



EEB

European
Environmental
Bureau


Energy Transition & Climate Neutrality

What rural areas need to benefit from
Europe's renewable rollout

23 April 2026



Rural areas central to energy transition

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- **(1) Renewables are the future**
 - **(2) Renewable potential is rural**
 - (3) Local citizen and political support is crucial
 - (4) Distribute renewables' profits



(1) Renewables are the future

- Renewables are **cheap, scalable, fast**
- **Combustion** is inefficient, dirty and climate destructive.
- We **have the technologies** to electrify nearly everything
- Renewable industry will be **central part of economy**



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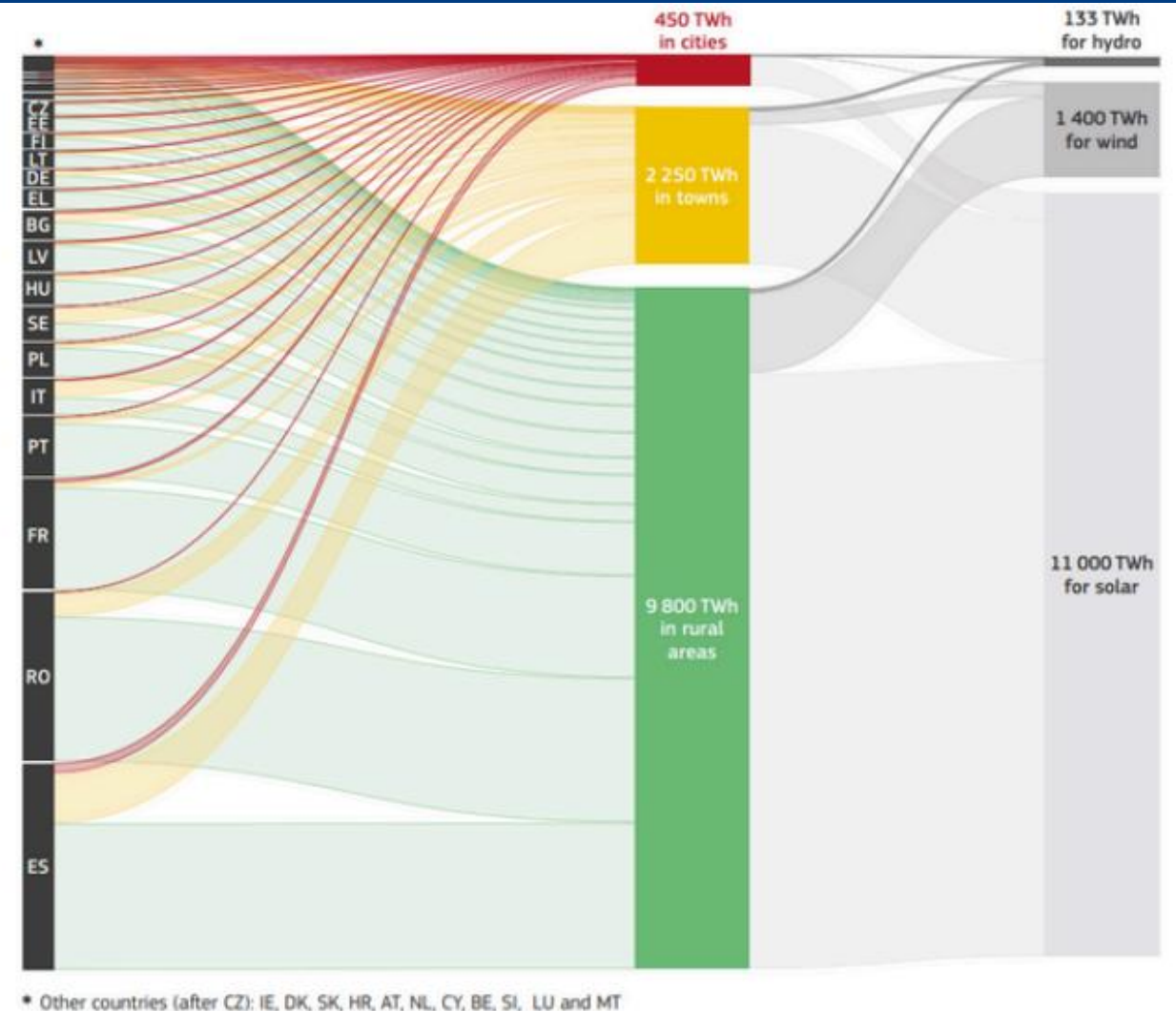
...what role do rural areas want to play in this?



