is equal to 5).

<sup>24</sup> For details on the weighting and processing of data, see Annex 2.

**Fig. 4.21 In the coming years, rural areas will be... (max 3 answers)**

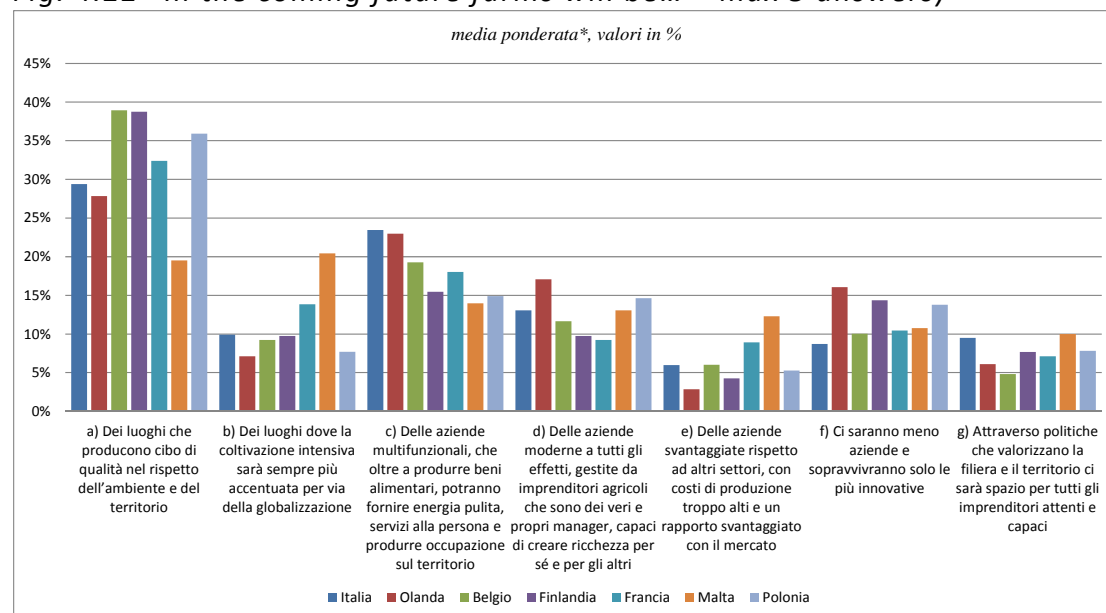


Source: National Rural Network - Italy processing on data provided by the eight MS.

A positive perception prevails among young people also on the future of farms: both male and female respondents living in both urban and rural areas consider farms as “places producing quality food while protecting the environment and territory” (see Fig. 4.22; this answer collects 32% of weighted preferences on the whole) and “places providing, besides food products, also green energy, services to people – nurseries, agritourisms, educational farms, direct sale of products – and employment opportunities” (20% of weighted preferences).

The farm manager is then recognized by young people, regardless of their place / Country of origin or their gender, as a producer of quality food through a socio-environmental and sustainable process, a role that is closely linked to the perception of a multifunctional agriculture providing rural areas with services and employment opportunities. Such perception belongs to young people from all the Countries, except for Malta where the answer collecting the largest number of preferences reveals a more negative perception on how farms will be in the coming future, that is “places that will be characterised by an increase in intensive farming due to globalization” (20% of weighted preferences).

Fig. 4.22 In the coming future farms will be... – max 3 answers)



