

Acknowledgements

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Executive Summary and Recommendations for Further Discussion



YOUNG PEOPLE FROM RURAL AND URBAN AREAS HAVE A SIMILAR PROFILE, OPINIONS AND PRIORITIES!



How can the similar priorities be implemented in different environments and contexts in order to best support both rural and urban youth?



Remember, a similar profile is not the same profile and can have different connotations in rural and urban contexts!



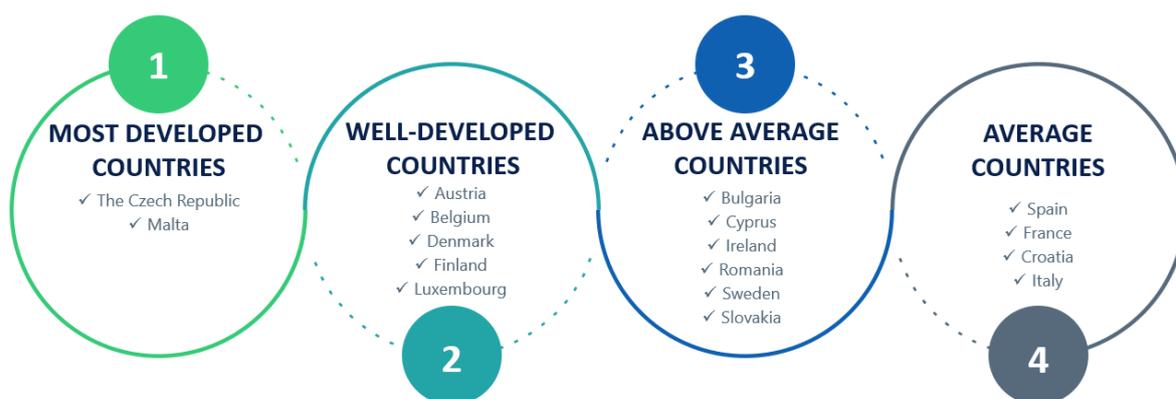
**Do you want to know more?!
See [Chapter 1](#) and [Chapter 2](#)!**



YOUNG PEOPLE DESCRIBE CONDITIONS IN RURAL AREAS DIFFERENTLY, DEPENDING ON THE COUNTRY THEY COME FROM!

RURAL DEVELOPMENT COUNTRY CLUSTERS

Countries grouped in line with the assessment of conditions in rural areas by the young people living there



What lessons can be learned from the countries belonging to the Most and Well-Developed clusters?



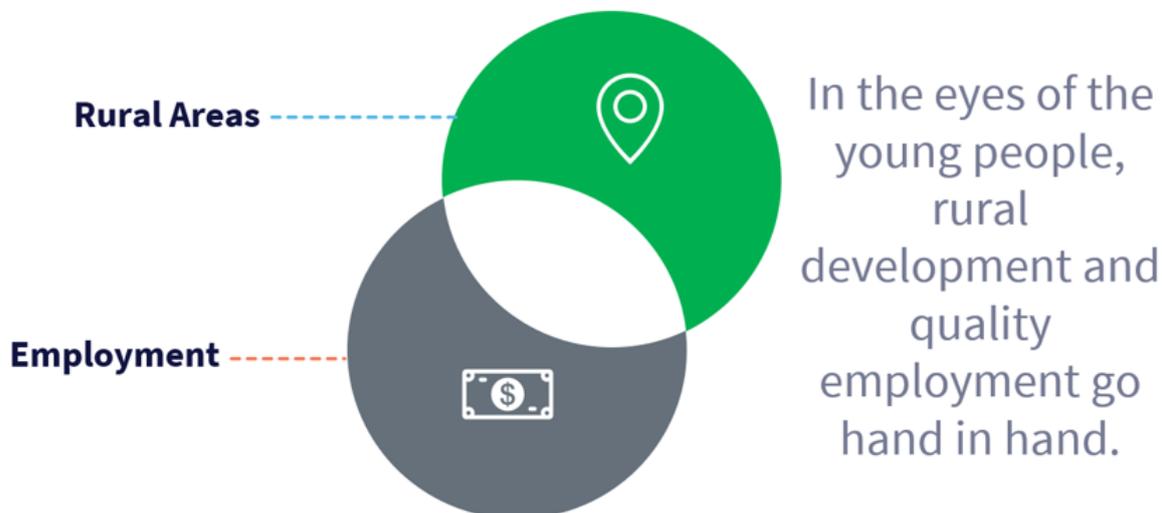
Remember, all support mechanisms need to be tailored to the context of a given country, there are no universal measures!



Do you want to know more?!
See [Chapter 3!](#)



DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL AREAS AND QUALITY EMPLOYMENT ARE INTERLINKED!



How can the link between employment and rural conditions be utilized to help fulfil the EU Youth Goals?



Remember, the link between employment and rural areas development can work both ways or be caused by completely different factors!



Do you want to know more?!
See [Chapter 3!](#)

Introduction

This report builds on and further elaborates the main report from the 7th cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue (EU YD): *Findings from EU Youth Dialogue Activities in the Member States and across Europe – Creating opportunities for youth*. The main report contains findings on all areas of interest of the 7th cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue, namely on **Moving the Rural Youth Forward** (Youth Goal No. 6), **Quality Employment for All** (Youth Goal No. 7), and **Quality Learning** (Youth Goal No. 8; with a special emphasis on youth work). This report focuses on further analyses of voices of young people concerning the rural areas, focusing solely on exploring in more detail survey data provided by the National Working Groups concerning Youth Goal No. 6: Moving the Rural Youth Forward.

Firstly, young people from rural areas are compared to their counterparts living in towns and cities, emphasizing their similarities and differences. Secondly, opinions of young people from rural areas on issues concerning Youth Goals No. 6, 7 and 8 are explored, again, contrasting their views with the voices of the young people from towns and cities. Third section offers an insight into geographical differences when it comes to young people assessing rural areas in their respective countries in various respects.

All figures and findings presented in this report are based on the survey data gathered during the 7th cycle of the EU YD, unless explicitly stated otherwise. For detailed information on the EU YD survey sample and weighting, please see Appendix 2 of the main report quoted above.

1. Who are the young people from rural areas in EU YD surveys of NWGs?

Before further analyses can be conducted, a profile of young people from rural areas who took part in the EU YD surveys needs to be explored. First and foremost, the method of identifying young people from rural areas needs to be clarified. Respondents of the EU YD surveys were asked to identify themselves as residents of rural areas, marking for the purposes of the analyses those who answered positively as rural youth, and all others as young people from urban areas. Despite the fact that the European reality covers a wide range of possibilities as to what “rural” and “urban” areas look like, this simplification is necessary in order to keep the findings clear and understandable. At the same time, kind readers are hereby urged to keep this in mind when reading through this report.

Figure 1 shows that there was, overall, about one third of young people who identified themselves as residents of rural areas in their respective countries. At the same time, as shown in

Figure 3, the ratio was widely differing across the countries, with over 50% of young people identifying themselves as residing in rural areas in Ireland and Belgium, and only about one tenth identifying as such in Cyprus and Bulgaria. Despite the vast variety of possibilities causing such different results in different countries, two of potential explanations are worth mentioning. Firstly, the young people from rural areas engaged in the surveys in some countries more than in others, causing the differing results. Secondly, the young people in different countries have different understandings of the term “rural area” as well as different connotations which connect to this term, and the combination of these factors causes them to identify as residents of rural areas to a different extent across countries. In reality, abovementioned explanations likely combine not only with each other, but with other possible causes as well, for example with a simple fact that different countries have different ratios of rural residents in general.