(2) Renewable potential is rural

Source: JRC 2024
(<https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC135612>)

Note: JRC's assessment for rooftop PV is based on very conservative assumptions; newer analyses show higher potentials.





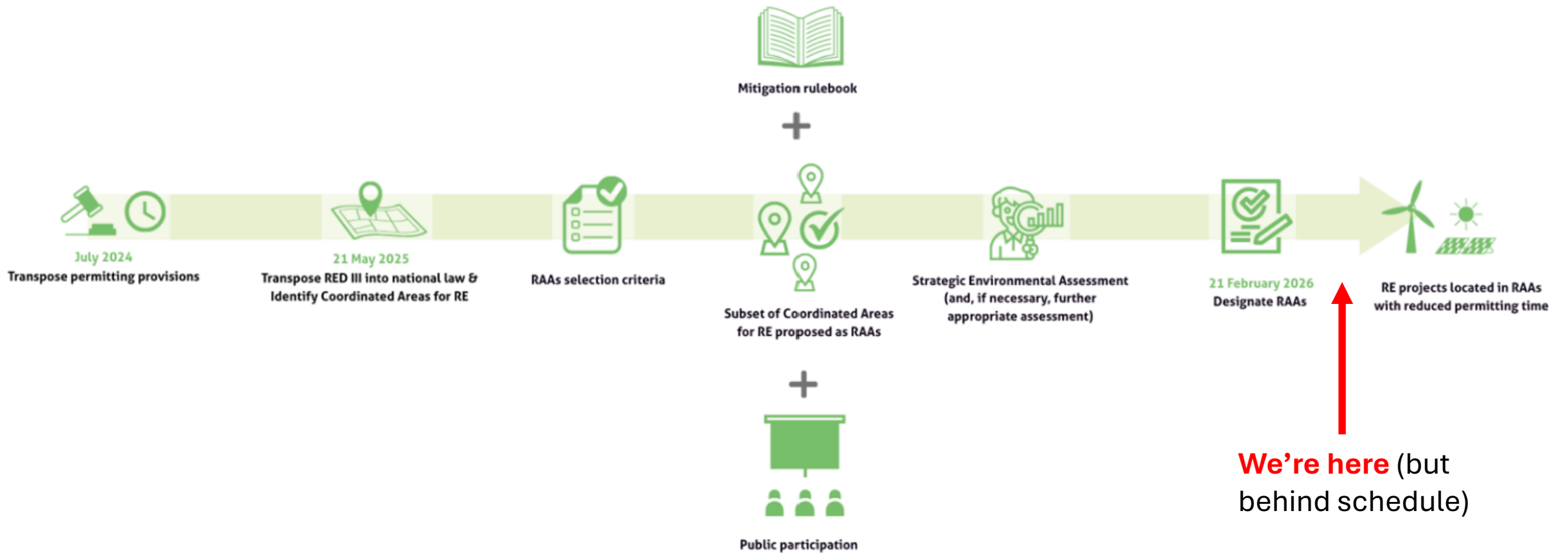
(3) Local citizen & political support

- **Projects with no social licence** face delays, legal challenges, no permits.
- **Participation** helps foster understanding.
- Two-stage **spatial planning** may facilitate calm discussion.





