

I. GENERAL PROVISIONS**AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY OF CASTILLA-LA MANCHA**

11513 Law 2/2021, of 7 May, on Economic, Social and Tax Measures against Depopulation and for the Development of the Rural Environment in Castilla-La Mancha.

The Parliament of Castilla-La Mancha has passed and I, on behalf of the King, hereby enact the following Law.

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EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

I

Demographic change is one of the greatest challenges facing Europe's regions, cities and rural population centres and is mainly determined by factors related to population ageing, low birth rates and worsening imbalances in population distribution.

At the European level, the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) mandates the European institutions to pay particular attention to the demographic challenge. Article 174 states that, in order to strengthen its economic, social and territorial cohesion, the Union shall aim to reduce disparities between the levels of development of the various regions and the backwardness of the least favoured regions, including rural areas, areas affected by industrial transition and regions which suffer from severe natural or demographic handicaps. Furthermore, Article 175 of the TFEU stipulates that the achievement of this objective shall be supported by the Structural Funds, the European Investment Bank and the other financial instruments.

The vision of the EU's response to the demographic challenge was set out by the Committee of the Regions (CoR) in its opinion 2017/C017/08, in which it stated that the response should be broad, coordinated and inclusive, as it is a cross-cutting issue, requiring a European strategy on demographic challenges, raising the awareness of all policies: cohesion, innovation, transport, health, social and employment policies, ICT, rural development, migration, etc.

More recently, the CoR has advanced its conclusions on this issue in its opinion *SEDEC-VII/001* on «Demographic change: proposals for quantifying and tackling the negative effects on EU regions», highlighting the dangers of population loss in remote and sparsely populated areas, particularly of the young population, insofar as it constitutes an extraordinary disadvantage for the smallest municipalities in terms of maintaining essential public services and boosting economic and productive activity in these areas, as well as increasing dependency rates and a decrease in the number of people of working age.

The legal regulation on this matter, dictated in exercise of the state competence attributed by article 149.1.13 of the Constitution on the bases and coordination of the general planning of

economic activity, began with Law 45/2007, of 13 December, for the sustainable development of the rural environment, of a transversal nature and territorial orientation, with a vocation to combine economic development with the preservation of the natural environment, contemplating actions and measures for sustainable development, both of national and community origin, applicable between the different public administrations in a concerted manner, in accordance with their respective competences.

At the level of the Autonomous Community of Castilla-La Mancha, several regulatory initiatives related to the promotion of rural development have been promoted for years from different areas, among which it is worth mentioning Law 4/2004, of 18 May, on Farming and Rural Development, with an eminently sectoral agricultural perspective; Law 12/2010, of 18 November, on Equality between Women and Men of Castilla-La Mancha, which imposed on the public administrations the need to guarantee the rights of women living in rural areas; Law 5/2017, of 30 November, on Economic Stimulus in Priority Areas in Castilla-La Mancha, which contemplates specific promotion measures aimed at the so-called ITI Areas (Integrated Territorial Investments); as well as Law 6/2019, of 25 November, on the Statute of Rural Women of Castilla-La Mancha, which promotes measures to foster the social and professional autonomy of women in rural areas.

On the other hand, in order to combat the current and future population challenges of Castilla-La Mancha, on 28 February 2020, representatives of *Cecam*, *CCOO*, *UGT*, *Recamder*, *FEMP-CLM* and the Regional Executive signed a social and economic Unity Pact to address the phenomenon of depopulation under the parameters of development, sustainability and balance. Furthermore, at parliamentary level, the Plenary of the Castilla-La Mancha Parliament, held on 21 January 2021, unanimously ratified the Opinion issued by the Non-Permanent Study Commission to reach a Pact against Depopulation in Castilla-La Mancha. Both documents have been taken into account in the process of drafting this regulation.

II

Castilla-La Mancha is a region with an eminently rural profile and characterisation, in which more than 90 % of its geography is rural, and in which more than half of its municipalities have less than 500 inhabitants, and only 12 have more than 30,000 inhabitants.

The determining impact that demography has on the rural world, which in Castilla-La Mancha translates into the existence of areas with levels of depopulation well above the national and European average, requires considering this new reality and its challenges with its own regulatory developments, covering all dimensions of the reality of the rural world in the region and providing a vision adjusted to the reality of the rural territories in Castilla-La Mancha, where depopulation conditions its integral development.

Within this framework, the region of Castilla-La Mancha is endowed with this new regulation which aims to go beyond the traditional views of rural development, centred on the «second pillar» of the CAP, assuming that the objective of cohesion of rural territories implies interactions with diverse activities and sectors, which together with agriculture and forestry, serve to promote the rural development of the region and its municipalities in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This regulation is approached with a multisectoral and cross-cutting focus, in view of the complexity and heterogeneity of actions required for comprehensive action in the rural environment in Castilla-La Mancha, paying special attention to the fight against depopulation and with the aim of ensuring that the demographic challenge is present, both in the derived planning and in the sectoral regulations, with the primary purpose of providing basic public services adapted to the needs of its population, enabling effective equality of opportunities for its inhabitants, and the economic and social cohesion of the rural environment.

With regard to the competence framework within which this law is developed, and in view of its cross-cutting nature, the Autonomous Community is empowered to approve it under multiple competences. Specifically, and based on the mandate that the Statute of Autonomy directs the regional public authorities to «promote the conditions so that the freedom and equality of the individual and of the groups of which they form part are real and effective», and to the Community Council to promote «the effective equality of men and women» (Article 4, paragraphs 2 and 3 respectively) we must refer to the exclusive powers of the Autonomous Community in matters of organisation, regime and functioning of its institutions of self-1.1.1.); land-use planning, town planning and housing (Article 31.1.2.); public works of interest to the region within its own territory, which are not of general interest to the State and do not affect another Autonomous Community (Article 31.1.3.); highways and roads whose itinerary is entirely within the territory of the region and, in the same terms, land transport (Article 31.1.4.); agriculture, livestock and agri-food industries (Article 31.1.6.); special treatment of mountain areas (Article 31.1.9.); planning of economic activity and promotion of the economic development of the region (Article 31.1.12.); crafts (Article 31.1.14.); promotion of culture and research (Article 31.1.17.); tourism (Article 31.1.18.); promotion of sport and appropriate use of leisure (Article 31.1.19); social assistance and social services (Article 31.1.20); industry (Article 31.1.26); energy production, distribution and transmission installations (Article 31.1.27).

Similarly, the powers of legislative development and execution which, within the framework of the basic State legislation, and under the terms established therein, are held by the Autonomous Community in matters of forestry, forest use and services (Article 32.2); health and hygiene, promotion, prevention and restoration of health (Article 32.3); and protection of the environment and ecosystems (Article 32.7), are also covered by the regulatory initiative.

