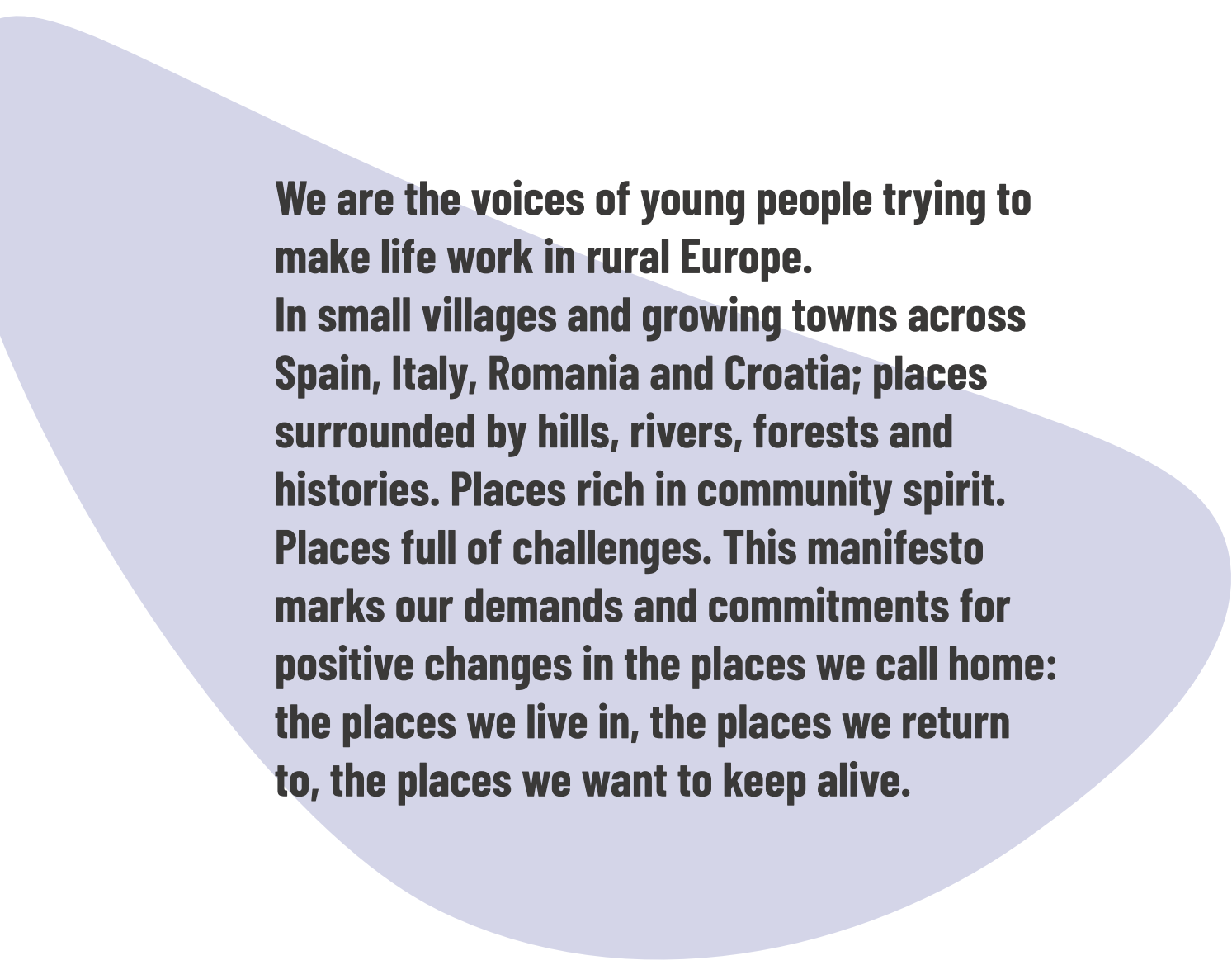




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WINDOWS OF CHANGE IN RURAL EUROPE: OUR MANIFESTO





We are the voices of young people trying to make life work in rural Europe. In small villages and growing towns across Spain, Italy, Romania and Croatia; places surrounded by hills, rivers, forests and histories. Places rich in community spirit. Places full of challenges. This manifesto marks our demands and commitments for positive changes in the places we call home: the places we live in, the places we return to, the places we want to keep alive.

THE CONTEXT WE SPEAK FROM, ACT FROM, DEMAND FROM

We are a group of people between 16 and 35 years old from different areas of Europe's rural hinterland (Spain, Italy, Romania and Croatia), trying to make lives work in towns or villages with populations between 100 and 31.000 people, who want to keep actively enlivening these places that we value. Our homes are full of structural problems: depopulation, ageing populations and generational disconnections, severe lack of job opportunities, limited public transport, health and wellbeing services, socio-cultural opportunities. But we see cracks—windows—in which we, in collaboration with our peers and local decision makers can make positive changes to the way these places are inhabited and kept alive.

OUR DEMANDS

- 1.** We as a rural youth community want the feeling of belonging to the place where we live and to the people we live with. We want to be safe, we want to be ourselves, we want to express ourselves and not be judged. We want spaces for young people that allow us to gather, speak openly and have lively social lives where mental health, sexuality and other aspects of our identity are not taboo. We want our local councils to make mental wellbeing and health visible and destigmatise it. We want clean, well-maintained outdoor public spaces which we will also be responsible for.
- 2.** We want the same opportunities to participate in culture and sport as our peers do in cities: we want the council to help us fund open house galleries that we can contribute to, as well as residencies and cultural training workshops from different artists, musicians, writers and makers.
- 3.** We want adequate, affordable and accessible infrastructure (housing, transport, internet, health services) that enable us to have fluid and practical connections to bigger towns and cities.
- 4.** We want more immediate job opportunities that start here and that our local councils have a role in creating. We want them to build partnerships with local businesses to set up co-financing internships of at least n.6 months for youth and to offer reduced taxes to local businesses that can host career starting interns.
- 5.** We want more intercultural exchange and for our local councils and civil society organisations to support the incubation of a "European" space in their offices and support the promotion of different forms of European culture within our towns.

OUR COMMITMENTS

We are committed to:

-> **Improving community social life**

- making connections between the members of the community and deconstructing discrimination;
- bringing and introducing people to the village;
- helping develop cultural opportunities.

-> **Local sustainable development**

- contributing to increasing transportation from the bottom-up;
- buying all our groceries from local businesses;
- committing to sustainable tourism through grassroots actions.

-> **Rural activism**

- volunteering;
- taking responsibility for looking after the public spaces and all its living beings (animals, plants);
- contribute to empowering young people to make their own associations and participate in EU opportunities.

OUR TOOLS

We will realise these commitments through the committed use of the following tools:

- Taking advantage of European youth project opportunities;
- Continuing local and European networking;
- Keeping an open dialogue with local decision makers;
- Regularly carrying out a skills assessment of ourselves and our peers to remind ourselves of what WE can DO, NOW;
- Helping facilitate in intercultural exchanges and participating in them.

OUR MESSAGE

We, young people, who are trying to make life work in rural areas, believe that we can start opening up small but impactful windows of change in our communities, starting from these demands, commitments and tools.



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