Youth Goal No.6: Moving Rural Youth Forward
EU YD Survey Results

Figure 1: Ratio of young people who identified themselves as living in rural areas.

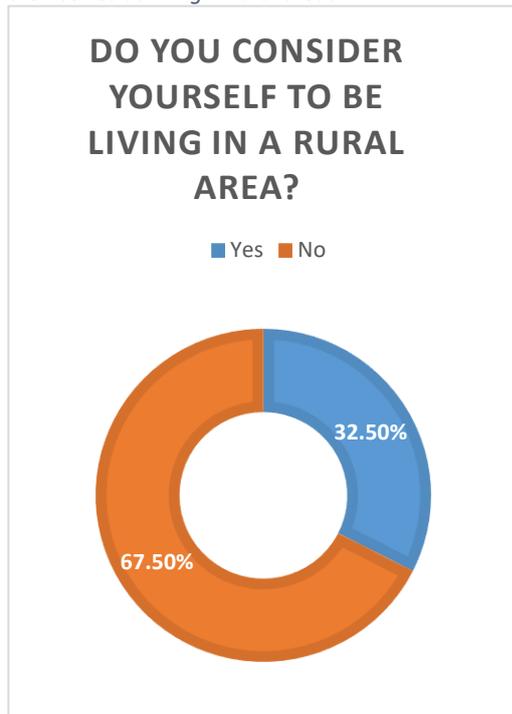
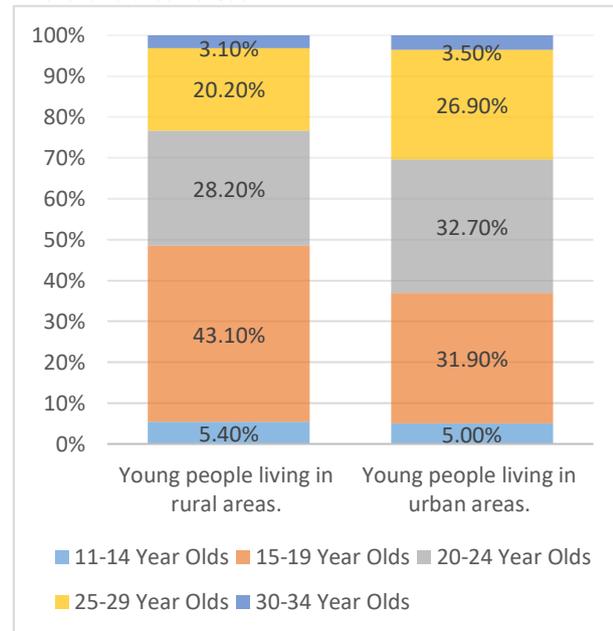
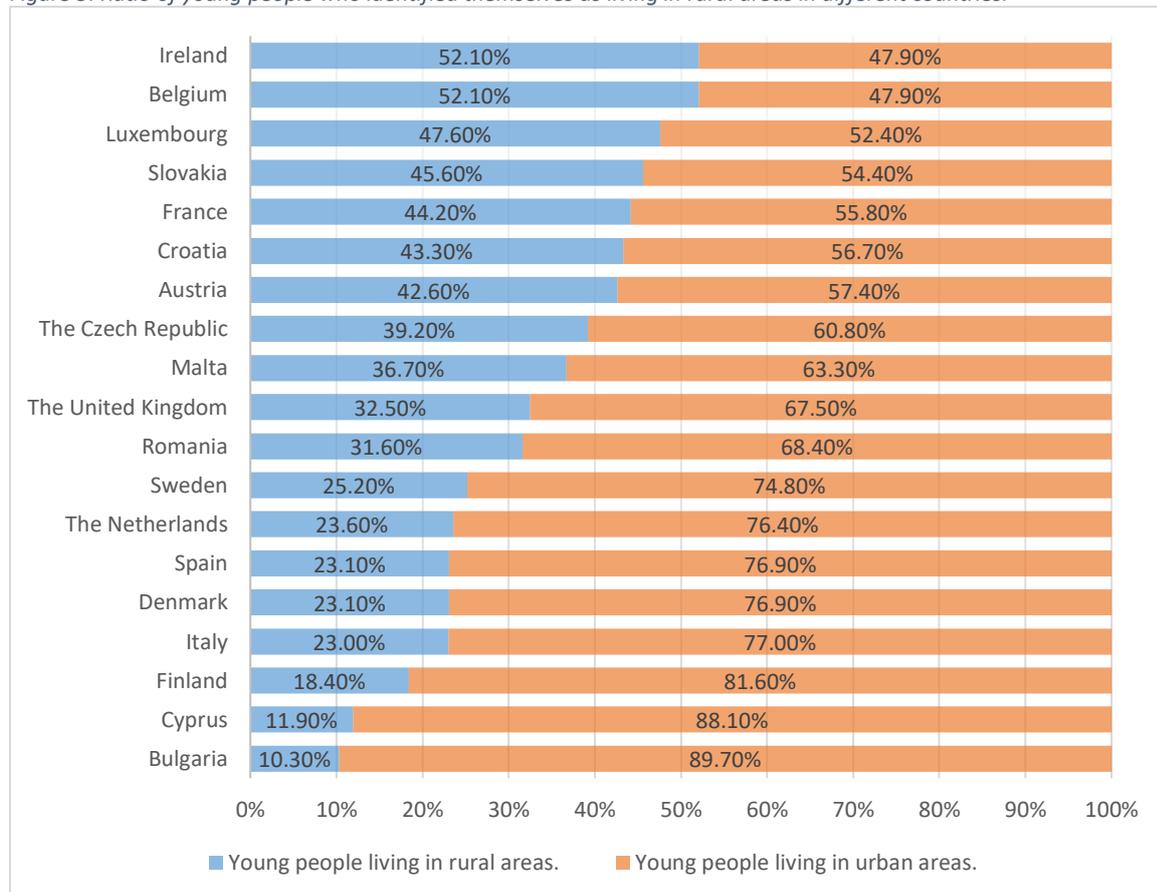


Figure 2: Ratio of young people of different age groups living in rural and urban areas.



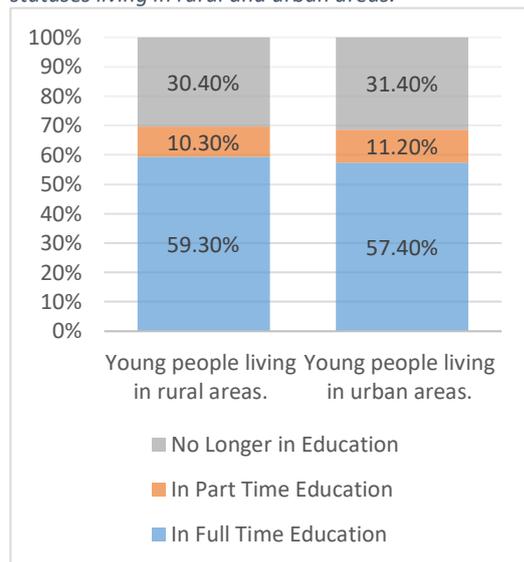
Note: All differences are statistically significant with the exceptions of 11-14-year olds and 30-34-year olds.

Figure 3: Ratio of young people who identified themselves as living in rural areas in different countries.



Interestingly, there is about the same ratio of young people 11-14 year old and 30-34 year old in both urban and rural areas, but there are 4.5% more of the 20-24 year olds and 6.7% more of the 25-29 year olds in urban areas than in the rural ones, while the age group of 15-19 year olds is more than 11% larger in rural localities (Figure 2). This situation can be caused by two interlinked phenomena: attending basic schools and high schools locally and migrating from rural to urban regions in search for further education (and potentially even employment opportunities) in subsequent stages of life of young people.

