

A circular logo with the text "MIGRATION POLICY SCOTLAND" inside. The background of the entire slide is a scenic photograph of a Scottish landscape with a winding road through a valley, illuminated by golden light, under a dramatic, cloudy sky.

MIGRATION
POLICY
SCOTLAND

A MIGRATION POLICY SCOTLAND EVENT

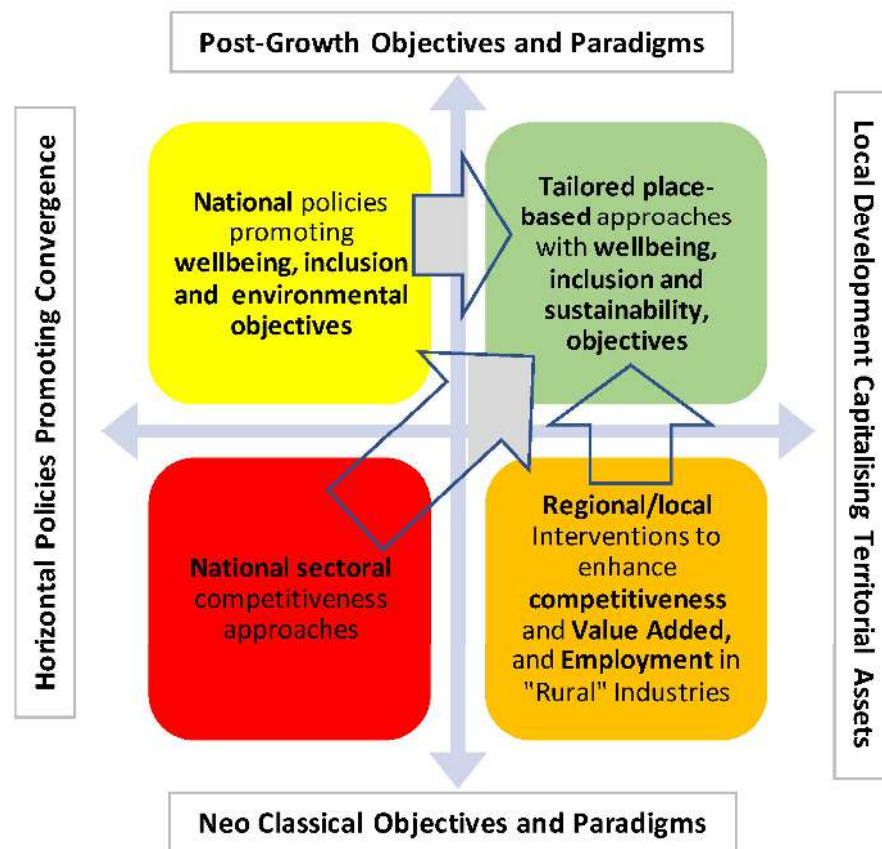
**MULTI-LEVEL POLICY
RESPONSES TO RURAL
DEPOPULATION:
THE ROLE OF MIGRATION**

FRIDAY 15TH SEPTEMBER 2023

10:00am

Addressing rural depopulation: A shift in focus?

- New ways of thinking about rural development, including population concerns and policy responses to these, include shift to thinking about balance and well-being rather than necessarily focus on growth (economic or demographic).
- Zeitgeist for local level initiatives and qualitative approaches is both fed by and feeds into supranational policy frameworks: EU / Council of Europe frameworks / OECD
 - Are national governments in some ways left out/ left behind?
 - Is the Scottish Government Addressing Depopulation Action Plan an opportunity to do this better?



(Dax, Copus and Ge, 2023: p. 360)

New policy approaches – who is in the driving seat?

“Small centres and rural areas must be involved in making themselves stand out. Some strategies that have been used to promote, attract, and retain immigrants include providing online information portals, welcoming community campaigns and events, employer-supported initiatives, and incentives for relocation.

Yet a piecemeal approach will not be enough to reinvigorate small centres. It will take a collective effort on the part of multiple levels of government, business associations and employers, community leaders and civil society, and the settlement sector. It will require both short-term initiatives, within a three-year timeframe, as well as longer-term efforts”

(Beyond the Big City – Canada Public Policy Forum)

- Local inputs/drivers
 - often quite holistic, intrinsic,
 - can match well to a focus on well-being,
 - uneasy fit with rigid policy divisions
 - harder to evaluate for ‘measurable’ economic or demographic outcomes
- National (and local?) policy
 - often quite siloed
 - focused on and measured by harder ‘quantitative’ outcomes
 - requires criteria for selection and evaluation of initiatives or investments