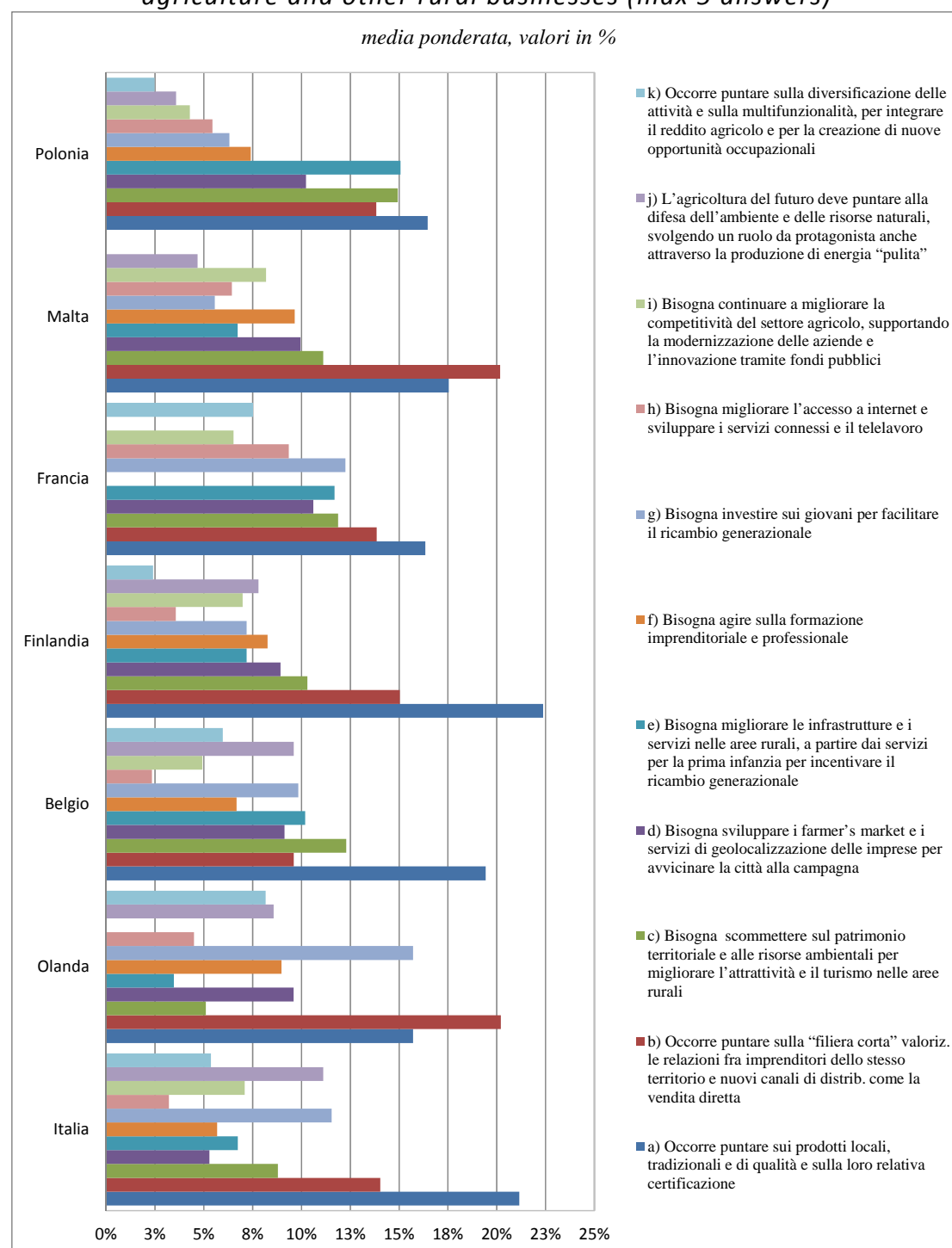
Source: National Rural Network - Italy processing on data provided by the eight MS.

Young people were asked to suggest the policies they would implement for the future of agriculture and other rural businesses. They were also asked to express up to five answers on a priority scale.

Their priority scale is as follow (see Fig. 4.23):

1. Focusing on local, traditional and quality products and related certification procedures (19% of weighted preferences); this policy collects the largest share of preferences by both male and female respondents living in both urban and rural areas and in all the Countries, except for Malta and Netherlands where, however, the frequency associated with this type of answer is at second position;
2. Focusing on the “short supply chain”, enhancing the relationship between managers of the same territory and new distribution channels such as direct sale (14% of weighted preferences; this percentage rises to 15% for those living in rural areas);
3. Investing on young people in order to enhance the generational change (11% of weighted preferences);
4. Focusing on territorial heritage and environmental resources to improve attractiveness and tourism in rural areas (11% of weighted preferences);
5. Improving rural areas infrastructures and services, starting from the provision of early childhood services (nurseries, schools) in order to enhance the generational change (9% of weighted preferences); this is mostly believed by those who live in urban areas (+2 percentage points compared to those living in rural areas).