Figure 4: Ratio of young people of different educational statuses living in rural and urban areas.



Note: Only the difference between the young people in full time education in rural and urban areas is statistically significant.

Figure 5: Ratio of young people based on their economic activity living in rural and urban areas.

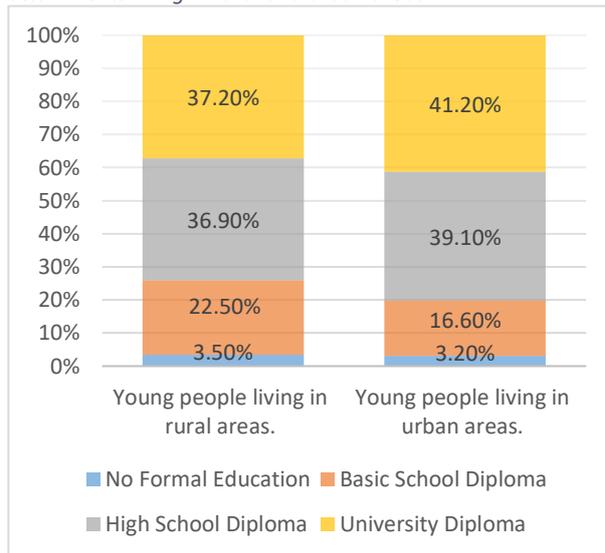


Note: Only the difference between the young people working full time in rural and urban areas is statistically significant.

When it comes to the economic activity and educational status of young people, the situation does not differ much between the rural and urban youth populations (Figure 4 and Figure 5), with a majority of young people in full time education and not working. Figure 6 completes the picture by showing, all in all, a slightly higher educational attainment in urban young people in comparison to the young people based in rural areas. In urban areas, there are about 6% less young people with basic education and about 6% more young people with high school education as well as 4% more young people with university education. This corresponds to the possible flow of young people from rural to urban areas in search of higher education, as suggested above.

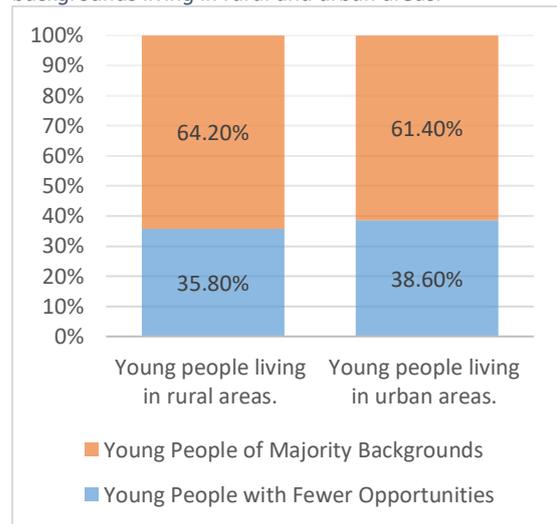
There is, overall, a higher ratio of young people with fewer opportunities in urban areas as shown in Figure 7. This is in line with detailed analyses of young people with various forms of potential disadvantages, described below.

Figure 6: Ratio of young people of different educational attainments living in rural and urban areas.



Note: All differences are statistically significant with the exception of young people with no formal education.

Figure 7: Ratio of young people with fewer opportunities and young people of majority backgrounds living in rural and urban areas.



Note: All differences are statistically significant.

Overall, there is about the same ratio of young people with disabilities (Figure 8) in both rural and urban regions and a slightly lower ratio of young people who identify as LGBTQI in rural areas than in urban ones (Figure 9). Larger differences can be seen in young people with minority backgrounds, with 3% less young people with minority religion backgrounds (Figure 10) and 4% less young people from ethnic minority backgrounds (Figure 11) found in rural areas in comparison to the urban ones. Both of these differences in young people with minority backgrounds can be caused by a variety of factors, some of which can be a higher level of acceptance of different religions and ethnicities in urban areas, as well as economic and practical advantages often connected to towns and cities in comparison to villages and countryside in general.

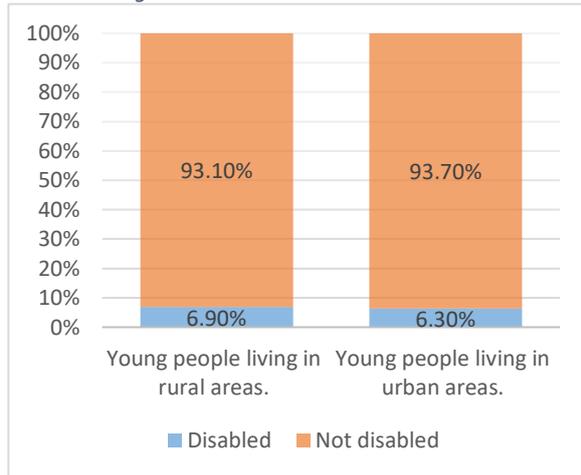
All in all, when it comes to young people with fewer opportunities, the ratios in rural and urban areas vary, but do not suggest striking differences when it comes to where the young people with fewer opportunities reside.

Conclusion

Despite the fact that there are differences between the young people who answered the survey and resided in rural areas and those who resided in urban areas, no results suggest overall striking distinctions between the two groups. On the contrary, a rather similar profile of the rural and urban youth can be seen.

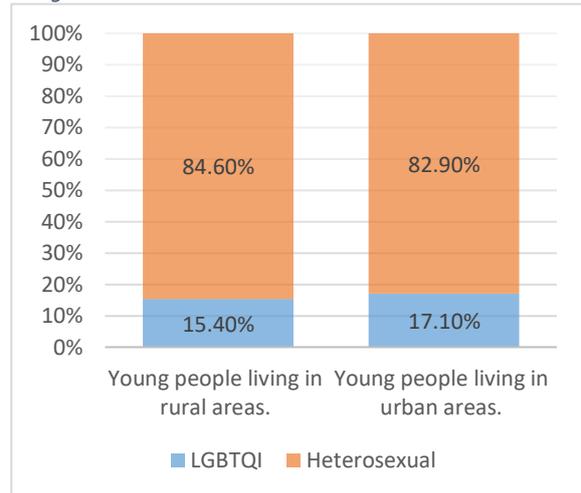
Youth Goal No.6: Moving Rural Youth Forward
EU YD Survey Results

Figure 8: Ratio of young people who are and are not disabled living in rural and urban areas.



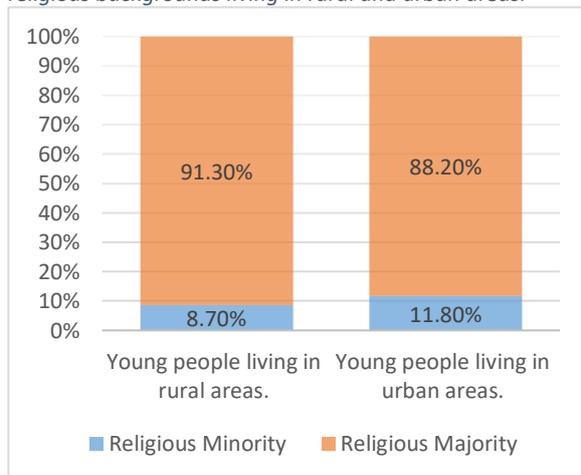
Note: No differences are statistically significant.

Figure 9: Ratio of young people of different sexualities living in rural and urban areas.



