Building Vibrant Rural Communities

ACORN
empowering young rural developers

3 areas that youth can make a difference

3. Digital Futures

Co-funded by the European Union

Overview

Together, we thrive!

This bite-size module puts the spotlight on three areas that youth can bring unique perspectives and solutions to.

1. Health and wellbeing

2. Cultural and community identity

3. **Digital futures**

Let's dive into cultural and community identity..

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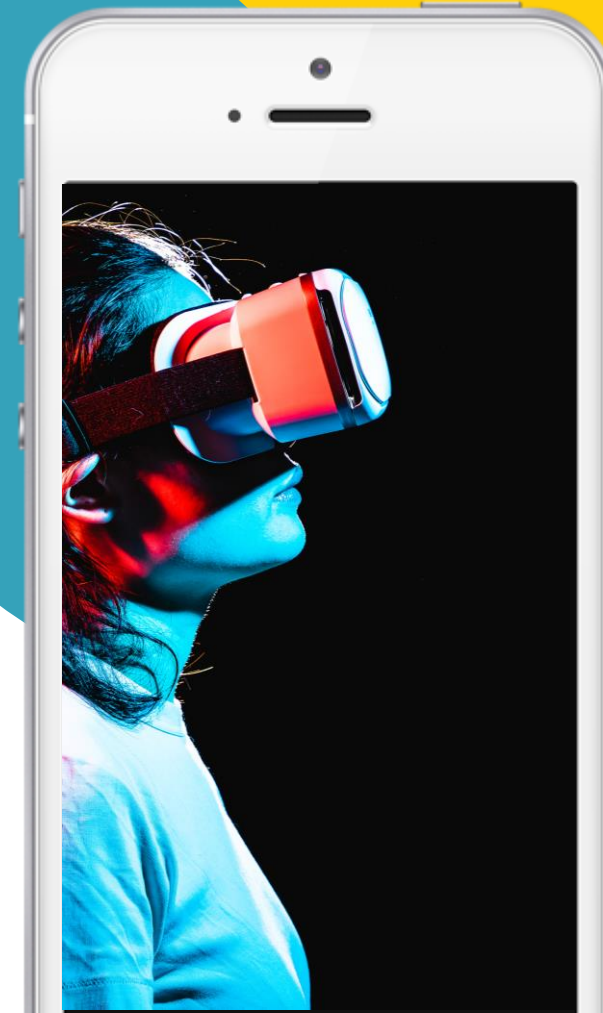
03
Digital Futures

The context...

Digital futures hold immense potential for rural youth. By embracing digital technologies and using their innate skills, they can transform their communities, enhance their quality of life, and create a more connected and prosperous future.