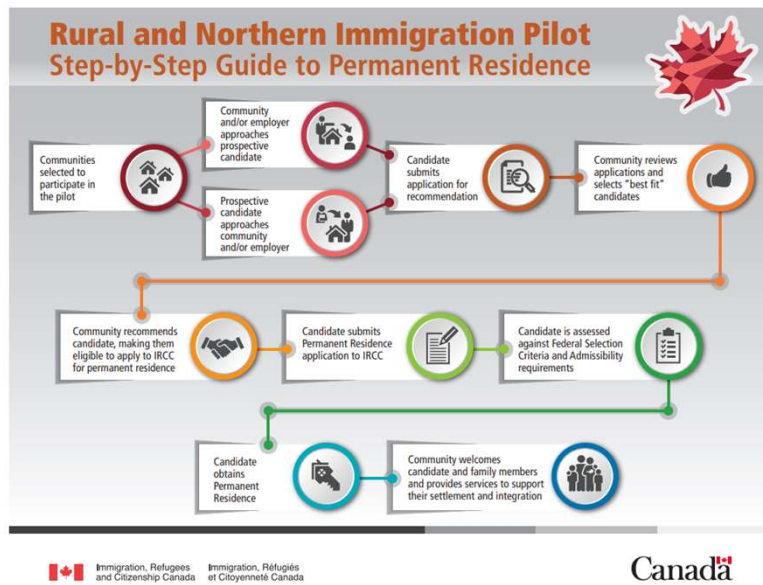


Multi-level policy making – how to call the Ceilidh?

- Good multi-level policy should result in a whole that is more than the sum of its parts. This requires:
 - Shared vision to bring together complex multi-level dynamics, both between different levels of government and with non-public actors (local stakeholders, private and third sector).
 - Clear mechanisms and processes to:
 - Assess resources and dynamics of diverse (rural) contexts
 - Spread resource, share learning and build capacity
 - Resources which are not only financial, and could also include:
 - Support for ‘horizontal’ exchange and capacity building
 - ‘Vertical’ dissemination of guiding principles and tools, and co-ordination across policy remits

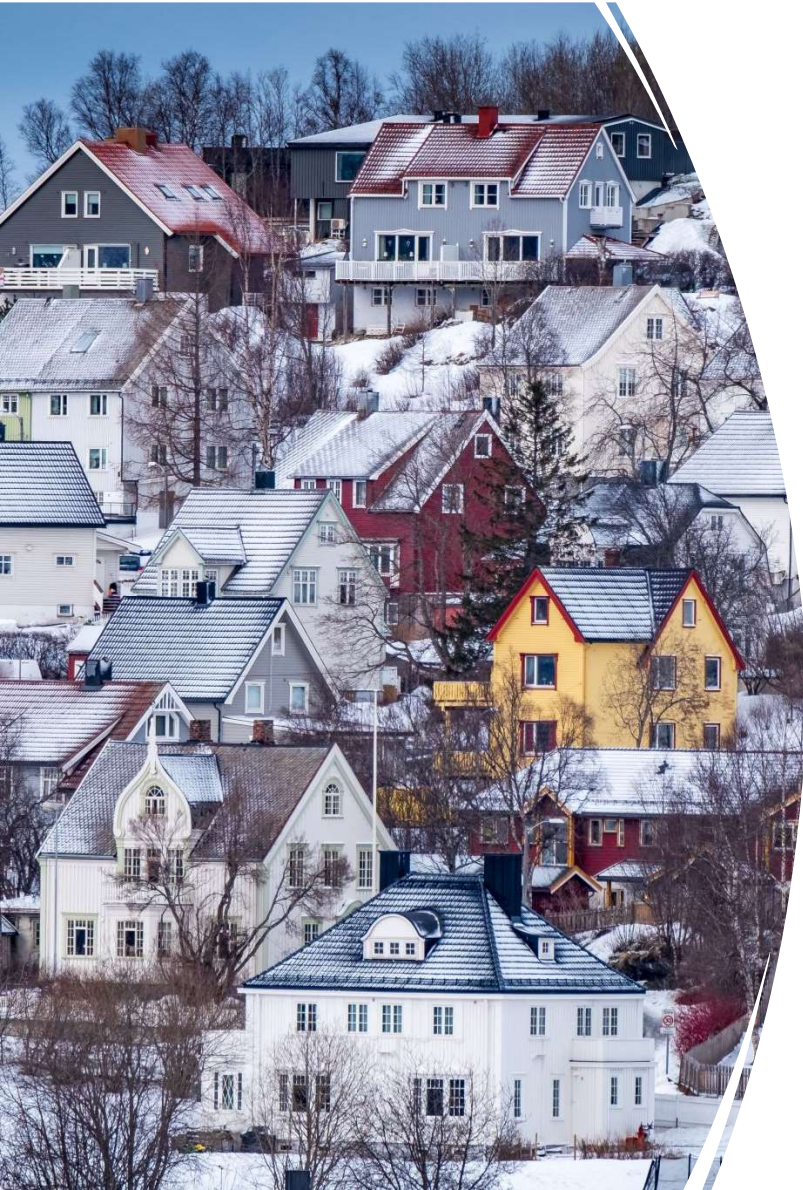
Attracting and retaining local populations – two contrasting examples of multi-level responses

Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot, Canada (2019-2022 – extended to 2024)



Empenta Artieda, Aragon, Spain (since 2016/17)





Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot, Canada

- Led by a Federal Government Department (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada) and the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario (FedNor)
- A permanent residence pathway to help bring skilled foreign workers to remote and rural areas 'to spread the benefits of economic immigration to smaller communities'
- Local delivery partners include local authorities, local economic and community development agencies, **employers** and ngos.
- Links to local needs through 'communities' creating own selection criteria for newcomers they want to settle and fill labour shortages.