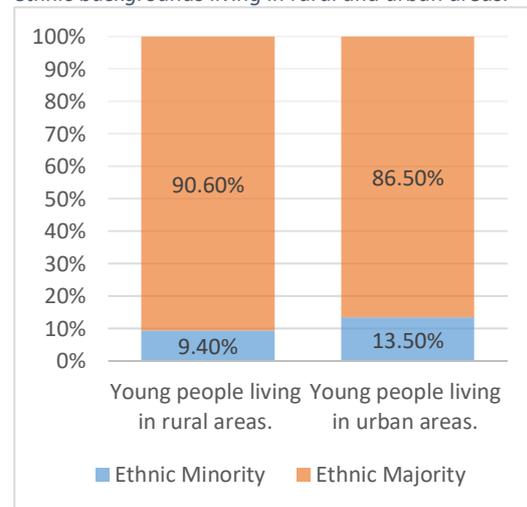
Note: All differences are statistically significant.

Figure 10: Ratio of young people of minority and majority religious backgrounds living in rural and urban areas.



Note: All differences are statistically significant.

Figure 11: Ratio of young people of minority and majority ethnic backgrounds living in rural and urban areas.



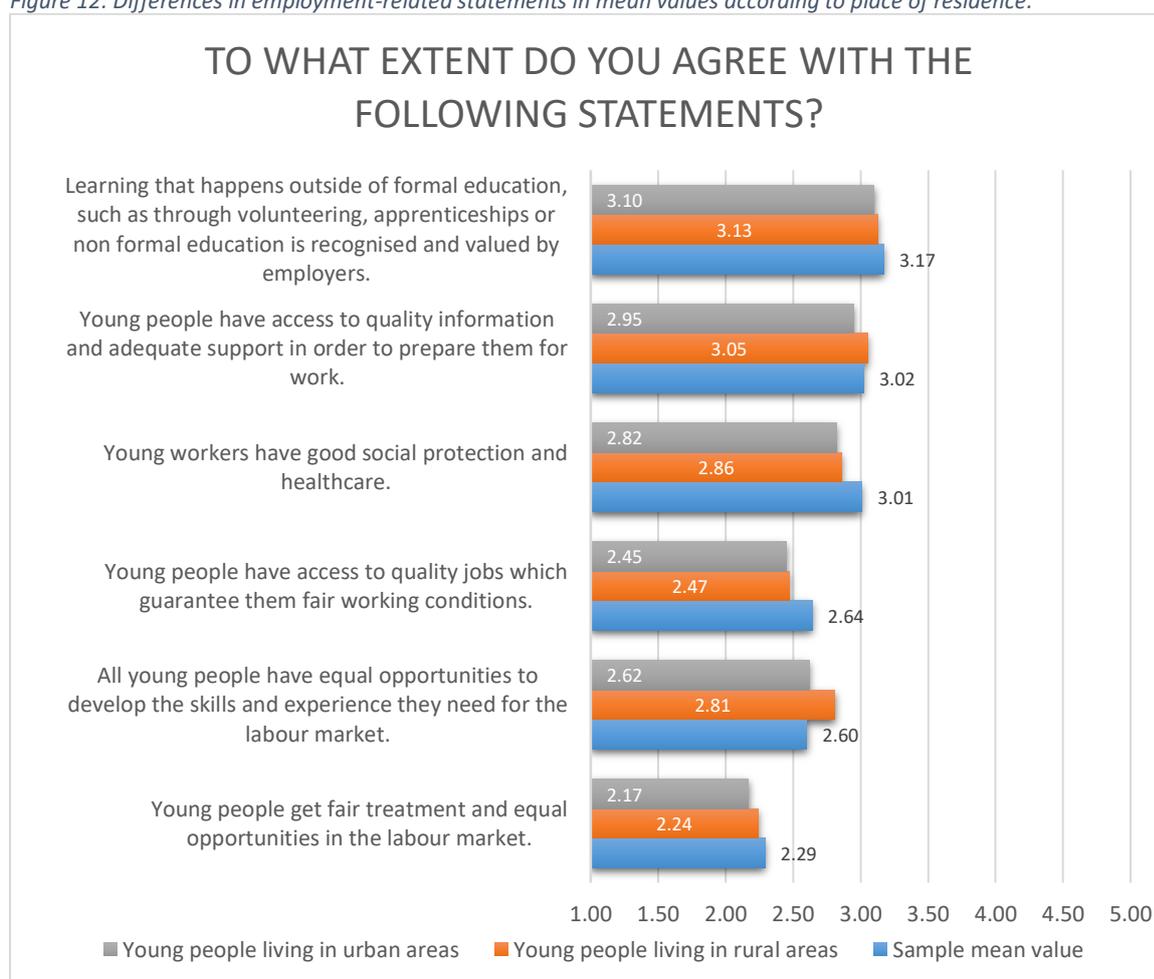
Note: All differences are statistically significant.

2. How do young people from rural and urban areas differ in their opinions?

Three main areas were explored during the 7th cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue: employment; youth work; and rural areas. To explore each of these broad topics in the survey, a battery of questions was designed for each of the topics, and young people were asked their opinion in each of the questions. Since overall findings are already published in the main report summarizing the 7th cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue, only the differences between the young people residing in rural and urban areas are explored in here.

In case of employment, current situation in different countries was explored as seen by the young people themselves, asking them to what extent they agree or disagree with a set of statements focusing on various aspects of quality employment. Figure 12 shows mean values for the total of all young people who responded to the surveys (Sample mean value) as well as mean values separately for young people from rural and from urban areas.

Figure 12: Differences in employment-related statements in mean values according to place of residence.



Note: All mean differences higher than 0.03 are statistically significant. Scale ranges from 1 = Very unimportant to 5 = Very important.

Interestingly, young people living in rural areas rate all aspects related to employment more positively than their counterparts living in urban regions (see Figure 12). In most of the cases the differences are rather slight, with the exception of the question asking about equal opportunities to develop skills and experience needed for the labour market, where young people from rural areas are not only more

positive than their urban counterparts, but score even higher than the average of all respondents. These findings can either suggest that the employment domain is more developed in rural areas, or that the young people from rural areas are less critical in their assessment of the labour market conditions.

Figure 13: Differences in youth work-related statements in mean values according to place of residence.

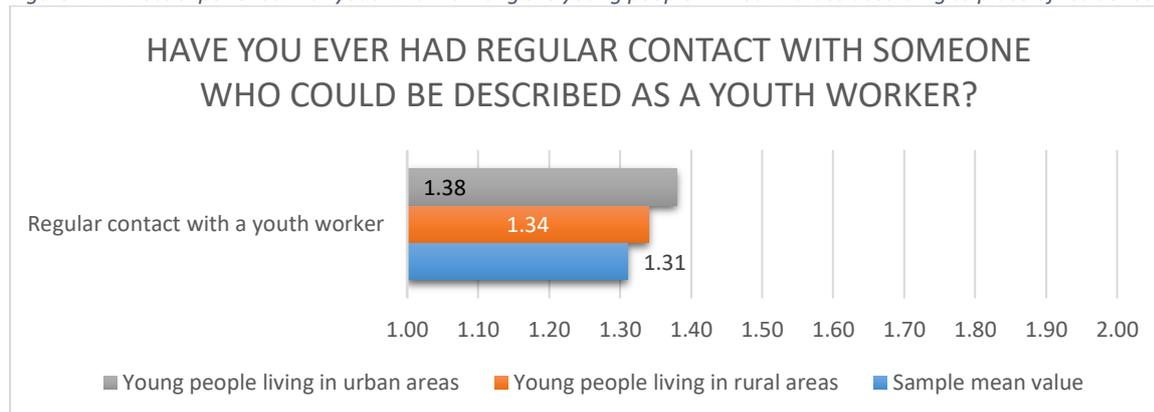


Note: All mean differences higher than 0.03 are statistically significant. Scale ranges from 1 = Very unimportant to 5 = Very important.