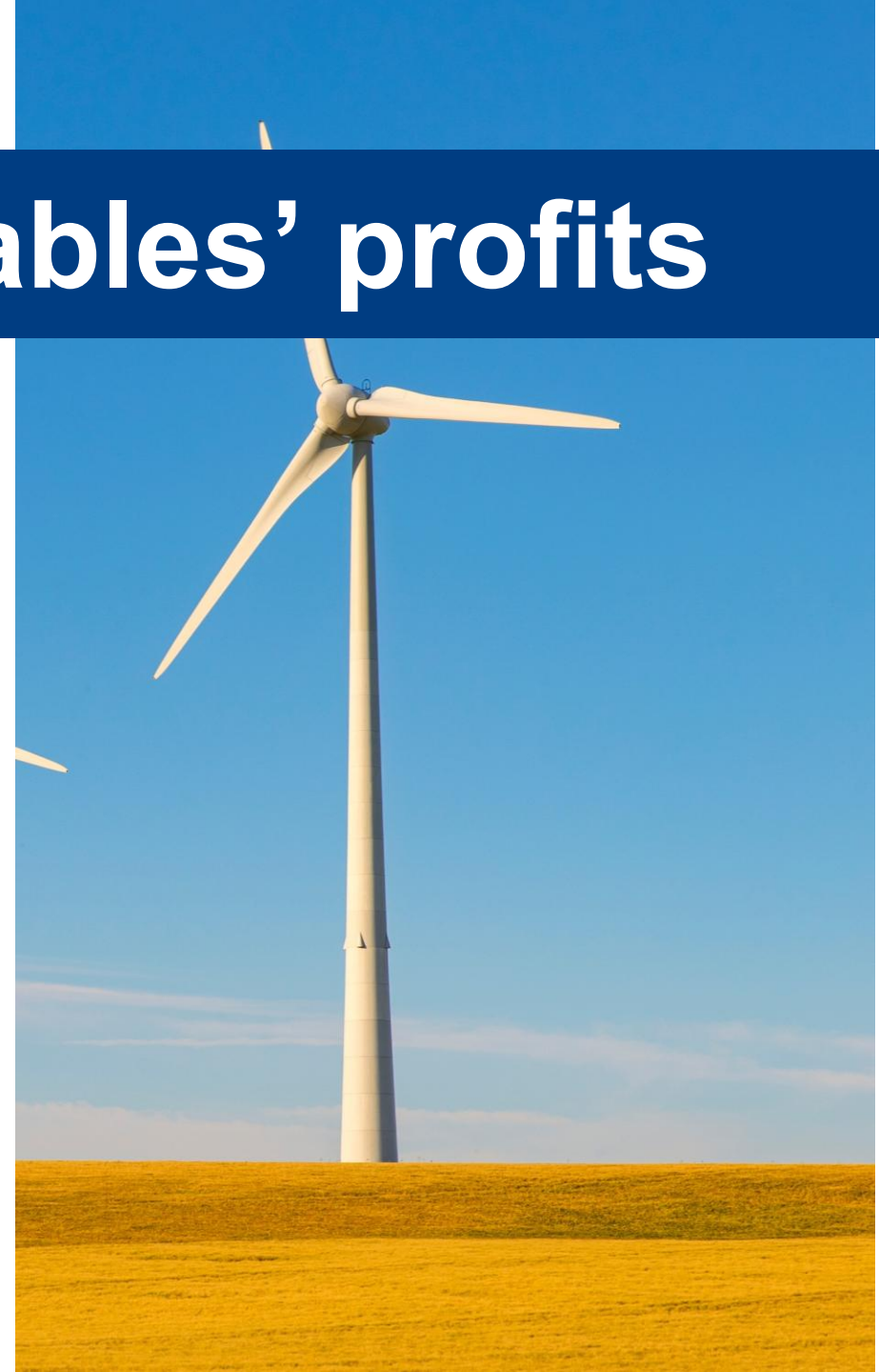
Policy urgency: RED III and RE acceleration





(4) Distribute renewables' profits

- Capital-intensive legacy utilities –
Citizen-owned projects: a spectrum of sharing
 - Funding public goods & infrastructure:
renewables **can help regenerate** rural areas
- => How to invest public monies sustainably?





The renewable geo-economy

- **Integrate renewables into everything:**

Agri-PV: which crops, which business model?
Renewables help shade against heat

Home-PV: Renewables makes **rural areas attractive**: for industry, households, admin?

- Rural areas **can** be winners of the energy transition?





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Do we have a vision how?