Finally, it is worth mentioning as precepts whose content empowers the Autonomous Community to enact the tax measures contemplated in this law, the regional solidarity contained in Article 41.1 of the Statute of Autonomy, the financial autonomy contained in Article 42.1, and the recognition of the Autonomous Community Treasury in Article 44.

III

The law consists of seventy-seven articles divided into seven titles, five additional provisions, one repealing provision and thirteen final provisions.

The Preliminary Title sets out the purpose of the law, the scope of application, its aims and objectives and various definitions.

Title I, Demographic challenge and depopulation, includes two issues to be highlighted: social awareness of demographic issues and the obligation of the Regional Administration to include a report on demographic impact in the production of regulations and in the drafting of plans and programmes.

Title II, Zoning, categorisation and planning of the rural environment, is divided into two chapters. Chapter I develops a new approach to the zoning of the rural environment of Castilla-La Mancha, classifying rural areas into the following categories: sparsely populated areas, areas at risk of depopulation, intermediate rural areas, and peri-urban rural areas. In addition, in view of the seriousness and intensity of the demographic problem, two categories of sparsely populated areas are created: areas of intense depopulation and areas of extreme depopulation.

Chapter II regulates the planning and programming of the rural environment and includes as planning instruments to address the development of the different types of rural areas: the Regional Strategy to Combat Depopulation, which will specify the actions and measures to be developed in the rural areas most affected by depopulation, and the Regional Strategy for Rural Development.

Title III, Public policies for the development of the rural environment and the fight against depopulation, is divided into two chapters. Chapter I advocates institutional collaboration with the aim of defining public policies and improving the provision of public services. In addition,

measures are envisaged to use public procurement to tackle depopulation, as well as to support access to public aid and subsidies for applicants from the most depopulated rural areas.

Chapter II regulates in five sections the guarantee of the rural population's access to quality basic public services, with the aim of guaranteeing equal opportunities for all people in the territory, focusing on educational and health access, social and dependency care, attention and care for the elderly, as well as the inclusion of people with disabilities.

Finally, it is planned to implement a demand-sensitive transport model, with the aim of making public services accessible to all citizens.

Title IV, Economic, social and territorial cohesion of the rural environment, consists of three chapters. Chapter I, on economic cohesion, contains measures aimed at the diversification of economic activity, the promotion of employment and entrepreneurship, support for the promotion of activities and companies and the promotion of research, development and innovation. It also promotes support for different key sectors in the rural environment, such as the bioeconomy, agriculture, agri-food and forestry. Finally, a series of actions are included to facilitate access to banking services for people living in rural areas.

Chapter II, on social cohesion, includes a series of measures to promote the reconciliation of personal, family and working life, as well as to guarantee adequate care for children and support for families. It also contains measures to facilitate access to housing, as well as the promotion of cultural programmes and responsible leisure activities.

Chapter III, on territorial cohesion, regulates the promotion of renewable energies and the guarantee of a quality water supply service for human consumption. It is worth highlighting the commitment to bridge the digital divide, guaranteeing quality digital connectivity for all localities, as well as promoting the training of citizens in digital skills.

Title V, Financing of measures for the development of rural areas and to combat depopulation, establishes certain rules and principles for the financing of these measures.

Title VI, Tax measures to combat depopulation, makes it possible to approve tax benefits that may affect both the Autonomous Community's own taxes and those assigned to it, and which will be aimed at people living in the rural areas most affected by depopulation.

Title VII, Governance, creates the Regional Council for the Development of the Rural Environment and the Fight against Depopulation as a body for collaboration and cooperation between the region's territorial administrations, in which citizen participation is guaranteed.

With regard to the final part of the regulation, it is worth highlighting the creation, by the first additional provision, of a fund for the financial support of viable business projects in the rural areas most affected by depopulation. Thirteen final provisions are also included, amending various regional laws in order to adapt their content to the mandates of this law, as well as to make other necessary modifications to their content. Specifically, Law 3/2000, of 26 May, on the Creation of the Public Body of Radio-Television of Castilla-La Mancha, is amended in order to enable the creation of subsidiary companies in different areas in order to achieve more efficient management; Law 8/2000, of 30 November, on the Organisation of Health Care in Castilla-La Mancha; Law 5/2005, of 27 June 2005, on the Organisation of the Pharmaceutical Service of Castilla-La Mancha; and Law 14/2005, of 29 December, on the Organisation of Road Transport of People in Castilla-La Mancha; Law 1/2007, of 15 February, on the Promotion of Renewable Energies and Incentives for Energy Saving and Efficiency of Castilla-La Mancha, to promote the energy transition within the Regional Administration and the deployment of a network of recharging points for electric vehicles; Law 3/2008, of 12 June, on Forestry and Sustainable Forest Management of Castilla-La Mancha; Law 7/2010, of 20 July, on Education of Castilla-La Mancha; Law 5/2011, of 10 March, on the Declaration of the Sierra Norte de Guadalajara Natural Park; as well as Law 8/2013, of 21 November, on Tax Measures of Castilla-La Mancha, to incorporate a package of measures affecting both personal income tax (*IRPF*) and the tax on property transfers and documented legal acts (*ITPAJD*).

These measures advocate granting more advantageous deductions to taxpayers residing in rural areas with depopulation problems in the region, and find their constitutional justification,

among others, in articles 9.2 and 40.1 of the Spanish Constitution. Their purpose is to contribute to the effective equality of rural citizens in the Region, to ensure the social and economic progress of its inhabitants and a more equitable distribution of regional and personal income.

On the one hand, it establishes a pioneering and unprecedented tax measure in the common regime Autonomous Communities, such as the application of a deduction of a percentage of the total regional personal income tax liability in favour of taxpayers who have their habitual residence and effective stay in the sparsely populated areas referred to in Article 12 of the law, which is completed with the establishment of a new deduction for the acquisition or rehabilitation of the habitual residence. For the application of the aforementioned deductions, the habitual residence of a natural person is considered, in all cases, as a personal circumstance and, when it is a question of cohabitation with other persons in the family unit, as a family circumstance. At this point, we should not overlook the fact that the habitual residence, in addition to being the family home, is the main nucleus or the basis of the activities or economic interests of individuals.

The tax measures included in this law aim to combat the phenomenon of depopulation and are an essential part of the exercise of financial autonomy and the principle of territoriality of Castilla-La Mancha.

The personal income tax incentives apply to situations that comply with the connection points of Law 22/2009, of 18 December, which regulates the financing system of the Autonomous Communities of the common system and Cities with Statute of Autonomy and modifies certain tax rules, such as, essentially, the habitual residence. In the two measures envisaged, residence does not act as an element of discrimination between residents of rural areas of Castilla-La Mancha and non-residents of those areas, but as the main parameter of a differentiated tax policy aimed at guaranteeing the constitutional principle of material equality of individuals. In this sense, constitutional jurisprudence has approved the differences in legal and fiscal treatment that exist in our State as a consequence of the different tax powers (state, autonomous and local).