Another domain of the survey focused on youth work. Young people were asked about their priorities when it comes to aims of youth work practice. As shown in Figure 13, this is a domain in which young people from both the rural and the urban areas exhibit very similar assessment of priorities, ranking notably high in all given options. The only priority where a distinction can be seen between the young people from the rural areas in comparison to their urban counterparts, is the priority which focuses on enabling young people to make positive changes in their community. This could suggest that young people in rural areas feel more confident when it comes to influencing local communities, or also that the youth work in rural areas is linked to the community life already and hence comes out as a slightly lower priority. At the same time, given the small scale of the difference in mean values, this finding needs to be read with caution.

Figure 14 suggests that young people in rural areas have slightly more contact with youth workers than their urban counterparts, a figure which is, again, showing a small-scale difference and needs to be treated with caution.

Figure 14: Direct experience with youth work among the young people in mean values according to place of residence.

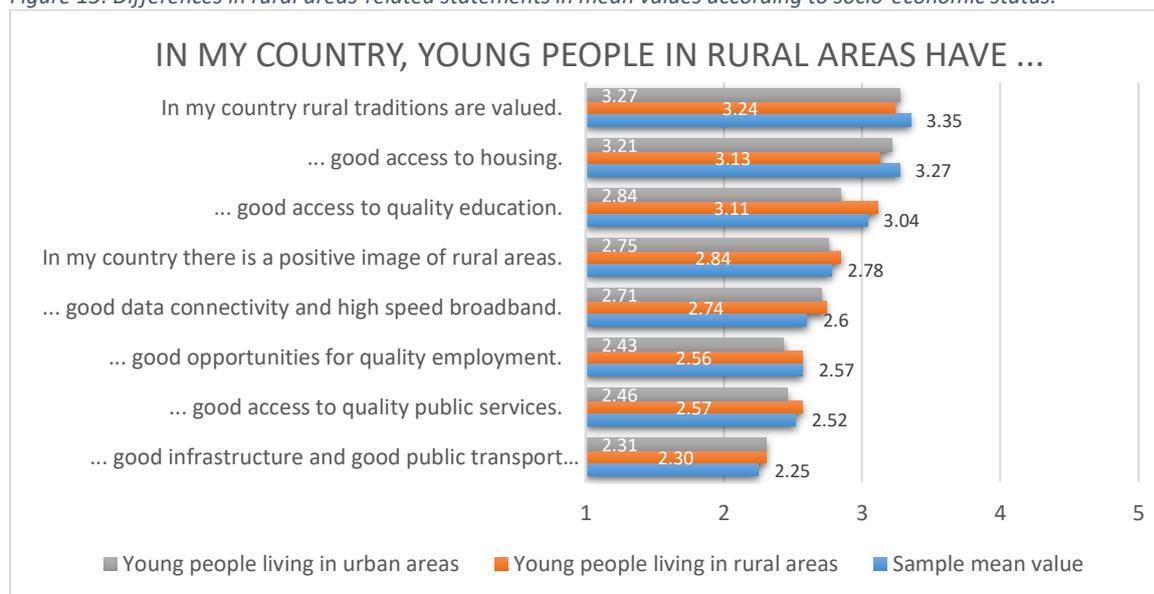


Note: All mean differences higher than 0.01 are statistically significant. Scale ranges from 1 = Yes to 2 = No.

Rural areas were explored in the survey on two levels. Firstly, young people were asked to describe a current situation in rural areas in their respective countries. Secondly, young people were asked to rate a list of priorities connected to the rural areas in general.

When it comes to exploring the current situation of the rural areas via the eyes of the young people, Figure 15 suggests¹ that young people living in rural areas differ in strength of their opinions from those who live in urban places. Young people living in rural areas are slightly more positive in most statements, with an exception of valuing rural traditions and access to housing, where it is young people from urban places who show slightly more optimistic views. Notably, both groups agree on rather low rating of infrastructure and public transport in rural areas.

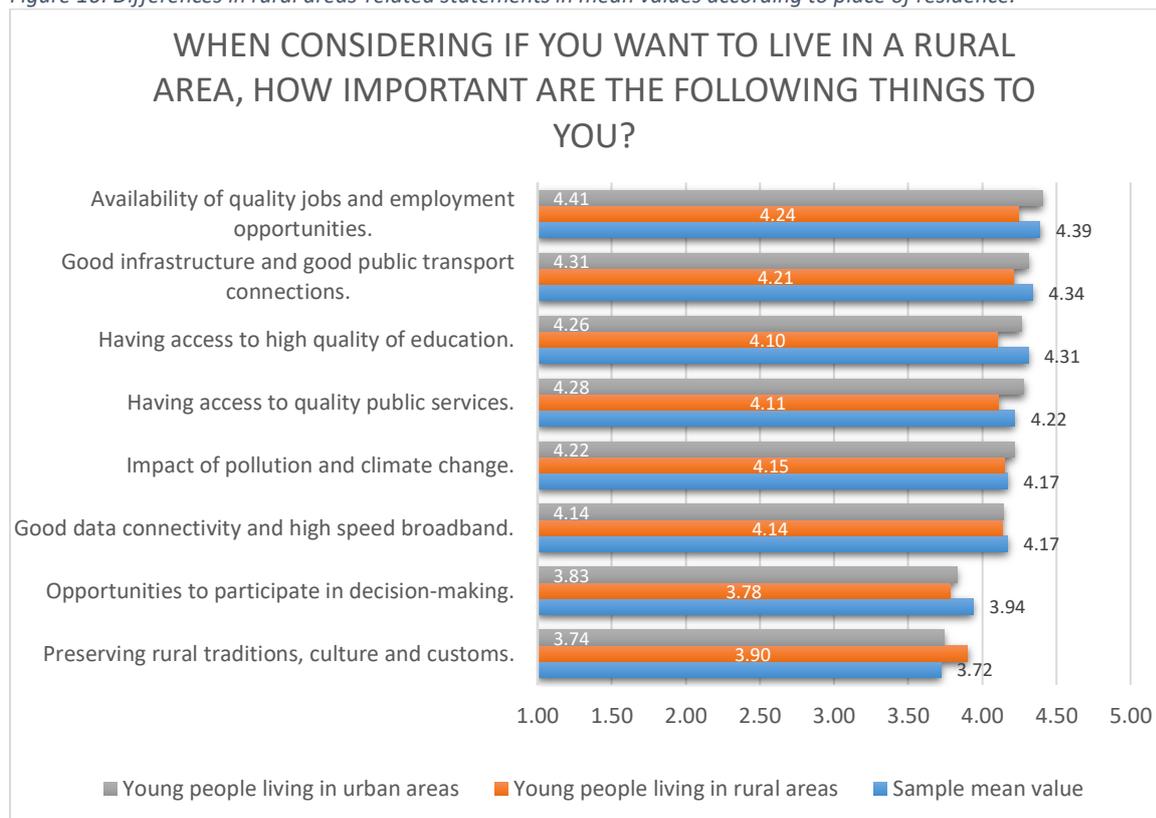
Figure 15: Differences in rural areas-related statements in mean values according to socio-economic status.



Note: All mean differences higher than 0.04 are statistically significant. Scale ranges from 1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree.

¹ This section refers directly to findings published in the main report for the 7th cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue.

Figure 16: Differences in rural areas-related statements in mean values according to place of residence.



Note: All mean differences higher than 0.01 are statistically significant. Scale ranges from 1 = Very unimportant to 5 = Very important.