The Digital Divide

In rural areas, there is often a significant gap in access to digital technologies and high-speed internet compared to urban centres. This digital divide can limit educational opportunities, hinder access to essential services, and restrict social and economic development with a particular impact on the younger population.
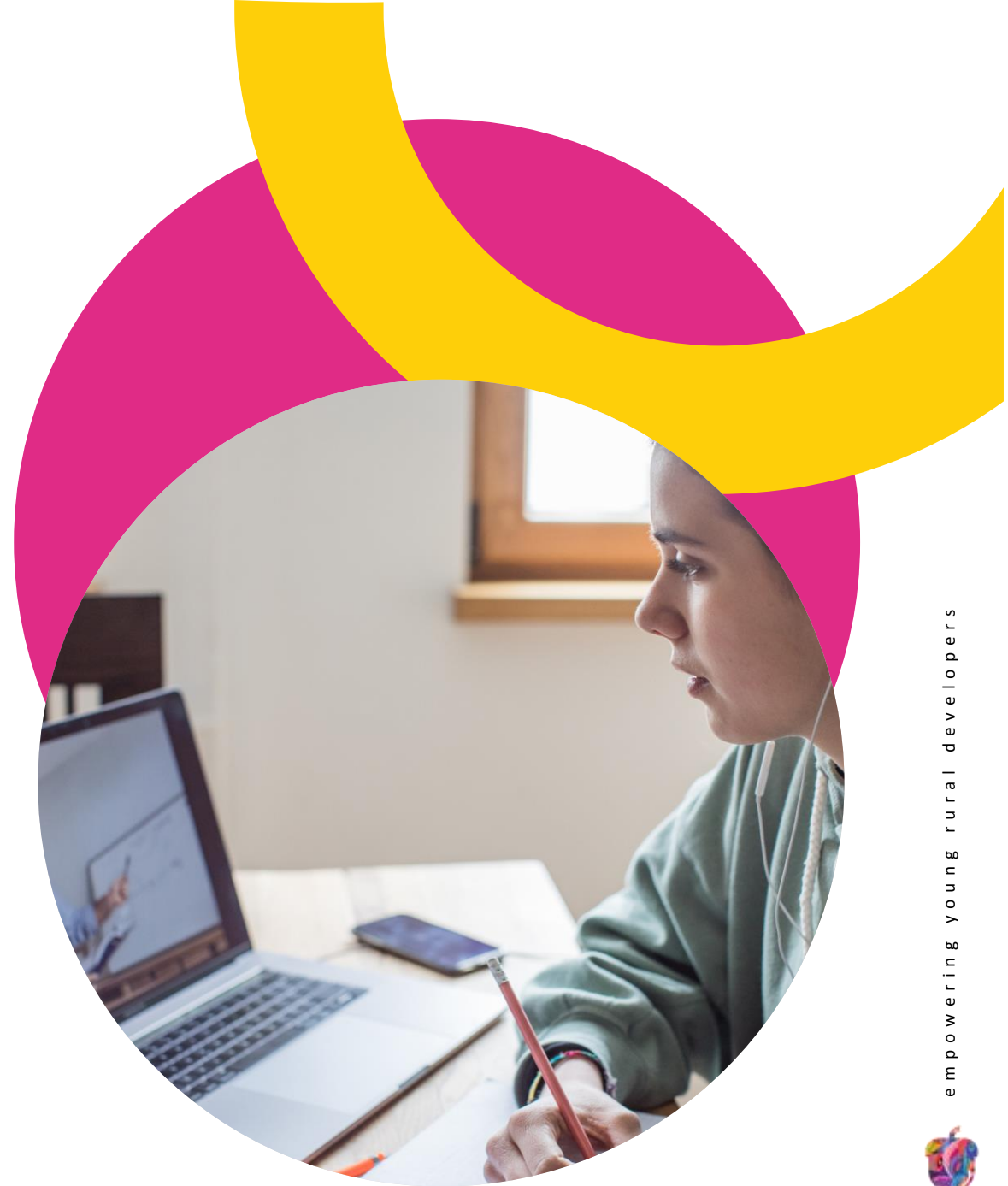
Opportunities for Innovation

Despite these challenges, rural youth have unique opportunities to leverage digital technologies and their skills to drive innovation and make a significant impact on their communities.

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How can technology empower rural areas and youth

Access to digital technologies empowers rural youth to:

- **Enhance Education**: Online learning platforms and resources can provide access to a much wider choice of education opportunities, regardless of geographic location. This includes access to specialised courses, virtual classrooms, and global educational resources that would otherwise be unavailable. Additionally, digital tools can facilitate personalised learning experiences, mentoring and coaching.

- **Promote Entrepreneurship**: Digital tools enable young entrepreneurs to start and grow businesses, access wider markets, and even create more jobs in their rural area. E-commerce platforms, social media marketing, and digital financial services provide young rural entrepreneurs with the tools they need to compete on a global scale. Moreover, digital literacy can open doors to remote work opportunities, enabling young people to participate in the digital economy from their rural homes.