Likewise, tax benefits are established in the tax on property transfers and documented legal acts (*ITPAJD*), consisting of the regulation of reduced rates for the transfer of properties located in the municipalities of the rural areas most affected by depopulation, the purpose of which is the acquisition of the first habitual residence or which are intended for the registered office or work centre of companies or business premises, as well as reductions in the tax liability for actions on industrial and tertiary land in these areas.

Finally, the Tenth Final Provision modifies Law 6/2019, of 25 November, on the Statute of Rural Women of Castilla-La Mancha, to bring the definition of rural areas into line with the provisions of Article 5.1. b) of this law.

PRELIMINARY TITLE

Article 1. *Object.*

1. The purpose of this law is to regulate and establish principles of action and measures aimed at achieving an integral development of the rural environment in Castilla-La Mancha, paying special attention to the fight against depopulation, as well as to guarantee basic services and equal opportunities for its inhabitants and to promote the economic and social development of the rural environment in order to achieve social and territorial cohesion, within the framework of a culture of equality between women and men that guarantees sustainable development.

2. Likewise, this law regulates the governance that will articulate the coordinated public action of the different Administrations, with competencies in the sectoral policies of application in the rural environment and in the fight against depopulation. The participation of the social and economic actors present in the regional territory shall be guaranteed.

Article 2. Scope of application.

1. This law is applicable to the Administration of the Castilla-La Mancha Community Council, as well as to the bodies, entities and enterprises that make up the Regional Public Sector, as defined in Article 4 of Legislative Decree 1/2002, of 19 November, which approves the Consolidated Text of the Finance Law of Castilla-La Mancha.

2. In the same way, with respect to local autonomy, the provisions of this law shall also be applicable to the local administrations of Castilla-La Mancha.

Article 3. Aims.

The purposes of this law are:

a) To guarantee the maintenance of the population of rural areas, improving their quality of life, as well as their economic and social viability.

b) To attract and retain population in the rural environment, through the enhancement of its value, the improvement of infrastructures and services available to its inhabitants, as well as through an economic development model based on a green, digital, accessible and sustainable economy distributed among the surrounding localities and any other activity compatible with the territory that diversifies the economy.

c) To promote social, economic and territorial balance and cohesion, as well as the integral development of the rural environment, as basic principles in the fight against depopulation, encouraging a fair and equitable redistribution of resources between rural and urban areas.

d) Promote and preserve the landscape, heritage, cultural and leisure values of the Region, as well as sustainable models of production, as the driving force for the development of the rural environment.

e) To promote and guarantee equality between women and men in the exercise of their rights in the rural environment, and to implement actions to remove the obstacles that prevent or hinder their fulfilment, as well as to combat the multiple discriminations suffered by rural women.

Article 4. Objectives.

In the fulfilment of the object and purposes set out in Articles 1 and 3, the public action of the Regional Administration will be oriented towards the achievement of the following objectives:

a) To improve the quality of life of the rural population, raising the level of well-being of its inhabitants and ensuring adequate and sufficient basic public services that guarantee equal opportunities and accessibility, focusing on access to education, health services, social care, dependency, disability, transport, housing, energy, water and the provision of new information and communication technologies.

b) To halt the processes of depopulation of the rural environment, implementing positive action measures aimed at people living in rural areas suffering from depopulation and socio-economic decline.

c) To make visible and recognise the value of women's contribution to the economy, culture, society, the care of life and the development of the rural environment.

d) To maintain and broaden the economic base of the rural environment by preserving competitive and multifunctional economic activities, diversifying its economy, with the incorporation of new economic activities compatible with sustainable development.

e) Promote renewable energies, the bioeconomy, natural, ecological and sustainable production and the circular economy as basic activities in the rural economy.

f) Encourage the protection, rehabilitation, recovery and use of the natural, tangible and intangible cultural, ethnological and historical heritage as a means of economic and social enhancement of the uniqueness of the local dimension of the rural world and the sense of belonging to its inhabitants.

g) To encourage the development of sustainable tourism, through projects compatible with the natural environment, the integration of tourist activity in the rural population and environmental values.

h) To promote and conserve traditions, popular festivals, gastronomic wealth and craft trades, as differential values of the rural environment.

i) To maintain and improve the opportunities for development of the rural environment through the financing of R+D+i programmes and projects appropriate to the rural reality.

j) To generate the digital transformation of the current and future productive and business sector of rural areas. As well as empowering the citizenship by provoking the transition to a knowledge society and the acquisition of advanced technological skills for full employability.

k) To develop the participatory mechanism and invest in territorial social capital, in order to integrate and coordinate social agents and organisations involved in the rural environment, with the aim of optimising actions and financial resources available for the achievement of an intelligent, accessible, sustainable, territorial and integrating rural area.

l) To make visible the positive aspects and values of rural life and its competitive advantages, in order to counteract the cultural and social hegemony that extols urban life.

m) To promote the silver economy as an opportunity offered by the ageing of the population, to deploy a new sector of activity and employment in the rural world.

Article 5. *Definitions.*

1. For the purposes of this law, the following definitions shall apply:

a) Integral rural development: Process of regional socio-economic planning, carried out in a cross-cutting manner, with the aim of articulating comprehensive policies that guarantee the progress and economic and social cohesion of the rural environment.

b) Rural environment: Geographical space, defined in accordance with the applicable rural development regulations, which includes the rural areas of Castilla-La Mancha and its population.

c) Rural area: Each of the municipal groupings into which the rural area is subdivided, for the application of the measures derived from the planning and programming of territorial development of the rural area regulated by this law.

d) Regional Strategy against Depopulation (Spanish acronym: ERD): Main instrument for the social, economic and territorial planning of the action of the Castilla-La Mancha Community Council, in relation to the typologies of rural areas classified as sparsely populated and at risk of depopulation.

e) Regional Strategy for Rural Development (Spanish acronym: ERDR): This is the basic planning instrument for rural development policy, applicable as a complement to agricultural

policies, which defines the measures and objectives of rural development, the rural areas of application, the instruments to be used and the measures to be carried out.

f) Demographic impact: Identification and assessment of the different effects and results of a regulation or public policy on sparsely populated rural areas at risk of depopulation, with a view to establishing measures to adapt them to the fight against depopulation.

g) Effective stay: An effective stay in a municipality of Castilla-La Mancha will be considered to be that which can be accredited with the certification of the respective municipal registers and which coincides with the following indicators of permanence in the municipality:

- Certification of health card, attached to the health centre assigned in the basic health area of the municipality where the person is registered.

