European Rural Development Network

Institutions unlocking opportunity and impact.

BEYOND INFRASTRUCTURE:

Linking Human Activation and Institutional Opportunity for Rural Regeneration and Food System Resilience

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THE CHALLENGE

Despite decades of subsidies, grants, and infrastructure investment, many rural regions across Europe continue to experience:

- Depopulation and generational outmigration
- Declining productive capacity
- Persistent dependence on external support

Infrastructure creates the possibility of development. People create development.

Sustainable rural regeneration requires both.

OUR APPROACH

We propose an integrated framework that links human activation with institutional opportunity.

TFE / EF
(HUMAN ACTIVATION)

Activating local potential and entrepreneurial capacity through Third Force Economics (TFE) and Enterprise Facilitation (EF).

+

FREC
(INSTITUTIONAL (OPPORTUNITY)

Creating the structural conditions through the Fortin Rural Economic Compact (FREC) to translate initiative into sustainable regeneration.

RURAL REGENERATION AND FOOD SYSTEM RESILIENCE

Stronger communities. Viable livelihoods. Resilient food systems.

THE INTEGRATED FRAMEWORK: TFE/EF + FREC

TFE/EF + FREC = Human Activation + Institutional Opportunity

TFE / EF
(HUMAN ACTIVATION)

- Listen
- Discover
- Support
- Enterprise
- Community



FREC
(FORTIN RURAL ECONOMIC COMPACT)
(INSTITUTIONAL OPPORTUNITY)

Institutions unlocking opportunity and impact.

INTEGRATED FRAMEWORK

People create development.
Institutions enable and sustain it.

OUTCOME: Self-Sustaining Rural Communities and Resilient Food Systems

HOW REGENERATION HAPPENS: THE HUMAN-FIRST PATHWAY

1	2	3	4	5	6
LOCAL POTENTIAL EXISTS	DISCOVERY & LISTENING	ENTERPRISE SUPPORT	INSTITUTIONAL ACCESS	VIABLE ENTERPRISE	RURAL REGENERATION
					
People have skills, ideas and motivation.	EF listens to identify real opportunities.	EF supports and strengthens entrepreneurs.	FREC foundations remove barriers and open doors.	Businesses start, grow and create value.	Communities thrive. Food systems resilient.

Human activation creates flow; institutional opportunity enables it to become sustainable development.

ENTERPRISE FACILITATION IN PRACTICE

- 40+ years of practice
- Hundreds of communities
- Across Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas.

IMPLEMENTATION EXAMPLE – 2028–2034 EU MFF

FREC provides a practical policy architecture for the EU Multiannual Financial Framework 2028–2034.

Integrates human development with institutional design to deliver measurable, place-based impact.

FREC: FORTIN RURAL ECONOMIC COMPACT SIX INTERDEPENDENT FOUNDATIONS

1 ANCHOR-COMMIT



Secures multi-year commitments from anchor institutions to buy local, hire local, and invest local.

2 PRODUCTION CREDITS



Makes local output visible and creditworthy in financing systems, unlocking working capital and growth.

3 HOUSING CONVERSION



Converts underused rural buildings into affordable worker and entrepreneur housing while limiting speculation.

4 INFRASTRUCTURE BOND



Transforms infrastructure commitments into enforceable delivery mechanisms.

5 RURAL FINANCE BOND



Provides long-term, patient capital to support investments beyond political cycles.

6 iTRUST



(Integrated Transport Regional Utilization System Theory)
A community-governed multimodal logistics system to improve market access and competitiveness.

THE CENTRAL THESIS

Human activation without structural inclusion leaves motivated entrepreneurs isolated.
Structural opportunity without human activation remains unused.

Together, they create the conditions for self-sustaining rural regeneration and food system resilience.

WHY IT MATTERS

- People choose rural life when viable opportunities exist.
- Rural living improves health, child development and quality of life.
- Small- and medium-scale producers are essential for resilient and diverse food systems.
- Integrated human and institutional investment creates self-sustaining, regenerative communities.

CALL TO ACTION

Invest in human activation and institutional opportunity.
Support place-based, people-driven regeneration.
Build resilient rural communities and food systems—together.

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