**Fig. 4.23 Which policies would you suggest to implement for the future of agriculture and other rural businesses (max 5 answers)**



Source: National Rural Network - Italy processing on data provided by the eight MS

## 5. Conclusions

In recent years, the rural world has been affected by depopulation processes which is the reason why trying to understand young people's knowledge and perception of the rural areas is of strategic importance to better target public interventions and increase these areas' attractiveness.

Rural areas' future lies in the hands of young people who still have direct links with these areas and with agriculture thanks to their family relationships (72% of respondents). These young people are the same who joined this project by answering the survey questions.

In most cases, a strong tie of affection is what favors the choice of young Europeans surveyed – including those who live in urban centers – to visit rural areas on a regular basis and allows them to have a good knowledge of the rural world: 68% of European students are visiting rural areas on average at least once a month, with a total stay of one month during the whole year.

The analysis of more than 1,500 questionnaires showed that young people surveyed have clear ideas on the definition of rural areas and have no difficulties expressing their opinion on the quality of life and on employment and living opportunities in these areas.

It should be emphasized the key result from this survey: who lives in rural areas and knows more about the rural world, has a more positive perception, fewer prejudices and no false representations of it.

The young Europeans surveyed give on average a slightly higher value to the quality of life in rural areas than in urban centers. This rating depends on those features that are typical of life in rural areas: the importance of contact with nature, the trusting relationships with the community, the strong ties of affection with the family.

On the threshold of the third millennium, young people in Europe identify rural areas as a place where man and nature are in harmony; most of them also identify these areas as a place where agriculture prevails as the major user of land. The result is a positive opinion of the agricultural sector in relation to the environment and nature.

The quality of human relationships as a strength in rural areas is confirmed by the European students' opinion that a community with under 10,000 inhabitants is the ideal place to live as it is easier to get to know each other and interact with the other members of the community in daily activities.

The lack of services and infrastructures that may facilitate interpersonal relationships is perceived by young Europeans as the main critical element

of these areas. It is, in fact, the lack of places for extra-curricular and recreational activities, of educational facilities and public transport networks that makes rural areas less attractive than urban centers.

These elements of assessment, however, assume a different significance depending on where the young respondent use to live and according to the propensity to live and carry out a life project, being it private or professional, in these areas which are considered the ideal place to raise children (31% of weighted preferences).

Many of the young people interviewed consider the possibility of becoming farmers; however three elements are considered to be the main difficulties of starting an agricultural business:

- lack of resources for investments;
- inadequate income to meet the family needs;
- land availability.

All these factors are of extreme importance in those farms where high-employment activities are carried out and preferred by the European students interviewed: livestock farming and intensive horticulture.

For young Europeans it is clear that the necessary condition for a successful farm is the re-acquisition of its added value, identifying direct sale as the main channel to achieve this goal.

The agricultural activity is not only considered by young people as an income-producing activity but also as a concrete tool for improving the quality of life in rural areas and for civil society in general, thanks to its capacity to produce high quality and healthy food as well as environmental and cultural resources to which young people are particularly sensitive. Young people living in rural areas know more about the agricultural processes and give greater importance to organic production methods and environmentally friendly procedures.

They believe that rural areas underpin society's sustainable development, and that agriculture may, in turn, contribute to the development of these areas, increasing their attractiveness and making them a place where it is good to live and work, a place of tourism attraction and where new development models can put man and nature in productive harmony.

They have a positive view of the agricultural sector due to more than 50% of respondents' direct working experience in a farm.

Young Europeans have clear and precise ideas and requests concerning the need for improved policies and measures supporting agriculture and rural areas; most of these interventions may be implemented through the

regulatory framework and support schemes for Rural Development. For the future of agriculture and rural areas, European students would focus on policies for quality enhancement, on enhanced local traditions and links to the territory and on marketing strategies that shorten the supply chain.

This analysis clearly shows young Europeans' need to rely on policy strategies directly addressing younger generations and enhancing the generational change in the agricultural sector (11% of weighted preferences). According to this survey results, what is essential to young people in order to achieve this goal is the improvement of rural areas' infrastructure and services, starting from those basic services that citizens need; a variety of meeting and recreational facilities available to young people plays also a key role.