- Certification, where applicable, that minors of compulsory school age are enrolled in one of the educational centres of the reference locality, in the municipality where they are registered.

h) Silver economy: Set of opportunities derived from the economic and social impact of the activities carried out and demanded by the population over 55 years of age.

i) Training programme contract: Agreement signed between the Regional Administration and students of Vocational Training and/or university studies, by means of which the latter receive aid for the completion of these studies, in exchange for maintaining the effective stay of the family unit in a sparsely populated area or one at risk of depopulation.

j) Internship programme contract: Agreement signed between the Regional Administration and students enrolled in Vocational Training or University studies, as well as for people who have obtained their vocational training or university degree during the three years prior to the application and who wish to acquire work, personal and professional experience in sparsely populated areas or areas at risk of depopulation.

k) Demand-sensitive transport: A form of public transport that is not subject to a fixed itinerary and timetable and is sensitive to the mobility needs of the population, especially in rural areas.

l) Itinerancy: Occasional displacement of professionals of a programme located in a provincial headquarters to provide the service in the locality of residence or closest to the domicile of the users, within the framework of the requirements and regulations of that programme.

TITLE I

Demographic challenge and depopulation

Article 6. Powers of the Governing Council in matters of demographic challenge.

The Governing Council is responsible for the demographic challenge:

a) To establish the guidelines for regional action in the face of the demographic challenge and territorial depopulation.

b) To promote the implementation of the demographic perspective in the actions of the Autonomous Government, as well as the monitoring and evaluation of its effectiveness.

c) To approve the Regional Strategy to Combat Depopulation by means of an Agreement.

d) To define and approve the groupings of municipalities or population centres that make up each of the areas that make up the rural environment, according to the typology defined in Article 11.

Article 7. Social awareness-raising in demographic matters.

1. The public administrations of Castilla-La Mancha shall be responsible for raising the awareness of society on demographic change and its implications, as well as on the values that characterise life in the rural environment and its social, economic and environmental advantages.

2. The public administrations of Castilla-La Mancha shall collaborate with the media operating in the Autonomous Community of Castilla-La Mancha in order to transfer knowledge on demographic issues to the citizens.

3. The image and reputation of the rural environment will be enhanced, using territorial communication strategies to promote the reality of rural areas and their social and economic advantages, highlighting the values that characterise life in the rural world.

Article 8. Demographic impact report.

1. In the procedures for the drafting of bills and the regulatory provisions that develop them, as well as in the drafting of plans and programmes that are processed by the Regional Administration, a demographic impact report must be incorporated, taking into account the gender perspective, which analyses the possible effects on rural areas with depopulation problems and establishes measures to adapt it to the reality of the rural environment and to combat depopulation.

2. When drawing up regional budgets, indicators shall be taken into consideration that make it possible to integrate the demographic impact and the fight against depopulation into budgetary policies.

3. The budget report shall identify the expenditure on active policies to combat depopulation included in the Regional Strategy to Combat Depopulation and in the Regional Strategy for Rural Development.

4. The body responsible for the demographic challenge shall provide guidelines, criteria and methodologies to facilitate the preparation of the report provided for in paragraph 1.

TITLE II

Zoning, categorisation and planning of the rural environment

CHAPTER I

Zoning and categorisation of the rural environment

Article 9. Delimitation of the rural areas comprising the rural environment.

1. In order to specify and apply the measures arising from the planning and programming regulated by the law, rural areas comprising groups of municipalities shall be delimited in the rural environment.

2. The delimitation of the municipal groupings that make up each of the rural areas shall be carried out taking into account their contiguity, homogeneity and the existing zoning for the provision of public services under the jurisdiction of the Regional Administration.

Article 10. Criteria for the categorisation of the rural environment.

1. The categorisation of the rural environment of Castilla-La Mancha requires the establishment of a zoning of the same, for which demographic criteria, economic activity, land use and accessibility in relation to the urban environment will be taken into account.

2. As demographic criteria, the size of the population of the municipalities and population centres that make up the zones, their density, the evolution of their population and their ageing will be used.

3. As criteria of economic activity, employment in the different sectors of economic activity of the population of the areas will be used.

4. As land use criteria, the artificial, agricultural and forest land cover of the zones shall be used.

5. As a criterion of geographical isolation and accessibility, the average access time, by car by road, from the population centres of the municipalities of the zones to the nearest urban nucleus of the province of more than 30,000 inhabitants will be used.

6. The statistical indicators to be used for each of the established criteria shall be established by Agreement of the Governing Council.

Article 11. Typology of rural areas.

1. The areas that make up the rural environment of Castilla-La Mancha shall be classified into one of the following categories: sparsely populated areas, areas at risk of depopulation, intermediate rural areas, and peri-urban rural areas.

2. Exceptionally, municipalities or population centres may be included in the categories described in the previous paragraph which, without meeting any of the requirements set out in the following articles, so require due to their homogeneity, functionality or contiguity.

Article 12. Sparsely populated areas.

1. Sparsely populated areas shall be classified as those groupings of municipalities or population centres made up mainly of small municipalities, with a joint population density of less than 12.5 inhabitants per square kilometre, high rates of ageing, and high rates of population density of less than 1.5 inhabitants per square kilometre, high rates of ageing and intensive population loss, with a significant geographical isolation with respect to municipalities with more than 30,000 inhabitants, a high percentage of forest land-use, and a high significance of agricultural activity.

2. In consideration of the degree of depopulation, the following categories of sparsely populated areas are established:

(a) Areas of intense depopulation: those groupings of municipalities with a density of more than 8 inhabitants per sq. km.

b) Areas of extreme depopulation: Those groupings of municipalities with a population density of less than 8 inhabitants per sq. km .

Article 13. Areas at risk of depopulation.

Those groupings of municipalities or population centres with a population density of less than 20 inhabitants per sq. km, but more than 12.5 inhabitants per sq. km, high ageing rates and a negative evolution of their population, with a medium or low accessibility with respect to municipalities with more than 30,000 inhabitants, with a high significance of agricultural employment, with more than 75 % of their population residing in municipalities with less than 2,000 inhabitants, with both agricultural and forestry land uses, shall be classified as areas at risk of depopulation.

Article 14. Intermediate rural areas.

1. Intermediate areas are classified as those groupings of municipalities or population centres, with a population density of more than 20 inhabitants per sq. km and less than 50 inhabitants per sq. km, outside the direct sphere of influence of urban areas and average accessibility to them, with a population density around the regional average, stable or growing population and with more than 75% of its population residing in municipalities with more than 2,000 inhabitants.

2. In consideration of the economic activity, the following categories of intermediate zones are established:

- a) With predominantly agricultural activity.
- b) With diversified economic activity.