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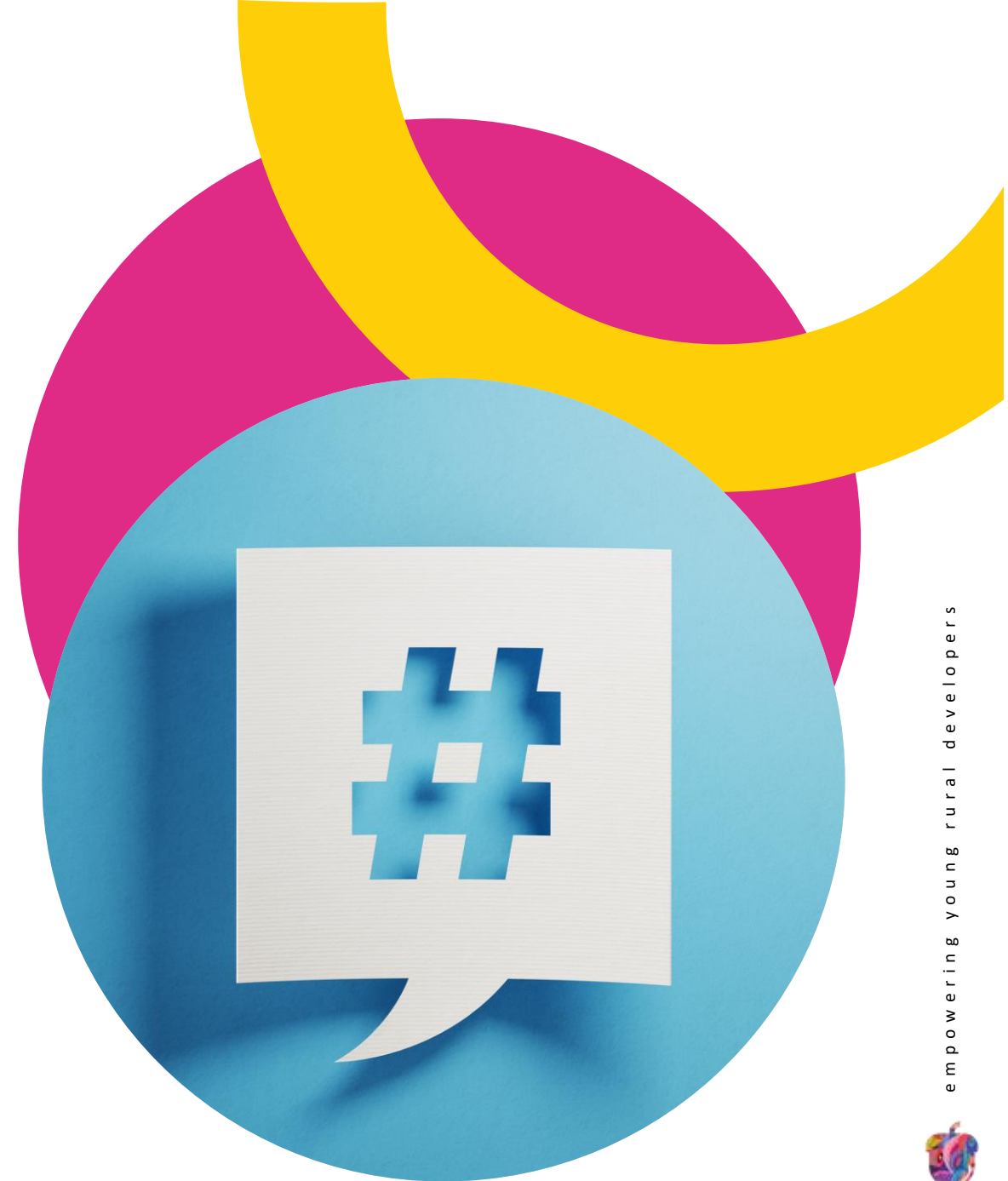# How can technology empower rural areas and youth

Access to digital technologies empowers rural youth to:

- **Foster Social Connections**: Social media and communication platforms allow rural youth to connect with peers, share ideas, and build supportive networks. These platforms can help overcome geographical isolation, allowing young people to participate in national and international conversations. Additionally, digital communities can provide a support system for mental health and well-being, helping youth navigate challenges and share experiences.

  Have you heard about Discord ?