In summary this study reveals that the more young people know rural areas, the more they love them and think of agriculture as a possible work-life choice, though asking for more services for themselves and their future family as well as concrete opportunities of access to land and credit in order to carry out their own business project with the awareness of using natural and environmental resource, recognized as public goods the society and local community will be provided with. Such responsibility puts them in the front line as far as the future of these areas is concerned: their choice to live in a rural area and to become farm manager turns into a challenge that young people want to tackle.



## Annex 1: The questionnaire

### “YOUNG PEOPLE KNOWLEDGE AND PERCEPTION OF THE RURAL WORLD AND ITS CHANGES”

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Questionnaire for last two-year students of high school and first-year university students

An initiative by the National Rural Network – Italy

## Section I - Relationship with rural areas and agriculture

### Definition

**Question 1** *When thinking of a rural area, you think of*  
(tick one answer only)

- a) A place where it would be nice to live in ☐
- b) A place too isolated for families or young people to live in ☐
- c) A place characterised by the equilibrium between man and nature ☐
- d) A place where people's relationships are easier and “sincere” ☐
- e) A place where it is hard to build relationships and whose community is “closed” ☐
- f) A place to spend holidays ☐
- g) I don't know ☐

**Question 2** *Which of these places would you define as “rural”?*  
(tick one answer only)

- a) A municipality with fewer than 5000 inhabitants ☐
- b) A municipality where the main activity being carried out is the rural activity ☐
- c) A municipality that is more than 40 Km far from the urban centre ☐

**Question 3** *What do you think the role played by agriculture is in the development and maintenance of rural areas?* (tick one answer only)

- a) It plays an essential role ☐
- b) It plays an important and ever-growing role ☐
- c) It plays an important but declining role ☐
- d) Its role is linked to tourist and hobby purposes only ☐
- e) It plays a marginal and unimportant role ☐
- f) I don't know ☐

**Question 4** *Do you live in a urban centre or in a rural area? (Rural area means a small centre and/or isolated houses **in agricultural context**)*

- a) In a urban centre ☐
- b) In a rural area ☐

If you **do NOT** live in a rural area please go to question 4.1, **otherwise please go directly to question 5**

**How frequently rural areas are visited**

**Question 4.1** *How many times a year do you visit a rural area?*

- a) Almost once a week ☐
- b) More than once a month ☐
- c) Once a month ☐
- d) More than once a year ☐
- e) Once a year ☐
- f) More rarely ☐
- g) Never been there (in this case please go directly to question 4.3) ☐

**Reasons and satisfaction**

**Question 4.2** *Why do you choose to visit a rural area?* (tick a maximum of three answers)

- h) To spend holidays ☐
- i) On special occasions, parties, long weekends ☐
- j) To visit relatives ☐
- k) To visit friends ☐
- l) For touristic reasons or sport activities ☐
- m) For business ☐

**Relationships with rural areas inhabitants: relatives (e.g. grandparents, friends, sports competitions) etc.**

**Question 4.3** *People you know or you have met in rural areas are living there:*

- a) By choice ☐
- b) From necessity (difficulty to live in urban areas) ☐
- c) By “tradition” ☐
- d) I don’t know ☐

**Section II - Perceptions of the quality of life in rural areas**

**Question 5** *On a scale of 1-10, how would you consider the current situation of rural areas with respect to the following aspects? (Rate each statement 1-10 where 1 means “very bad” and 10 “excellent”)*

- The cost of living ☐
- Quietness/safety of the people and territory ☐
- Social life ☐
- The environment where children are growing ☐
- Closeness to nature ☐
- Low levels of pollution ☐
- No traffic ☐
- Road links and means of public transportation ☐
- Schools ☐
- Recreational and extra-curricular activities (cinemas, pubs, sports, discos, libraries etc.) ☐
- Communication systems ☐
- Internet access ☐

**Question 6** *In general, which do you think is a better place to live in?*

- A municipality with more than 100.000 inhabitants ☐
- A municipality of 50.000 to 100.000 inhabitants ☐
- A municipality of 10.000 to 50.000 inhabitants ☐
- A municipality of 5.000 to 10.000 inhabitants ☐
- A municipality with less than 5000 inhabitants ☐