As for the exploration of priorities young people hold in connection to the rural areas, interestingly, young people living in rural areas (see Figure 16²) rate almost all aspects less positively than their counterparts living in urban places. The only two exceptions are data connectivity, where both groups show identical results, and preserving rural traditions, where young people living in rural areas exhibit more optimistic opinions than the youth from the cities.

Conclusions

Despite slight differences in the magnitude of agreement, in vast majority of all questions across all three domains (employment, youth work, rural areas), the young people from urban and rural areas exhibit very similar opinions in both priority ratings and assessments of a situation in a given domain.

Interestingly, young people from rural areas seem to be repeatedly more optimistic when it comes to assessing the current situation of the rural areas and the employment domain. Both rural and urban youth are also very similar in their rating of priorities for youth work. And last but not least, the rural youth are less enthusiastic about priorities concerning living in rural areas: a trend possibly connected to the fact that they are already living in there, and hence being less critical than the urban youth in many respects.

² This section refers directly to findings published in the main report for the 7th cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue.

3. What differences can be seen in European countries when it comes to the assessment of rural areas by young people living in them?

In order to further explore rural areas across the European countries, a statistical procedure called cluster analysis was conducted to determine whether there are countries in which young people assessed rural areas in a similar fashion and can, therefore, be gathered into groups (clusters) for the purposes of deeper insight and further analyses. The statistical procedure was based on answers of young people living in rural areas to the following items:

- In my country, young people in rural areas have good access to quality public services.
- In my country, young people in rural areas have good access to quality education.
- In my country, young people in rural areas have good opportunities for quality employment.
- In my country, young people in rural areas have good access to housing.
- In my country, rural areas have good infrastructure and good public transport connection to urban areas.
- In my country, rural areas have good data connectivity and high-speed broadband.
- In my country, there is a positive image of rural areas.
- In my country, rural traditions are valued.

The cluster analysis confirmed that four country clusters can be identified, representing countries in which young people residing in the rural areas assess different aspects of living in rural regions in a different way, as summarized in Table 1. Firstly, the clusters are described in order to point out differences between them, and subsequently, the clusters themselves are used to explore priorities of young people towards rural areas and their opinions concerning the current state of the quality employment.

Table 1: Clusters of countries in line with assessment of conditions of rural areas by young people living in rural areas.

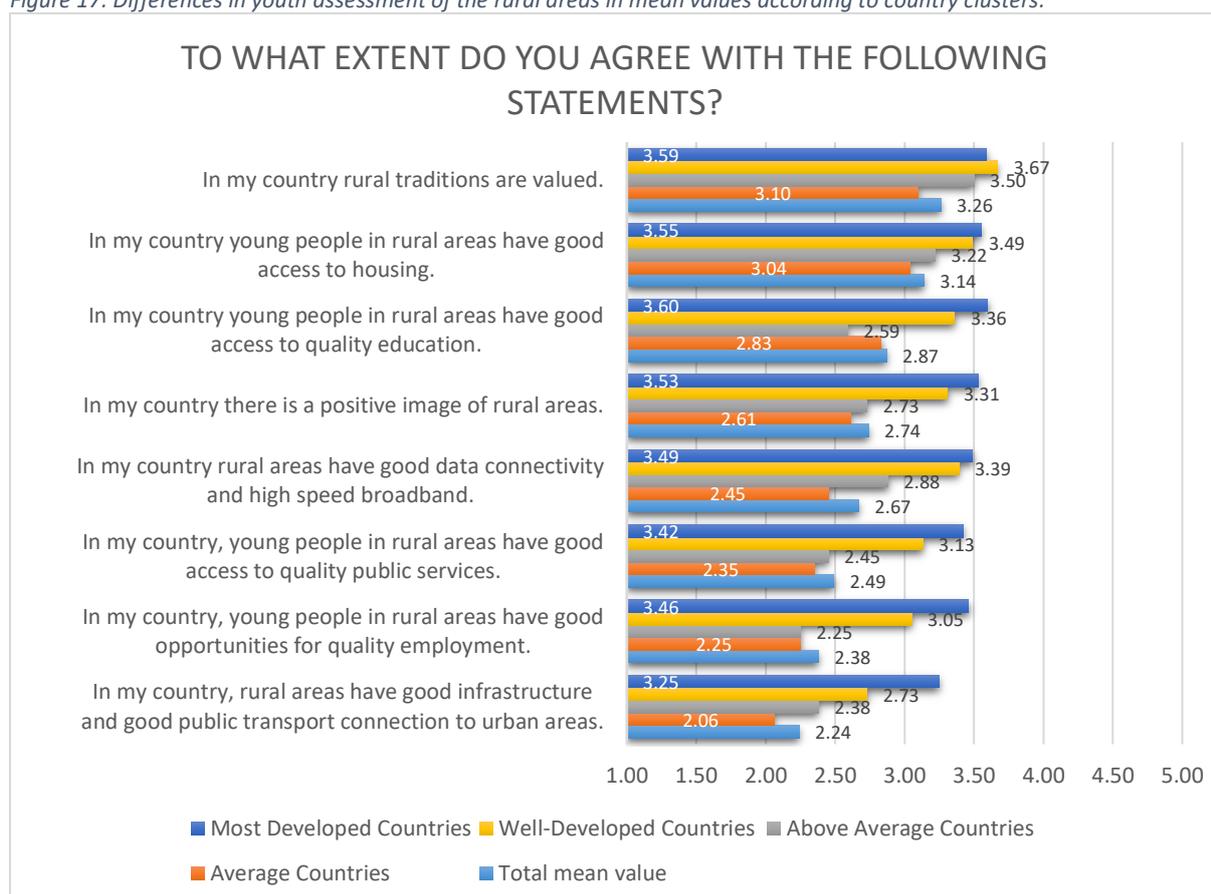
Country Cluster	Countries in Country Clusters
Most Developed Countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Czech Republic • Malta
Well-Developed Countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Austria • Belgium • Denmark • Finland • Luxembourg
Above Average Countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bulgaria • Cyprus • Ireland • Romania • Sweden • Slovakia
Average Countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spain • France • Croatia • Italy

Note: Since country clusters are based on assessments by young people residing in rural areas, respondents from country samples not providing such distinction, or missing answers at any other question necessary for the analysis could not be included, resulting in some country samples not being included in the analyses and subsequently also not being represented in the country clusters.

As Table 1 suggests, the countries are grouped according to the assessment of the young people living in rural areas in line with a simple pattern: at the top of the table, the Most Developed Countries scored highest in most of the questions, while at the bottom of the table, the Average Countries scored very close to the mean values for each of the questions. This pattern is clearly visible in Figure 17 where mean values for all questions taken into account when clustering the countries are presented for each of the country clusters and the whole sample.

At the same time, Figure 17 shows that for all country clusters, the domain of infrastructure is perceived as the most problematic by the young people, scoring very low in comparison to other domains. Rural traditions, on the other hand, are perceived as well-valued by young people across all country clusters, and access to housing seems to be seen by the young people as the least troubling aspects of rural areas across all country clusters.

Figure 17: Differences in youth assessment of the rural areas in mean values according to country clusters.

