



UNIVERSITÀ
CATTOLICA
del Sacro Cuore



EUROPEAN[®]
RURAL YOUTH
OBSERVATORY

Summer School
June 16 to 21, 2025

***“Empowering Rural Communities. From Theory to Practice in
Community Development”***

Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore – Campus Santa Monica, Cremona (Italy)

The summer school is designed for professionals, researchers, and practitioners engaged in various sectors related to rural development, community work, and social innovation. It is particularly relevant for individuals working in:

- Educational Institutions: Schools, universities, and vocational training centers involved in rural education and digital learning initiatives.
- Cooperatives and Social Enterprises: Organizations focused on local economic development, social innovation, and sustainable entrepreneurship in rural areas.
- Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Civil Society: Entities working on social inclusion, climate justice, youth empowerment, and participatory governance.
- Local and Regional Public Administrations: Policy advisors, local development officers, and municipal representatives engaged in rural and territorial planning.
- Research Institutions and Think Tanks: Scholars and professionals conducting interdisciplinary research on rural transformation and community-driven policies.
- International Organizations and Development Agencies: Professionals involved in global and European rural development programs, funding mechanisms, and policy implementation.

Outgoing knowledge

- Theoretical foundations of rural community development, including community approach and bioecological frameworks
- Key principles of participatory methodologies and their application in rural contexts
- Understanding of social inclusion strategies and resilience-building in marginalized communities
- Insights into rural education challenges and innovative solutions for learning accessibility
- Analysis of rural labor markets and strategies for fostering local entrepreneurship
- Knowledge of sustainability and climate justice approaches in rural development
- Case studies of successful rural interventions across Europe and beyond
- Policy frameworks and governance structures influencing rural community development
- Ethical considerations in community-based research and participatory methodologies
- Impact assessment techniques for evaluating rural development initiative

Teaching methods

The summer school adopts an integrated teaching approach, combining theoretical and methodological lectures, case study analyses, and expert contributions. Participants will engage in interactive discussions and practical sessions designed to bridge theory with real-world applications. Course materials, including lecture slides and supplementary resources, will be provided in digital formats. Additional reading materials and reference documents will be distributed throughout the course to support deeper exploration of key topics.

Schedule Program

The program includes a total of 40 hours of interactive training, combining lectures, thematic sessions, and participatory workshops.

- Monday to Friday
 - Morning sessions: 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM
 - Afternoon sessions: 2:00 PM – 5:00 PM
- Saturday
 - Field trip: 5h (to be defined)

Day	Title	Readings
1	EURYO conference, Welcome tour and Foundations of Community Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morning Session: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ EURYO conference ○ Welcome tour • Afternoon Session: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Introduction to community approach and its relevance in rural contexts. ○ Exploration of the bioecological model and other key theories in community development.
2	Social Inclusion, youth mobility and climate justice in rural areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morning Session: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Youth Mobility and Climate Justice in Rural Areas: Exploring how environmental challenges impact youth migration patterns, employment opportunities, and long-term sustainability in rural communities. ○ Social Inclusion in Rural Areas: Addressing challenges of marginalization, demographic shifts, and equitable access to resources for diverse rural populations. ○ Interconnections Between Climate Justice and Social Inclusion: Examining how climate-related policies and interventions can either reinforce or mitigate social inequalities in rural communities. • Afternoon Session: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Working in Communities: The Role of Participatory Action Research (PAR): Understanding how PAR fosters inclusive, community-driven development in rural contexts.

3	Sustainability and Resilient Rural Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morning Session: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The intersection of sustainability and rural development. ○ Integrating ecological, economic, and social dimensions for resilience. ○ Best practices in renewable energy, supply chain, sustainable agriculture, and climate adaptation. • Afternoon Session: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Methods and Tools for Community-Based Research: Exploring participatory techniques and methods.
4	Education and Lifelong Learning in Rural Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morning Session: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Barriers to Access and Quality in Rural Education: Examining geographical, economic, and infrastructural challenges that limit educational opportunities in rural communities. ○ Opportunities for Digital Innovation and Lifelong Learning: Exploring how digital tools, online education, and blended learning can enhance access to education in remote areas. ○ Successful Educational Initiatives in Rural Settings: Analyzing best practices and innovative models that have improved rural education across different regions • Afternoon Session: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Methods and Tools for Community-Based Research: Exploring participatory techniques and methods.
5	Labor, Economic Development, and Rural Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morning Session: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Challenges and Opportunities in the Rural Labor Market: Understanding economic trends, employment gaps, and the impact of demographic shifts on rural job opportunities. ○ Entrepreneurship and Local Economic Development: Exploring strategies for fostering rural entrepreneurship, cooperatives, and sustainable business models. ○ Designing Employment and Skills Development Strategies: Developing participatory approaches to support job creation, workforce training, and economic resilience in rural areas. • Afternoon Session: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Methods and Tools for Community-Based Research: Exploring participatory techniques and methods.
6	Field Visit to a Rural reality in Cremona	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Guided exploration of rural development initiatives.

Faculty:

- **Ellena, Adriano Mauro** – Research fellow in Social and Community Psychology at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano-Brescia-Cremona (Italy)
- **Fernandes-Jesus, Maria** – Assistant Professor in Psychology (Psychology) at University of Sussex (United Kingdom)
- **Flynn, Paul** – researcher and lecturer in education at the School of Education, NUI Galway (Ireland)
- **Mujcinovic, Alen** – Assistant Professor, Faculty of Agriculture and Food Science, University of Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
- **Petrescu, Claudia** – Senior Researcher at Romanian Academy - Research Institute For Quality Of Life; University Of Bucharest - Faculty Of Sociology And Social Work (Romania)

Scientifico Directors:

- **Marta, Elena** – Full Professor in Social and Community Psychology at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano-Brescia-Cremona (Italy)
- **Simões, Francisco** – Assistant Researcher at Cis-Iscte (Portugal)

Scientific Committee:

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- **Fernandes-Jesus, Maria** – Assistant Professor in Psychology (Psychology) at University of Sussex (United Kingdom)
- **Ferreira, Tatiana** –Santarém Polytechnic University - School of Education (Portugal)
- **Flynn, Paul** – researcher and lecturer in education at the School of Education, NUI Galway (Ireland)
- **Marta, Elena** – Full Professor in Social and Community Psychology at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano-Brescia-Cremona (Italy)
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- **Soler Porta, Mariano** – Associate Professor at the Universidad de Malaga, Department of Business and Management (Spain)