**Question 7** *On a scale of 1-10, if 6 is the rate given to the quality of urban life, how would you rate the quality of rural life?*

**RATE expressed:** ☐

**If you live in a rural area please go to question 7.1, otherwise please go to question 8**

**Question 7.1** *In the rural area where you live, which of the following services provided do you consider inadequate? (You may tick more than one answer)*

- |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| Hospital cares and health services  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Nurseries   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Primary and middle schools  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| High schools/Universities   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Postal services   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Public transportation   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Pharmacies  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Internet and telecommunication services   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Banks and insurance companies   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Recreational and extra-curricular activities (cinemas/<br>pubs/sports/ discos/libraries etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**Question 8** *Among the following recreational facilities, what would you consider to be more important to make rural areas more attractive to young people? (tick a maximum of three answers)*

- |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| Agritourisms  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Restaurants and Hotels                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Live music places   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Pub, disco pub and lounge bars                            | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Libraries   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Groups and association for rediscovering local traditions | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Refreshment points with Wi-Fi access                      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Traditional and popular festivals                         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Sporting facilities                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Multimedia cultural events (music, art, video etc.)       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Concerts  | <input type="checkbox"/> |

### **Section III - Employment**

**Question 9** *Have you ever considered carrying out your future working activity in a rural area?*

- |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| a) Yes   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) No (in this case please go directly to question 10) | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**Question 9. 1 - If Yes, in which of the following sector?** *(tick one answer only)*

- a) Agriculture, forestry and fishing ☐
- b) Production and manufacture of food products and  
c) beverages ☐
- d) Manufacturing (clothing, furniture, etc. production) ☐
- e) Public utilities (electricity and water supply; waste  
f) management) ☐
- g) Construction ☐
- h) Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles  
i) and motorcycles ☐
- j) Transporting and storage ☐
- k) Accommodation and food service activities ☐
- l) Information and communication technology ☐
- m) Financial and insurance activities ☐
- n) Professional, scientific and technical activities ☐
- o) Public administration ☐
- p) Education ☐
- q) Human health and social work activities ☐
- r) Arts, entertainment and recreation ☐
- s) Other (please specify) .....

**Question 9.2 In which form?**

- a) Self-employed ☐
- b) Salaried ☐
- c) I don't know ☐

**Question 10 - Are there any farmers in your family?***(you may tick more than one answer)*

- a) Yes, my parents ☐
- b) Yes, my grandparents ☐
- c) Yes, other close relatives ☐
- d) No ☐

**Question 11 Have you ever worked on a farm?**

- a) Yes ☐
- b) No ☐

**Question 11.1** *Have you ever considered working as a farmer manager?*

- a) Yes ☐
- b) No ☐

**Question 12** *What do you consider to be the main difficulties of starting an agricultural business? (tick a maximum of three answers)*

- a) Land availability ☐
- b) Inadequate income to meet the family needs ☐
- c) Lack of investments resources ☐
- d) Administrative burdens ☐
- e) Farm management technical difficulties ☐
- f) Agricultural activities contingencies related to organic factors (natural disasters, damages caused by pests, etc.) ☐
- g) Difficulties of sharing your choice with your partner ☐

**Question 13** *Which do you consider to be the main positive expectations? (tick a maximum of three answers)*

- a) Running your own business ☐
- b) The human relationship with nature ☐
- c) The opportunity to build more “genuine” relationships ☐
- d) Adequate environment for families and children ☐
- e) Less stressful lifestyle ☐
- f) The opportunity to reconcile work and family life ☐

**Question 14** *If starting an agricultural business, which of the following sector would you choose? (tick one answer only)*

- a) Wine sector ☐
- b) Stock-farming sector ☐
- c) Intensive horticulture and fruit growing sector ☐
- d) Cereals sector ☐

**Question 15** *In your decision to start an agricultural business, how important would be the opportunity to carry out one of the following activity? (tick a maximum of three answers)*

- a) Organic farming ☐
- b) Agritourism activity ☐
- c) Product processing practices in the farm (wine, oil, washed and packaged salads, etc.) ☐
- d) Direct sale of farm products ☐
- e) Educational farms ☐
- f) Nurseries in the farm (agri-nurseries) ☐
- g) Green energy production (by farm products or waste, solar panels, wind power) ☐