Article 15. Peri-urban rural areas.

Peri-urban areas are classified as those groupings of municipalities or population centres with a population density of more than 50 inhabitants per sq. km and a growing population trend, with an ageing rate below the regional average, which, due to their proximity to urban areas, maintain an intense relationship and communication with them, with daily commuting for work purposes, the work activity of their population being related, almost entirely, to the secondary and tertiary sectors of activity.

CHAPTER II

Programming and planning

Article 16. Programming of actions for the comprehensive development of the rural environment and to combat depopulation.

The programming of the actions of the Regional Administration in this area shall be guided by the principles of the development of the rural environment with an integral, integrating and

sustainable vision of the same, which takes into account the singularities of the rural areas, paying special attention to the fight against depopulation and to the promotion of the equal opportunities between women and men, seeking to broaden the bases of inter-administrative articulation and empowerment of the population, through effective participation in the definition and implementation of actions in the territory.

Article 17. Planning instruments.

1. The development of the different types of rural areas contemplated in this regulation will be structured around the following basic planning instruments:

- a) The Regional Strategy against Depopulation (ERD).
- b) The Regional Strategy for Rural Development (ERDR).

2. In view of the cross-cutting nature of the policies applicable to the rural environment, the sectoral planning instruments approved by the Regional Administration shall comply with the provisions of this law and the Regional Strategy to Combat Depopulation.

Article 18. Regional Strategy to Combat Depopulation.

1. The Regional Strategy to Combat Depopulation will determine the objectives and actions to be developed by the Regional Administration in sparsely populated areas at risk of depopulation, financing mechanisms, as well as the evaluation and monitoring of the same through suitable and useful indicators of a quantitative or qualitative nature, which allow the achievement of its objectives to be measured.

2. The Strategy will be linked to the complementarities resulting from the rest of the frameworks in which it will be inserted, at regional, national, European and international level.

3. Equality of treatment and opportunities between women and men, and non-discrimination on grounds of sex, as well as gender mainstreaming, will be a cross-cutting issue in the provisions and wording contained in the Regional Strategy to Combat Depopulation (ERD), as well as in any direct or indirect area linked to its implementation.

4. The implementation of the Strategy will be carried out by the Regional Administration and, where appropriate, by the competent public administrations in accordance with the cooperation and collaboration mechanisms established.

5. The Regional Strategy to Combat Depopulation will be valid for at least ten years, with a first mid-term review after the first four years of implementation, and a second mid-term review after eight years of implementation, in order to analyse its evolution and make the necessary adjustments to achieve compliance with its objectives. In both reviews, a report shall be sent to the Regional Parliament for analysis.

Article 19. Regional Rural Development Strategy.

1. The Regional Rural Development Strategy (ERDR) shall be determined through objectives and actions, each action being articulated according to the typology of the intervention areas, the potential beneficiaries, the financial endowment, as well as the map of indicators for its ex ante and ex post evaluation.

2. Implementation will be carried out in consultation with each public administration involved and with rural society, using a participatory methodology, and with a system for evaluating and monitoring the objectives set. The Rural Development Groups will also be involved.

3. The *ERDR* will be applied in the municipalities of the rural environment integrated in the rural areas established in Article 11.

4. The *ERDR* shall be approved by means of an Agreement of the Governing Council and shall be valid for five years.

5. The implementation of the *ERDR* shall be the responsibility of the regional government in coordination with the local administrations within the scope of their respective competences, and with mechanisms for the effective participation of civil society.

6. In the spheres of social, environmental and territorial attention, the *ERDR* will focus on making explicit the instruments of positive action in the attention to rural women, intensifying those aimed at achieving equality for those people in which other forms of discrimination converge in addition to gender, young people, the elderly, minors, migrants, people with disabilities, people in a situation of dependency and social exclusion.

Priority will also be given to areas at risk of depopulation and sparsely populated areas, taking into account the objectives and actions of the Regional Strategy to Combat Depopulation.

7. Equality of treatment and opportunities between women and men, and non-discrimination on grounds of sex, as well as gender mainstreaming, will be a cross-cutting issue in the provisions and wording contained in the *ERDR*, as well as in any direct or indirect sphere linked to its application.

8. For the internal evaluation of the *ERDR*, a map of suitable and useful quantitative or qualitative monitoring and evaluation indicators shall be established to measure the achievement of its objectives, including gender indicators.

TITLE III

Public policies for the development of the rural environment and to combat depopulation

CHAPTER I

Principles applicable in the rural environment

Article 20. Institutional collaboration.

1. The Regional Administration shall guarantee the participation of the rest of the public administrations with a presence in the regional territory in the definition of public policies aimed at the rural environment and the fight against depopulation.

The territorial administrations of the region shall define and reach a consensus on the model for the provision of public services in rural areas, guaranteeing the effective equality of people in rural areas and equal treatment and opportunities for women and men.

2. The Regional Administration shall promote the formalisation of inter-administrative collaboration instruments with the local and supra-municipal entities of the region, for the development of activities of common interest in the rural environment, and in particular with regard

to the demographic challenge and the fight against depopulation. These collaboration instruments may contain incentives in favour of local and supra-municipal entities.

3. Within the framework provided for by the Statute of Autonomy of Castilla-La Mancha, the Castilla-La Mancha Community Council shall promote the conclusion of inter-administrative agreements with neighbouring Autonomous Communities, in order to optimise the management and provision of services within their competence in the rural environment, respecting the limits established in Law 40/2015, of 1 October, on the Legal Regime of the Public Sector.

Article 21. Public sector contracting.

1. Within the framework of the procurement regulations, the public sector of Castilla-La Mancha shall promote the use of public procurement as an instrument to fight depopulation and promote the balanced territorial development of rural communities by supporting socio-economic activities, business development, the promotion of employment and the sustainable use of available resources.

2. In compliance with the principles of competition, equality and non-discrimination, the regional public sector contracting authorities shall assess the possibility of including in the specifications of the contracts they propose to tender, social and environmental criteria that facilitate equal access to companies located in sparsely populated areas or at risk of depopulation, promoting the acquisition of local, fresh and seasonal products, organic products and benefiting from quality schemes, as well as the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, sustainable forest management, the use of renewable energies and energy savings.

3. In small contracts, small and medium-sized enterprises, cooperatives and/or self-employed entrepreneurs, and especially social economy enterprises and enterprises created with the specific support of municipal programmes to promote entrepreneurship, with adequate capacity and solvency to carry out the services in question, shall be invited to participate as a matter of preference. This criterion may also be used in the negotiated procedure without advertising in those cases in which the contract law allows it.

4. In accordance with current procurement regulations, the regional public sector bodies shall establish in the administrative specifications requirements of capacity and solvency, and award criteria that facilitate equal access to companies located in sparsely populated areas and areas at risk of depopulation.

