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For about one third pandemic provokes a new perception of country life

Berlin (ots) -

- More than half of all urbanites could imagine moving to the countryside – in contrast, the majority of rural residents want to stay where they live.
- This is a main finding of the Vodafone Institute's Digitising Europe Pulse, a citizen survey, conducted by Kantar in 15 European countries.
- For about one third the pandemic provokes a new perception of country life.
- Advantages of country life predominate for most of urbanites (41%).
- For 72% of urbanites a good internet connection is a must have and by far the number one precondition for a life at the countryside.

The COVID-19 crisis has changed the Europeans attitude towards living at the countryside: 38% of the surveyed urbanites state, that the pandemic influenced or changed their opinion on living at the countryside, according to the Digitising Europe Pulse, a new survey commissioned by the Vodafone Institute, and conducted by Kantar, with over 15,000 interviewees from 15 European countries. Among people living in large cities (more than 500.000 inhabitants) this figure is even higher (45%).*

56% of the surveyed urbanites could imagine moving to the countryside in the next one or two years (16% "definitely" and 40% "maybe"). There is hardly any difference between the European countries – apart from the Netherlands, where only 36% can imagine moving to the countryside. Whereas most rural residents are fine with where they live (59%); only 35% could imagine moving to a city in the nearer future.

Asked about advantages and disadvantages of the country life, 69% respectively 68% of the urbanites consider the closeness to nature and its benefits for a healthy lifestyle as the biggest virtues. Only 35% name cheaper rents as a benefit of country life. The advantages of country life predominate for 41% of urbanites.

A good internet connection more important than a good health infrastructure

The number one precondition for a life at the countryside is by far a good internet connection: 72% of urbanites say it's a must-have; for 21% it's a nice to have. This finding is consistent for all European countries. However, there are differences in detail – for instance in Estonia 87% and in Ireland 77% consider a good internet connection as a must-have, while in France and the United Kingdom only 62% respectively 66% rate the internet connection as absolutely necessary.

In fact, reliable internet connection was deemed more important than good health infrastructure, which 56% agreed this is essential, or good public transport which 43% agreed was a 'must-have'. Only 36% consider good educational institutions as an essential pre-requisite. In Estonia 48% value access to education as vital, and 46% of Romanians. In contrast, Germany, Sweden, the UK and the Netherlands, scored lowly, with 26% naming access to high educational institutions as a 'must-have'.

How the EU and governments can realize the potential of rural communities and reinforce rural digitization along the Digital Decade targets is also being analyzed in a new report produced by Deloitte and commissioned by the Vodafone Group "[Enhancing rural connectivity](#)".

Inger Paus, Managing Director of the Vodafone Institute, said:

"In light of the experiences of the pandemic, closing the gap between urban and rural life seems has become even more important in the European Union. As the new Digitising Europe Pulse shows, connectivity is the most necessary precondition for moving to the countryside, which still proves to be insufficient in many countries. With the Digital Decade targets in mind and investments through the Recovery and Resilience Facility directed toward digital transformation, the EU now has a unique opportunity to foster cohesion and improve the quality of life of millions of European citizens."

Methodology

An online survey conducted by Kantar of 15,000 citizens from across 15 European countries including: Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, UK. There was a sample size of at least 1,000 interviews per country and all participants were aged 16 years or older. This research was conducted between 05.05.-16.05.2021. The complete report will be available in the upcoming weeks.

Vodafone Institute for Society and Communications

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between business, academia and politics.

* The respondents were divided into inhabitants of the countryside (<10.000 inhabitants), small/medium cities (10.000-500.000 inhabitants) and large cities (>500.000 inhabitants).

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