## Section IV - Social engagement and future perspectives on rural areas

### Future perceptions

**Question 16** Which of the following statements do you agree with?  
(tick a maximum of three answers rating each statement 1-3 where 1 means “very important” and 3 “less important”)

“In the coming years, rural areas will be”:

- a) A place offering the opportunity of living far from the urban chaos and where to develop one’s own life and work project ☐
- b) A place too far from the rhythms imposed by contemporary lifestyle and destined to take second place ☐
- c) A place offering the opportunity of living and working in perfect integration with the rest of the community ☐
- d) A better place to live, although the economic resources are lower than in urban areas ☐
- e) A better place to live and where the economic resources are the same as in urban areas, all conditions being equal ☐
- f) A worst place to live compared to urban areas, due to a lack of services provided ☐
- g) A place where all distances with urban areas and markets will be shortened thanks to internet access and where investments will be profitable ☐
- h) A bad place to invest in as it will always be less favoured than urban centres ☐
- i) Rural living will cost too much energy in the future and will not be sustainable ☐
- j) Rural living is the only way to make the society more sustainable in both ecological, economic and social aspects ☐

**Question 17** How do you consider farms in the coming future? (tick a maximum of three answers rating each statement 1-3 where 1 means “very important” and 3 “less important”)

- a) Places producing quality food while protecting the environment and territory ☐
- b) Places that will be characterised by an increase in intensive farming due to globalisation ☐
- c) Multifunctional farms providing, besides food products, also green energy, services to people (nurseries, agritourisms, educational farms, direct sale of products) and employment opportunities ☐

- d) Modern farms to all intents and purposes, managed by farm managers considered real businessmen able to offer important opportunities for the creation of wealth for themselves and other people ☐
- e) Farms less favoured than other sectors and characterised by high production costs and a less favoured relationship with the market ☐
- f) There will be a lower number of farms and only those characterised by innovation will survive ☐
- g) All competent and careful managers will be given space thanks to the implementation of policies aimed at enhancing the sector and territory ☐

**Question 18** *Which of the following policies would you suggest to implement for the future of agriculture and other rural businesses?* (tick a maximum of five answers rating each statement 1-5 where 1 means “very important” and 5 “less important”)

- a) Focusing on local, traditional and quality products and related certification procedures ☐
- b) Focusing on the “short supply chain” (shortening the chain from producer to consumer) to develop local markets and enhancing the relationship between managers of the same territory and new distribution channels ☐
- c) Focusing on territorial heritage and environmental resources to improve attractiveness and tourism in the area ☐
- d) Developing Farmers’ markets and farms’ geolocalisation services (e.g. pharmacies, petrol stations, small-scale crafts and trades businesses, agritourisms, direct sale of farm products ) for shortening the distances between the countryside and urban centres ☐
- e) Improving rural areas infrastructures and services, starting from the provision of early childhood services (nurseries, schools) in order to enhance the generational change ☐
- f) Working on entrepreneurial training activities ☐
- g) Investing on young people in order to enhance the generational change ☐
- h) Improving rural areas internet access and developing related services and telework opportunities as well ☐
- i) Continuing improving the agricultural sector competitiveness, supporting farms modernisation and innovation through public funds ☐
- j) Focusing, in farming, on environmental and natural resources protection, thus playing a leading role in the provision of green energy ☐



- k) Focusing on multifunctionality and diversification of activities for agricultural income to be integrated and for the creation of new employment opportunities ☐

**Personal details (Please fill out in its entirety)**

Name.....

Surname.....

Sex    M ☐    F ☐

Age.....

Nationality.....

Region.....

Place of residence.....

Type of High school/University.....

Year of  
study.....

## Annex 2: Methodology of correction and usage of data

### 2.1 Construction of a single database

The first thing to note is that the data collection of the present survey by the eight National Rural Networks was done at no cost and, more precisely, there were no direct costs related to data collection. Due to the lack of a specific budget, students were asked to self-complete the questionnaire, resulting in lower quality of data collected. In addition, the necessary translation of the questionnaires into the languages of each Country involved resulted, although in rare cases, in compilation errors.