5. In the preparation of contracts and under the legally established terms, efforts shall be made to adapt the size of contracts and their duration to facilitate the participation of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), micro-SMEs and local self-employed workers. Capacity and solvency requirements appropriate to the size of the contracts and to the SMEs, micro-SMEs and self-employed persons shall be established.

6. The Regional Administration, in collaboration with the local Administration, will carry out actions of support, assistance and continuous training in contracting for SMEs, micro-SMEs, social economy enterprises, self-employed persons and local entities in sparsely populated areas or areas at risk of depopulation, giving priority to women in the promotion of entrepreneurship and self-employment.

7. The Regional Administration, within the framework of the current regulations on contracting, shall establish a strategy of collaboration with local entities for the conclusion of framework agreements, dynamic systems or central contracting centres aimed at achieving greater efficiency in the use of public funds.

Article 22. Public aid and subsidies.

1. The regulatory bases and calls for regional public sector aid and subsidies shall incorporate positive incentive criteria and specific support measures for applicants from sparsely populated areas or areas at risk of depopulation, provided that such incentives are compatible with the object, purpose, intensity and maximum levels of the aid, in accordance with the applicable regulations on the matter, which may consist of:

- a) Establishing specific lines of aid for these areas.
- b) Reserving part of the total credit of the calls for projects from these areas.
- c) Percentage increases of at least 20 % of the aid intensity, which may reach up to 40 % in the case of projects in areas of extreme depopulation.
- d) Granting additional points in the competition processes, of at least 20 % of the total planned points, which may reach up to 40 % in the case of projects in areas of extreme depopulation.

2. Likewise, the regional public sector may make obtaining the additional incentives indicated in the preceding paragraph, when the applicant is a natural person, conditional upon accreditation of effective residence in sparsely populated areas at risk of depopulation.

Article 23. Public employment.

1. The Regional Administration, within the framework of the applicable legislation on public employment, shall adopt specific measures with the aim of promoting stability in rural areas, in accordance with the typology of rural areas provided for in Article 11 of this Law, preferably in the teaching, health and social fields. Specific measures shall also be adopted for posts that are difficult to fill in sparsely populated rural areas at risk of depopulation.

These measures may consist of administrative, professional or economic incentives for personnel who carry out their professional activity and who effectively reside in sparsely populated areas at risk of depopulation, as well as other incentives that promote the provision of jobs in these areas, such as the modification of the amount or structure of complementary remuneration, in accordance with civil service regulations.

2. The Autonomous Administration shall promote the training of Autonomous Community public sector personnel in demographic matters, considering it to be a cross-cutting issue for their professional promotion. Training and awareness-raising activities related to the subject shall be included in the training programmes.

Article 24. Regulatory and administrative simplification.

The Regional Administration, in collaboration with all public administrations, shall promote regulatory and administrative simplification initiatives in order to facilitate the development of public and private projects and initiatives that contribute to the economic and social revitalisation of rural areas, particularly those that are sparsely populated and at risk of depopulation.

Article 25. Digital administration.

In order to develop a digital and inclusive administration in rural areas:

- a) Digital administration shall be promoted as a guarantee of equal access to public services and to calls for aid or subsidies in rural areas.
- b) Accessibility to telematic processing will be guaranteed for the general public, through the means at their disposal.
- c) Accessibility will be guaranteed for people with disabilities, by means of technological tools.
- d) Assistance will be guaranteed to all persons who have any difficulty in carrying out telematic procedures.
- e) Training will be provided for telematic procedures.
- f) Telematic access by citizens to all the information that the Regional Administration has about them, regardless of where they live, will be fostered.
- g) The use of new technologies by people employed in the public sector of local entities, preferably those working in sparsely populated areas at risk of depopulation, shall be encouraged through training programmes for public administration staff.

Article 26. Public safety.

1. The Regional Administration, within the framework of the applicable legislation on public safety, will collaborate with the State Security Forces and Corps, as well as with the local police, in guaranteeing the rights, freedoms and security of the people living in rural areas and particularly in the field of the fight against, prevention of and awareness-raising about gender violence.

2. Pursuant to the provisions of the Fifth Additional Provision of Organic Law 2/1986, of 13 March, on State Security Forces and Corps, the Regional Administration shall support, within its sphere of competence, the creation of associations for the provision of the Local Police service.

Article 27. Access to basic facilities and services in rural areas.

1. The planning instruments derived from this Law, as well as the rest of the sectorial planning approved by the Regional Administration, shall be aimed at providing the rural environment with the infrastructures, public facilities and basic services necessary for its development under equal conditions.

2. The installations or equipment of the basic public services in each rural area shall be located in reference nuclei of each one of them, in order to ensure functional cohesion, both within the area and with the rest of the territory.

In any case, efforts shall be made to ensure that the access time from any nucleus to the nucleus where the basic service is provided does not exceed 30 minutes.

Article 28. Public-private collaboration.

The public administrations of Castilla-La Mancha shall promote public-private collaboration for the development of projects to face the demographic challenge and shall foster the incorporation of demographic factors into the social responsibility of the private sector, in order to turn the rural environment into a scenario of opportunities.

CHAPTER II

Guaranteeing access to public services in rural areas

Section 1. *On the guarantee of equal access*

Article 29. *Common provisions.*

In order to achieve equal access to public services in the rural environment, the planning carried out in this area shall contain measures aimed at guaranteeing:

- a) Adequate access to the population of the rural environment to the educational offer.
- b) A health supply that takes into account the peculiarities of the rural environment and its population.
- c) Access to social welfare services and facilities, adapted to the needs of the rural population.
- d) The provision of public transport services in rural areas, in order to effectively and accessibly meet the demand for the use of basic services, mobility and the movement of people living in rural areas.
- e) The provision of compulsory public services and facilities in rural areas, their proper maintenance and improvement, within the framework of the regulations governing local administration, specifically favouring the coordinated provision of public services between nearby municipalities.
- f) The incorporation of the gender perspective in the access and design of all these public services, benefits and facilities in rural areas.