  Discord is a communication tool that allows users to stay connected with their communities and friends over text, voice, and video chat.

  Discord - Group Chat That's All Fun & Games

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9 IDEAS/ACTIONS that rural youth can instigate

Rural youth are uniquely positioned to become digital pioneers in their communities. How? Consider these 9 ideas…

1. **Innovate Locally**: Use digital tools to address local challenges and develop innovative solutions that benefit their communities. This could be setting up and maintaining a community website or an online forum.

2. **Create Digital Content**: Produce and share digital content that reflects their experiences, culture, and aspirations. This content can range from blogs and vlogs to digital art and storytelling, helping to preserve and promote local culture while reaching a wider audience.

3. **Give back:** Use digital skills to provide community training to enhance the digital literacy and skills of others. This could include coding classes or boot camps for young people, digital literacy for older people, and safe online access workshops for parents by educating parents about online safety, privacy, and how to support their children's digital learning.

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9 IDEAS/ACTIONS that rural youth can instigate

Rural youth are uniquely positioned to become digital pioneers in their communities.

4. Digital Learning Hubs: Help establish a digital learning hub in the community equipped with office furniture, computers, high-speed internet, and a warm and welcoming atmosphere. These hubs can offer a venue for remote workers (and generate income for the community), digital skills training workshops and educational activities.

5. Community Crowdsourcing Solutions: Show groups in the community how to use
- online platforms to crowdsource ideas and solutions for local challenges from the community.
- crowdfunding fundraising platforms and campaign ideas

6. Digital Storytelling Projects: Initiate a project where youth will create digital stories, documentaries, or podcasts about their local culture, history, and personal experiences. This helps preserve and promote local heritage and stories.

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9 IDEAS/ACTIONS that rural youth can instigate

Rural youth are uniquely positioned to become digital pioneers in their communities. How?

7. E-commerce Initiatives for Local Products: Help develop e-commerce platforms for selling locally produced goods and crafts online, expanding market access for local businesses and encouraging youth entrepreneurship.

8. Tech for Good Projects: Introduce this topic across the community. What tech-based projects can be introduced that address rural social issues? It could be tech for good solutions for mental health support, environmental monitoring, or community safety.

9. Virtual Mentoring: Establish a virtual mentorship project where rural youth can connect with mentors from various fields and industries, providing guidance, support, and career advice.

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Examples in action

Name: Simbioza Genesis

Description: Simbioza Genesis is a **Slovenian** organisation that runs various intergenerational learning programmes, including digital literacy workshops where young people teach seniors how to use digital technologies.

Impact: This project has bridged the digital divide between generations, empowering seniors with digital skills and providing youth with valuable teaching and leadership experience.

Web Link: [Simbioza Genesis](#)

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Examples in action

Name: La Exclusiva

Description: La Exclusiva is a rural e-commerce initiative that delivers essential goods to depopulated rural areas in Spain. It helps local producers sell their goods online and ensures that residents in remote areas have access to necessary products

Impact: This platform has revitalized rural economies by providing a sales channel for local producers and ensuring that residents have access to essential goods.

Web Link: La Exclusiva

Watch the founder video on laexclusiva.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/vicky_la_exclusiva.mp4

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Examples in action

Name: Young Composers, Malta

Description: Young Composers provides young people with the opportunity to be mentored by some of Malta's leading composers and professionals in the field of music industry. The Young Composers Mentoring Programme is a joint initiative between Aġenzija Żgħażagħ and Pjazza Teatru Rjal.

Impact: This 4 –4-month project is a source of inspiration for young composers.