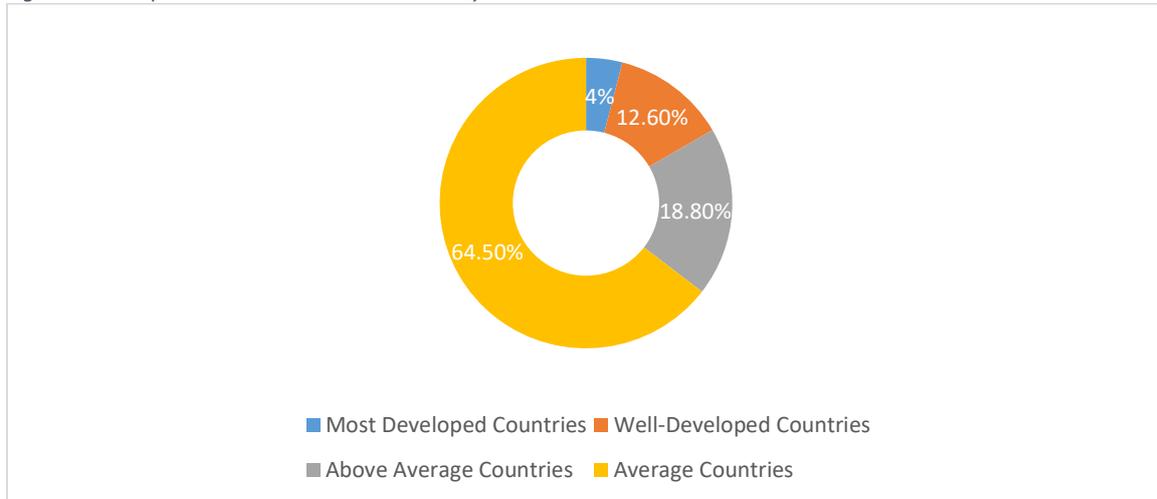


Note: All mean differences higher than 0.1 are statistically significant. Scale ranges from 1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree.

To better understand the nature of the country clusters, Figure 18 shows how the whole survey sample is distributed across the clusters. The Most Developed and Well-Developed Countries together contain about one fifth of the sample, while Above Average Countries represent another fifth, and the remaining approximately two thirds of the sample can be found in the cluster of Average Countries. This distribution is in line with the fact that the most populated countries such as Spain, France or Italy belong to the cluster of Average Countries (see Table 1); while a mixture of smaller and larger countries such as Bulgaria and Ireland located in the Above Average Country cluster; and at the same

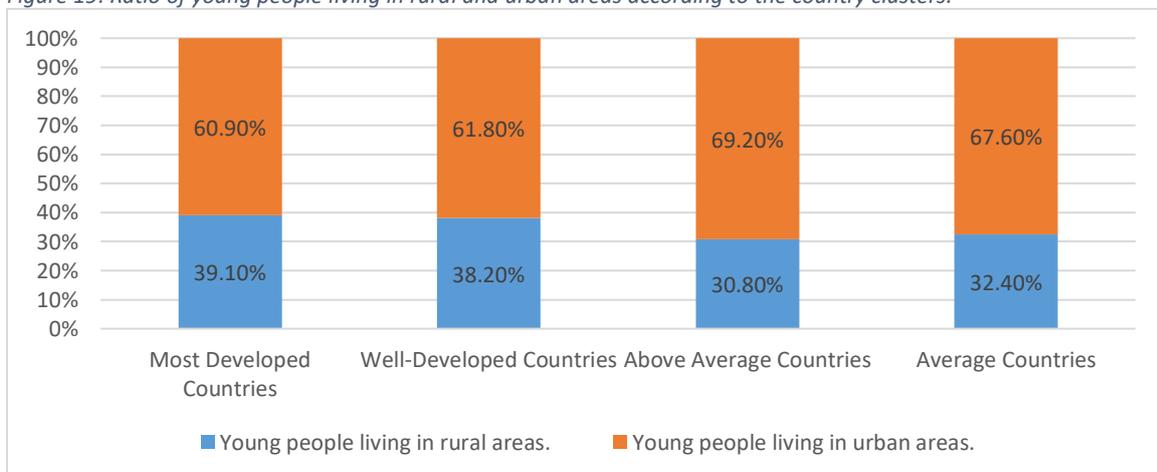
time a collection of predominantly smaller countries such as Denmark or Luxembourg falls into the Well-Developed Countries cluster; which leaves two small countries in the cluster of the Most Developed ones.

Figure 18: Sample distribution across the country clusters.



Interestingly, as shown in Figure 19, there are substantially more young people living in rural areas of the Most Developed and Well-Developed Countries in comparison to the Above Average and Average ones. This might suggest that young people not only assess the conditions of the rural areas differently across the country clusters, but that this assessment also influences their willingness to live in the rural regions. This interpretation, however, needs to be further explored in discussions with young people, since the limitations of the EU YD survey create space for yet another potential explanation: that young people living in rural areas in Above Average and Average Countries are simply less prone to taking part in the Youth Dialogue surveys.

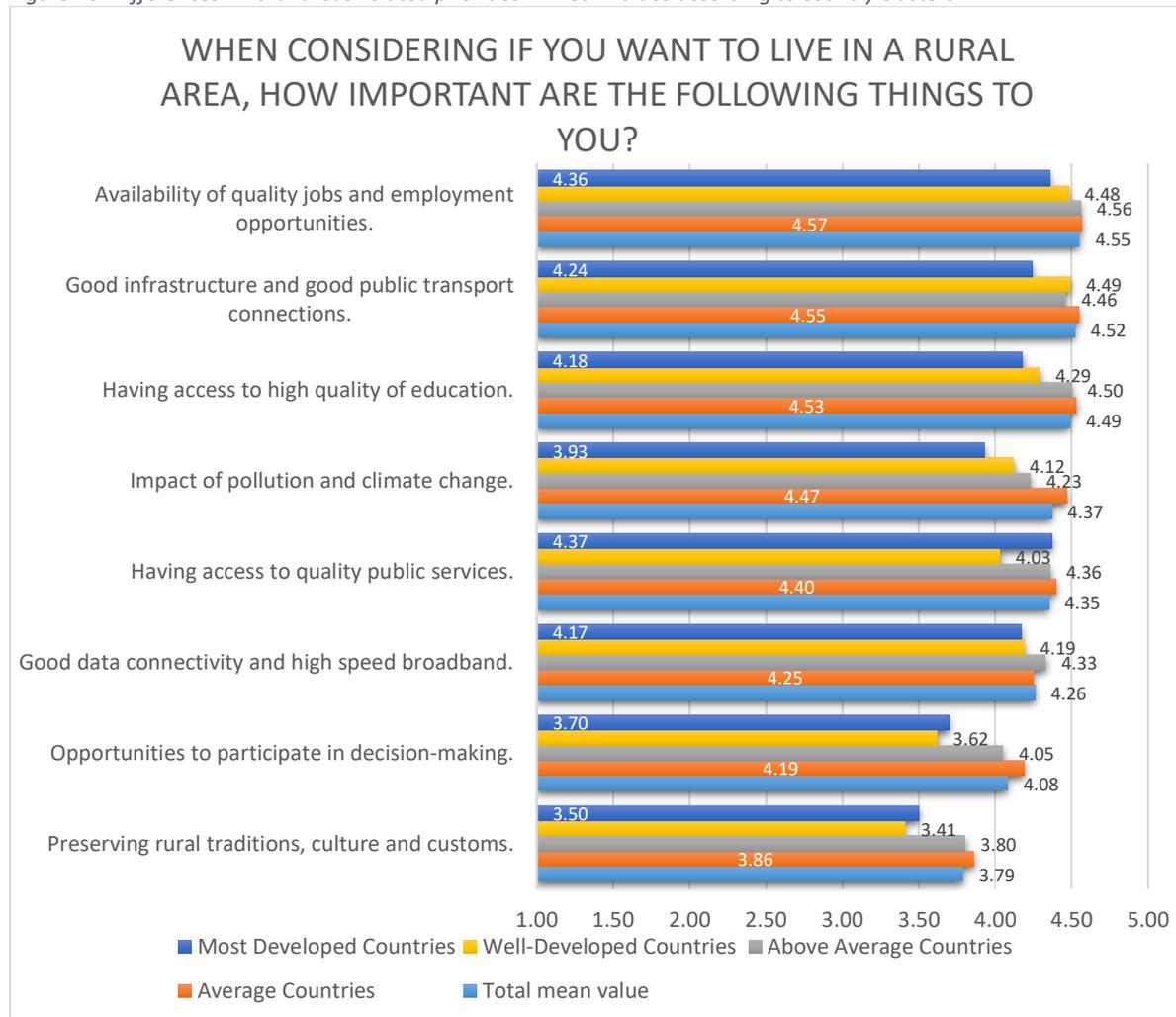
Figure 19: Ratio of young people living in rural and urban areas according to the country clusters.