Section 2. *Access to public education in rural areas.*

Article 30. *Access to the public education service.*

Quality public education in rural areas shall be guaranteed, and in particular, the following shall be encouraged:

- a) Stability in the design and operation of the map and the network of educational centres located in rural areas.
- b) The stabilisation of the teaching staff in rural schools and the improvement of the conditions of the teaching staff, as established in Law 7/2010, of 20 July, on Education in Castilla-La Mancha, which will result in the attraction of new inhabitants in rural areas.
- c) Adequate schooling and improvement of educational results in rural areas, guaranteeing equal access to higher levels of education, as well as equal opportunities with respect to people living in urban areas.
- d) To adapt ratios to the real and specific circumstances of rural areas.
- e) Encourage the use of digital curricular materials in compulsory education in centres funded by public money in sparsely populated rural areas at risk of depopulation.
- f) To guarantee the necessary support for the educational inclusion of all students with attention to Special Education, special regime education, as well as the training of adults.
- g) To consolidate the training and participation of educational communities in rural areas outside the educational centre.

h) The promotion of training and institutional support for schools and associations of families of rural pupils for their involvement in coeducation, the identification of situations of gender violence and the eradication of any degree of social tolerance towards inequality between women and men.

i) The improvement of related educational, sports and technological infrastructures, promoting the use of these spaces for extracurricular activities.

j) The promotion of educational actions that contribute to disseminating the reality and values of the rural environment, encouraging the addressing of this subject in the classroom, as well as raising awareness among the population as a whole.

Article 31. Maintenance of rural schools.

In order to contribute to equal access to education, as well as to the maintenance and grounding of the population in rural areas, the Regional Administration shall guarantee the opening of rural schools, in which infant and primary education classes are taught, with ratios adapted to the demands of the pupils in these areas.

Article 32. Measures in the area of complementary benefits.

1. The Regional Administration shall implement measures in the area of complementary services that favour equality of access to education for pupils residing in sparsely populated rural areas and at risk of depopulation, in order to guarantee transport or, where appropriate, access to a school or university residence, for pupils from their residence, to compulsory and post-compulsory secondary education centres, as well as to artistic and language teaching centres.

2. The Regional Administration, in collaboration with local administrations, shall develop a network of school canteens and morning classes adapted to the reality of sparsely populated areas at risk of depopulation.

3. The Regional Departments responsible for education and agriculture shall develop joint programmes for the promotion of healthy eating and local purchasing, supporting farmers, small agri-food industry and HORECA companies in the area.

Article 33. Contract programme for non-compulsory education.

1. The Regional Administration will implement the figure of the training contract programme, for students who effectively stay in sparsely populated areas or areas at risk of depopulation, aimed at carrying out non-compulsory studies, both in Vocational Training and university.

2. The programme contract, referred to in the previous paragraph, will be conditional on the rest of the family unit remaining in a sparsely populated area or at risk of depopulation for the duration of the training period, being exempt from the total refund of the amount allocated if the beneficiary, at the end of the studies, maintains their effective stay or starts an economic activity project in the municipality of origin or in a municipality belonging to a sparsely populated rural area or at risk of depopulation.

3. Programme contracts for non-compulsory education shall be compatible with obtaining any type of study grant.

Article 34. Internship programme contract.

1. The Regional Administration shall implement the figure of the work experience contract programme for students enrolled in Vocational Training or university education, as well as for persons who have obtained their vocational training or university degree during the three years prior to the application and who wish to acquire work, personal or professional experience in sparsely populated areas or areas at risk of depopulation.

2. Persons who sign the traineeship programme contract shall receive financial or in-kind incentives for carrying out the traineeship.

3. The Regional Administration shall collaborate with universities and other public or private entities in the implementation of the internship programme contract.

Article 35. Adequacy of the vocational training offer in rural areas.

1. The Regional Administration will take into account in the planning of the vocational training offer the needs of the local productive scheme of Castilla-La Mancha and, particularly those linked to rural development in order to fight against depopulation, facilitating the participation of workers and companies in rural areas in such training.

2. The Regional Administration shall promote the increase of online training programmes, boosting the access of the rural population and especially of employed workers for their qualification and requalification through other training methodologies (tele-training and online training), guaranteeing the quality of the same.

Section 3. Access to public health care.

Article 36. Guarantee in primary care and health services appropriate to rural areas.

1. Primary care centres shall be strengthened, ensuring basic health services of proximity in each rural area, by means of planning with positive actions in sparsely populated rural areas or those at risk of depopulation.

2. The health services offered by the Castilla-La Mancha Health System will meet the needs of the population in sparsely populated areas or areas at risk of depopulation, reviewing and improving infrastructure, technological equipment and the catalogue of diagnostic tests in Primary Care centres.

3. Healthy and active ageing of the rural population shall be encouraged as the main means of combating the loss of functionality and autonomy and the prevention of dependency, promoting healthy lifestyles and safe behaviours, strengthening coordination between the health, family and social services spheres.

Article 37. Guarantee of access to emergency services and health emergencies.

The Castilla-La Mancha Health System shall attend to the particularities derived from sparsely populated areas or areas at risk of depopulation in terms of access to emergency and health emergency services.

Article 38. Guarantee of appointments and coordination of timetables.

The Castilla-La Mancha Health Service shall incorporate into its patient appointment systems, both in primary and specialised care, the necessary mechanisms aimed at coordinating attendance at consultations and diagnostic tests with the timetables of public transport services.

Article 39. Pharmaceutical care in rural areas.

The Regional Administration shall promote pharmaceutical care specifically designed to respond to the needs of the rural population and, in particular, mechanisms shall be established to facilitate this in those localities in sparsely populated areas or areas at risk of depopulation where there are no pharmacies.

Article 40. Programme of technological advances in medical care in rural areas.

While maintaining face-to-face access to healthcare services, the use of telemedicine and information and communication technologies shall be encouraged in sparsely populated areas or areas at risk of depopulation.

Section 4. Public Access to the System of Social Services and Care for Dependency and Services in the Area of Equality

Article 41. Social care and services in matters of equality.

The provision of social care shall be adapted to the needs of persons residing in rural areas, by means of the following measures:

a) Access to the benefits and services included in the catalogue of social service benefits and care for dependent persons under conditions of equality, in accordance with what is established in the map of social service resources, which shall have to take into account the needs of people living in sparsely populated rural areas at risk of depopulation.

b) Attention to people's basic needs, as well as access to information, guidance and assessment of the social situation, through the public network of primary care social services with the participation of local entities and, where appropriate, with the collaboration of third-sector social entities.

c) The promotion of the home help service and telecare, increasing the range of existing services and encouraging the elderly to stay at home.

In collaboration with local entities, other complementary proximity services will be provided in a flexible and personalised manner, such as companionship, meals, laundry at home, as well as participation in social activities carried out in the community.

d) Access to specialised multidisciplinary care for rural women through the Women's Centres distributed throughout the region.

Article 42. Promotion of personal autonomy and care for dependent persons.