'The program is community-driven, which means participating communities take the lead in attracting new immigrants and matching them with local job vacancies, promoting a welcoming community, and connecting newcomers to established community members and local settlement services.'

[Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot \(RNIP\) | CanadianVisa.org](#)

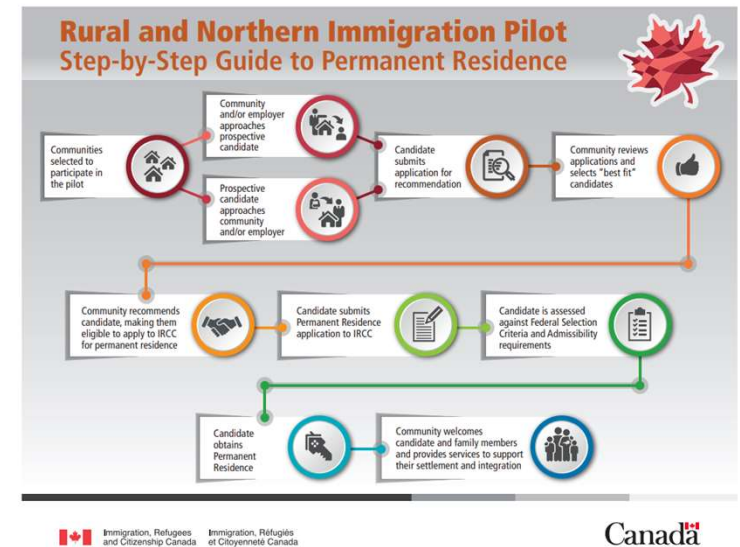


Empenta Artieda, Spain

- Project initiated by town council and mayor's office to counter economic and demographic decline of Artieda village
- Phased design includes:
 - Participative diagnosis: survey of inhabitants, mini focus groups and self-diagnostic workshops to define key concerns (housing, employment and social solidarity)
 - Development of 'Integral Plan of Action': anyone can propose ideas, these are measured against criteria under each priority concern, prioritized through consensus, taken forward by core team
- Core team – rotating teams of young people employed (part-time) by council, with funding from EU youth guarantee and Government of Aragon
- Integrated into wider 'Pueblos vivos' network connecting 7 local action groups working to curb depopulation in rural areas of Aragon – funded by EU (LEADER programme) and Government of Aragon (Rural development plan)

Evaluating the RNIP

- Pilot has been expanded since 2022, both in number of eligible jobs and geography (not number) of participating communities
- April 2023 proposals to make programme permanent based on quantitative evaluations:
 - New residents - 390 (2021); 1360 (2022); 6,120 (2023 – forecast)
 - Retention rates – no data yet but Atlantic Immigration Programme (inspiration for RNIP) doing well
- More local reviews and reports stress both quantitative and qualitative features
 - Migrants pleased to be working in jobs for which they are trained and qualified
 - Local communities receive both skilled workers and their families so there is a demographic multiplier
 - The work of providing ‘welcome’ is ongoing and it can be hard to maintain community ‘buy in’ for this
 - Concerns about longer term retention



Evaluating Empenta Artieda

- Evaluation mirrors participatory diagnostics and design.
 - Repeat survey of local residents and scoring of success of projects
 - Decisions about what to continue and identification of areas with less progress so far
- Quantitative outcomes modest – but 40 years of population decline has been replaced by modest increase:
 - 2 babies born and families stayed in the village
 - Some young people who moved away have returned,
 - Some new families (no former links to Artieda) moved there
- Workers Co-operative Ixambre (hive) established 2020 taking some key areas of work forward
 - Eco-Tourism – managing municipal tourist facilities: hostel/campsite/restaurant
 - Psychosocial accompaniment – for elderly/vulnerable etc.
 - Consultancy - Sharing learning and methodologies with other rural areas
- Areas where more progress needed
 - Housing and infrastructure – they now have more young people/families wishing to move to Artieda than they can accommodate



Is multi-level policy- making the answer?

- Shared vision as the starting point
- Aims and outcomes:
 - Framework for coordinating and sustaining local inputs
 - Spreading resource and building capacity
 - Refining processes and extending reach
- Evaluation
 - Important for decision-making and allocation of resource
 - Key to identifying where additional support is required, where learning can be shared
 - Both qualitative and quantitative evaluations are important
 - Needs to match well to aims and outcomes





Questions for discussion

- Is it possible to bring together the kind of top-down and bottom-up approaches of RNIP/Artieda, or are these mutually exclusive?
- What kind of criteria can be developed to measure whether initiatives and interventions are 'successful'?
- How important are wider structures of governance, political landscapes and traditions of policy-making in determining the nature of multi-level interventions?
- What should be the role of national government?