Note: All differences are statistically significant.

In order to further utilize the country clusters, comparisons of mean values across the clusters was conducted in order to explore whether the young people from different country clusters also exhibit various preferences in connection to priorities in rural area development and in their assessment of state of play in the employment domain³.

Figure 20: Differences in rural areas-related priorities in mean values according to country clusters.



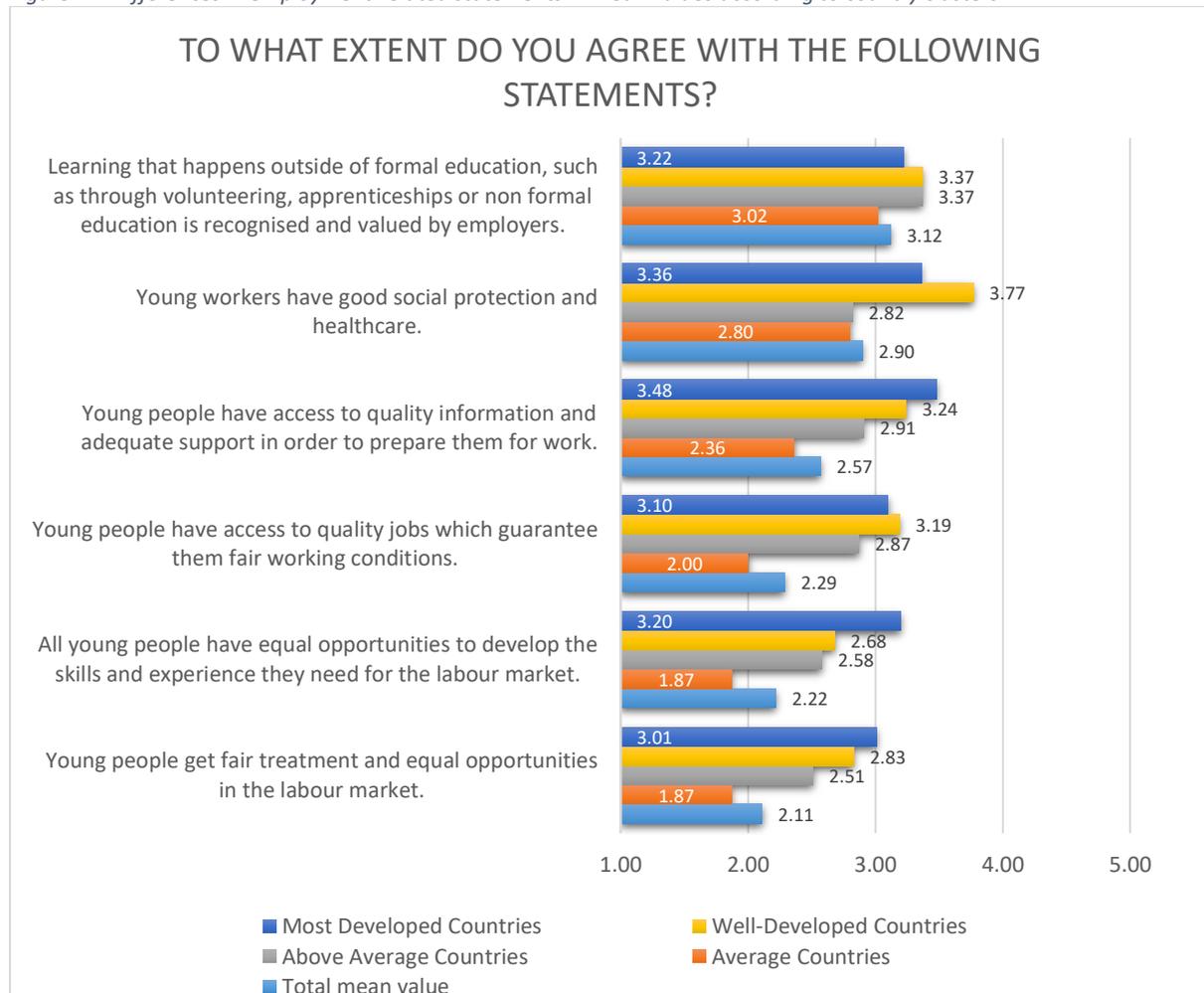
Note: All mean differences higher than 0.1 are statistically significant. Scale ranges from 1 = Very unimportant to 5 = Very important.

Figure 20 presents results for the rural areas and exhibits interesting patterns. The Most Developed Countries score in the vast majority of items the lowest, usually followed by the Well-Developed Countries, with the Above Average and Average countries scoring similarly, and usually rather high. This may suggest that, generally speaking, in countries where rural areas are highly developed, the young people are more content and express their priorities for rural areas in a more modest way, while young people from countries where rural areas can still be much improved express their views

³ The domain of youth work was intentionally left out as it is not necessarily directly connected to the level of development in rural areas.

in a starker way⁴. This picture differs in case of access to quality public services as well as in case of quality data connectivity, priorities which seem to be equally important to young people across all cluster countries. In other words, no matter how developed the rural areas are, young people see quality public services and data connectivity as high priorities.

Figure 21: Differences in employment-related statements in mean values according to country clusters.



Note: All mean differences higher than 0.2 are statistically significant. Scale ranges from 1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree.

Equally interesting is information in Figure 21 which presents mean values across the country clusters in case of their assessment of the employment domain. The trend is exactly the opposite to the one presented in Figure 20. Young people in countries which are the Most or Well-Developed exhibit notably higher levels of content with the situation at the labour market. On the other hand, especially young people from Average Countries express a rather harsh criticism of the labour market situation. This suggests a general link between the development of rural areas and the labour market situation

⁴ Further analyses of the country clusters and priorities expressed by the young people for the rural areas confirms this conclusion through weak correlational relationship and, in some cases, positive results of adjusted residual analyses.

in the given country⁵: young people tell us that the more they consider the rural areas to be developed, the better they perceive the situation at the labour market and vice versa.

Conclusions

Four clusters were identified, grouping countries in line with how young people living in rural areas perceive the development of rural regions. Clusters are subsequently used for further analysis of the priorities young people view in connection to rural area development and to their assessment of different aspects of quality employment.

Two links were identified. Firstly, young people from country clusters which perform well in developing their rural areas show less demanding approach when listing priorities for further development of the rural areas. Secondly, young people from country clusters which perform well in developing rural areas also suggest that the employment quality is high.

As is the case in many of such findings, it is not possible to determine whether the link presented above between the country clusters and the domain of quality employment, is based on cause and effect, or whether this link is based on another influence completely. It is, in other words, not possible to tell whether, for example, a better situation in the employment domain causes improvement in rural areas or whether, for instance, well-structured youth policies may affect both the employment situation of the young people and the development of rural areas at the same time. In any case, it is pointing further debates in a direction of possible good practice examples and links which may be useful to keep in mind.

⁵ Again, further analyses of the country clusters and assessments of the quality of labour market expressed by young people confirms this conclusion through weak to medium sized correlational relationship and positive results of adjusted residual analyses.