Web Link: Young Composers – Agenzija Zghazagh (gov.mt)

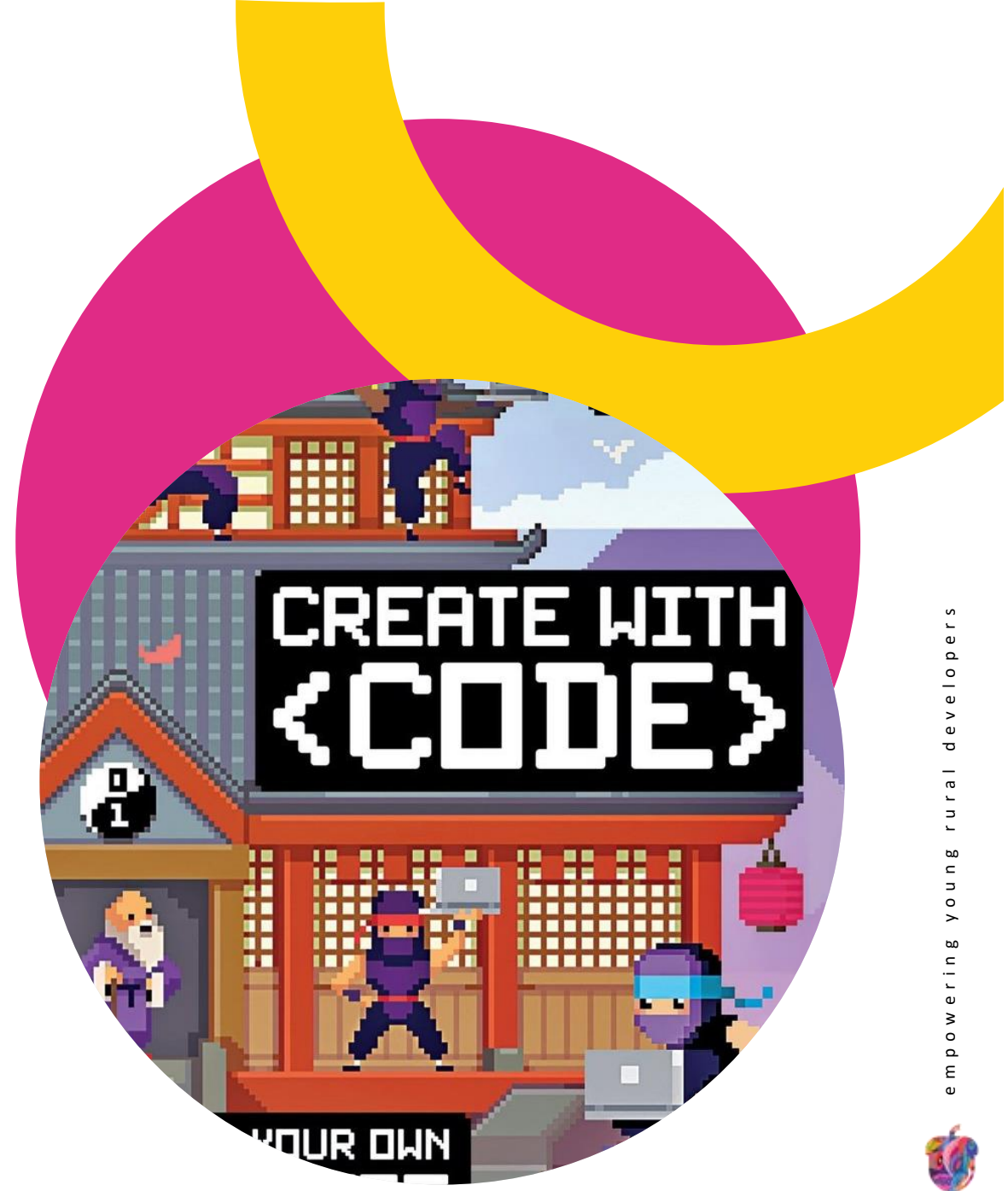empowering young rural developers

Examples in action

Name: CoderDojo Ireland

Description: Founded in Ireland, CoderDojo is a global network of free, volunteer-led, community-based programming clubs for young people. In rural areas across Ireland, CoderDojo clubs have been established to teach young people how to code and develop websites, apps, programmes, and games.

Impact: These clubs provide a space for youth to learn valuable digital skills, collaborate on projects, and gain confidence in their technical abilities, empowered to pursue careers in technology and contribute to their local digital economies.

Web Link: CoderDojo Ireland

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Thank you

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