Due to the construction of a single SPSS database, the following changes in the Excel worksheets sent by the single National Rural Networks needed to be made.

- As already mentioned in Section 2.2, it should be noted that Latvia could not be included in the database since the questionnaires were administered on-line and the Italian NRN dealing with the processing of such data was provided with overall results instead of micro-data.
- Question no. 1: Results sent by France could not be included: French students provided multiple answers where only one was allowed; this is most likely due to a mistranslation of this question completion instructions.
- Answers to question no. 4 were used to check consistency with answers to questions no. 4.1, 4.2 and 7.1. Where the answer to question no. 4 was:
  - ✓ I live “in a urban center”, it has been checked that answers to questions no. 4.1 and 4.2 were given; if not, the option “no answer” has been considered. Then it has been checked if answers to question no. 7.1 had been provided by mistake and, if so, they have been removed to achieve consistent and comparable results;
  - ✓ Vice versa, if the answer was “in a rural area”, it has been checked if answers to questions no. 4.1 and 4.2 had been provided by mistake and, if so, they have been removed. Then

it has been checked if answers to question no. 7.1 had been provided and, if not, the option “no answer” has been considered.

- All the questions have been provided with the option “no answer”.
- Questions no. 16, 17 and 18: These questions allowed up to three/five answers each. Where respondents provided a higher number of answers, these have been classified in the category “I don’t know”, “no answer” or “answers > 3 / > 5 have been provided”, according to the questions. Results from Latvia could not be included since a higher number of frequencies was sent.

## 2.2 Data processing

This section shows the calculation method used for the data processing reported in this paper:

- The Total\*: It refers to the sum of weighted results in a way that all Countries are given equal weight.
- The average age was calculated excluding the extreme values: less than 15 and more than 41 years of age.
- The estimate of the average number of days where students living in urban areas do visit rural areas: in order to calculate the average number of days, it has been supposed that: a) “at least once a week” = once a week for an average number of 53 days per year; b) “more than once a month” = twice a month for a total of 24 days per year; c) “once a month” = 12 days per year; d) “more than once a year” = 6 days per year; e) “once year” = one day per year; f) “more rarely” = 0.5 days per year; g) “never been there” = 0 days per year.
- The synthetic indicator of quality of life was calculated by adding up the frequencies related to all of the indicators by the indications provided (scores 1, 2, ... up to 10), dividing into the total of the frequencies.
- The frequencies expressed for questions no. 16 and 17 have been weighted as follows:

- Weight of 1 for Priority 1;
- Weight of 0,5 for Priority 2;
- Weight of 0,25 for Priority 3;

Questions where two or three answers were provided (questionnaire where “X” was used to fill in the tick-boxes) but no priority rating was given, have been weighted singularly as follows:

- Weight of  $0.75 = (1.0 + 0.5) / 2$  if the respondent expressed 2 preferences;
  - Weight of  $0.583333333 = (1.0 + 0.5 + 0.2) / 3$  if the respondent expressed 3 preferences;
- The frequencies expressed in question no. 18 have been weighted as follows:
    - Weight of 1 for Priority 1;
    - Weight of 0,8 for Priority 2;
    - Weight of 0,6 for Priority 3;
    - Weight of 0,4 for Priority 4;
    - Weight of 0,2 for Priority 5;

In conclusion, questions where two, three, four or five answers were provided (questionnaire where “X” is used to fill in the tick-boxes) but no priority rating was given, have been singularly weighted as follows:

- Weight of  $0.8 = (1.0 + 0.8) / 2$  if the respondent expressed 2 preferences;
- Weight of  $0.6 = (1.0 + 0.8 + 0.6) / 3$  if the respondent expressed 3 preferences;
- Weight of  $0.4 = (1.0 + 0.8 + 0.6 + 0.4) / 4$  if the respondent expressed 4 preferences;

- Weight of 0,2 =  $(1,0+0,8+0,6+0,4+0,2)/5$  if the respondent expressed 5 preferences.



**PIANO STRATEGICO DELLO SVILUPPO RURALE  
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**RETE RURALE NAZIONALE 2007-2013**

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