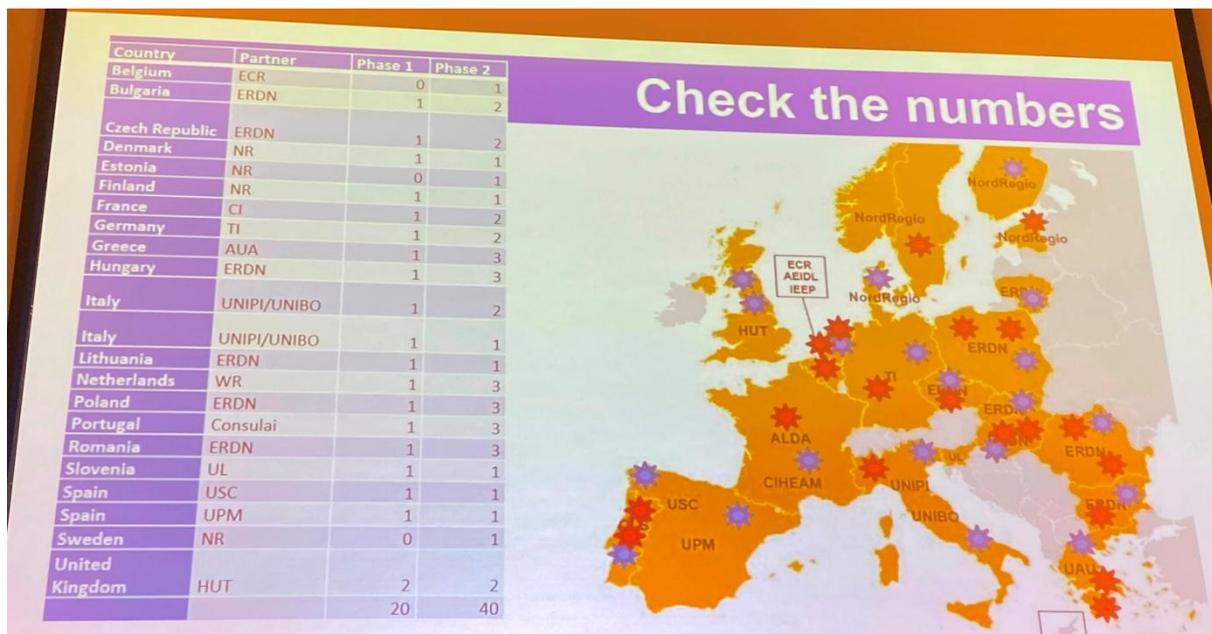


## New participatory EU hub for contributing to shaping future policies and research for rural areas

(22 October 2019) - One of the most ambitious public participation projects ever funded by the European Commission has just been launched today.



The Sustainable Hub to Engage into Rural Policies with Actors ([SHERPA](#)) is a four-year project funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme and is coordinated by [ECORYS](#) Brussels. AEIDL will be leading the work on stakeholder engagement, communications and dissemination and contribute to the rest of the activities of the project with its expertise on rural development.

The project aims at engaging citizens, stakeholders, scientists, and decision-makers in formulating recommendations with the ambition to redefine European development policies and the research agenda for rural areas. The interaction between research, policy and citizens will take place in up to 40 Multi-Actor Platforms (MAPs) set up in 20 Member States and in a MAP at EU level.

The SHERPA rural citizens-science-policy hub will contribute to policy development in three areas:

- providing inputs for the design of future research policies, with a focus on preparation of work programmes under Horizon Europe;
- supporting the implementation of policies relevant to rural areas in the 2021-2027 programming period;
- helping set the direction of rural policies in the next programming period (after 2027).

SHERPA's implementation approach will follow four guiding principles: flexible programming of activities to enable timely and responsive contributions to policy making, impartiality and transparency; recognition of the diversity of EU rural territories and multi-level interactions; and co-construction.

*“The project will adopt a new inclusive approach to facilitate the establishment of lasting interfaces between society, science and policy stakeholders dedicated to strengthening the resilience of rural areas.”*

Olivier Chartier, Project Coordinator

At its core, SHERPA is designed to ensure the effective use of knowledge gained from previous investment in research, and empower key actors in the development of public policy in rural areas. The project will set a new standard for shaping a common vision for the future of rural areas and public participation through scoping and stock-taking of past research results, development and assessment of solutions for addressing challenges and opportunities for the next two decades.

A key outcome from the project will be the development of position papers that will provide policy recommendations on specific thematic areas, on the basis of previous research and the local input of the MAPs.

By uniting 17 partners from all over Europe, SHERPA will build strong capacities in the field – inspiring for future engagement and evidence-based policy-making processes.

During the kick-off meeting, the MAPs of the project expressed the interest to work on a variety of policy issues related to service provision and well-being, climate change, digitisation, sustainability and agriculture.

### **What is next?**

Early next year, SHERPA will pilot the methodology in a number of selected MAPs in different Member States to develop the first SHERPA position papers. The official website of SHERPA will be launched very soon together with the Social Media channels.

- For more information on the project and the partners, please visit <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/rcn/225217/factsheet/en>
- **Press contact:** Robin Salter, Communication Manager of SHERPA, Association Européenne pour l'Information sur le Développement Local-AEIDL: [rsa@aeidl.eu](mailto:rsa@aeidl.eu)