The Autonomous Administration shall guarantee care for people living in rural areas who are in a situation of dependency, promoting access to the services and benefits of the System for Autonomy and Care for Dependency, developing the following measures:

a) The creation of services that facilitate care at home and in the closest social environment, establishing, where appropriate, itinerant services that facilitate access to them for dependent persons.

b) Promoting teleassistance and home care services, as well as personal assistance for dependent persons who do not have sufficient family support.

c) Facilitating access to the services offered by residential centres located in the municipality or in nearby municipalities for dependent persons who are not residents, with positive action criteria for those who reside in sparsely populated areas or areas at risk of depopulation, as well as occupational therapy, physiotherapy, day centre, meals, laundry and other services.

d) Promote coordinated actions between the Social Services and Dependency Care System and the Health System, in primary and hospital care, as well as the continuity of care in the municipality of residence.

Article 43. Care and attention for the elderly.

The Regional Administration shall guarantee attention and care for the elderly who live in rural areas, especially in sparsely populated rural areas or areas at risk of depopulation, in order to attend to their basic needs and offer them the necessary support to promote their personal autonomy through the following actions:

a) Ensuring the provision of the telecare service to elderly beneficiaries of the service who live in rural areas with difficult access to communication networks through the installation of latest generation digital terminals, preferably to those living alone or in isolated homes.

b) The development of active ageing and an environment of well-being in which they can contribute their knowledge and values.

c) To develop the digital skills of the population over 55 and access to communication technologies in order to reduce the generational digital divide and the gender digital divide and to encourage the development of digital procedures and activities.

d) Promote the development of services related to the ageing of the population.

e) Facilitate tools for older women for the identification and prevention of gender violence, guaranteeing comprehensive care through the Women's Centres.

f) Facilitate the necessary mechanisms for the promotion of inclusive leisure.

Article 44. Residential resources.

The Regional Administration shall promote the activation of residential resources adapted to the rural environment, by means of the following measures:

a) Access to a residential care resource, less than 40 kilometres from their home, in population centres in sparsely populated areas or areas at risk of depopulation so that the elderly can remain in their environment and avoid uprooting.

b) The system of social concertation of the Regional Administration shall contemplate measures of positive action towards centres or resources located in sparsely populated areas or areas at risk of depopulation, establishing criteria of preference for the allocation of places in these areas.

c) The adaptation or creation of new services suitable for attending to the specific needs of the elderly living in small municipalities or those affected by depopulation, such as multi-service

centres, specific accommodation and cohabitation units, supported or supervised housing, itinerant services and any mechanism that has the mandatory regulation and the corresponding authorisation for its operation.

d) Other types of residence or cohabitation in rural areas shall be activated for the elderly who have difficulties in remaining in their homes or who lack a home or who do not meet the basic conditions of habitability or accessibility, such as supervised or collaborative housing, small cohabitation units or foster families.

Article 45. The social inclusion of persons with disabilities.

Care for people with disabilities in rural areas shall be promoted by means of the following actions:

a) Promoting care in the most immediate environments through the implementation of family support programmes, care in natural environments or the itinerance of services as formulasto alleviate the social disadvantage of persons with disabilities. Likewise, an inclusive rural environment will be promoted by means of accessibility to services through the use of new information technologies and tele-intervention.

b) Programmes shall be established to facilitate accessibility in the usual dwelling and the equipment of homes to adapt them to the needs of people with disabilities, guaranteeing personalised attention through devices such as advanced tele-assistance, geolocation, risk alerts in the home, adapted terminals and accessible communication.

Section 5. Access to public transport in the rural environment

Article 46. Demand-sensitive transport.

1. Public transport for travellers in rural areas shall be provided mainly through demand-sensitive transport, in accordance with the state and autonomous community regulations established in this area, without detriment to the existence of regular transport beyond the county level and occasional transport.

2. The Regional Administration will establish a demand-sensitive transport system that has the maximum coverage for the population at an affordable price, that allows access to the services and activities offered in different municipalities and that facilitates travel for the elderly or people with mobility problems by means of adapted vehicles.

3. In sparsely populated areas, areas at risk of depopulation and intermediate rural areas, once demand-sensitive transport has been introduced, regular public service concession contracts for the general use of travellers will be adapted in terms of routes, calendars and timetables.

4. The Regional Administration will promote the implementation of a technological and telephone pre-contracting system that guarantees the reservation of seats, as well as the management and control of incidents and real-time information on services.

5. The Regional Administration shall grant the authorisation for demand-sensitive transport within the competence of the Autonomous Community.

Economic, social and territorial cohesion of the rural environment

CHAPTER I

Economic cohesion of the rural environment*Article 47. Promotion and diversification of economic activity in rural areas.*

1. Within the framework of the actions relating to the structuring of the territory, contemplated in the public policies of incentives for regional economic activity, their programming, and in particular the programming of European structural and investment funds and Integrated Territorial Investments, or of other integrated actions in response to the specific needs of the territories, emphasis shall be placed on sparsely populated areas or areas at risk of depopulation.

2. Economic diversification in rural areas shall be promoted and encouraged through cross-cutting measures aimed at:

a) Actions within the framework of actions co-financed by funds from the European Union, and in particular integrated actions in response to the specific needs of rural territories, with priority being given to sparsely populated rural areas or those at risk of depopulation.

b) Local economic initiatives from specific groups, based on the territorial approach and participatory mechanisms.

c) Manage and implement specific employment programmes, aimed at groups in specific sectors of activity, or qualification for the implementation of business projects or plans aimed at combating depopulation and population grounding in rural areas or strategic development of certain territories.

d) To support the trade sector in rural areas, as well as the modernisation of public commercial facilities, fairs and itinerant or non-sedentary sales, with special attention to sparsely populated rural areas or those at risk of depopulation.

e) To promote rural tourism in all its spheres, by means of an adequate organisation of the supply and improvement of tourist demand, with preferential attention to the promotion of sustainable tourism.

f) To encourage the socially and environmentally responsible use of the natural resources available in the region, such as forestry products, orienting their profitability towards the fight against climate change, energy transition, conservation of the natural heritage and landscape, and the sustainability of natural capital.

g) Encourage the social economy, in order to promote, create and consolidate inclusive employment in rural areas.

Article 48. Creation and maintenance of employment in the rural environment.

In order to encourage the creation and maintenance of employment in rural areas, especially for women, young people, the long-term unemployed, people at risk of social exclusion and people with disabilities, particularly in sparsely populated areas or areas at risk of depopulation, the following measures shall be implemented:

a) Economic and advisory support for the creation of companies, self-employment and employment in cooperatives and other legal forms that make up the social economy, particularly in sectors of economic activity related to the use of new technologies and innovative practices in environmental matters. In particular, support will be given to cooperatives and rural women's networks with the aim of promoting a balanced representation of women and men.

b) To develop a «Talent Recruitment» programme to help people with university degrees, training courses or certificates of professionalism to move to rural areas that are sparsely populated or at risk of depopulation, encouraging their recruitment, their entrepreneurial activity or the continuity of their vocational training.

c) The maintenance of jobs in particularly significant productive sectors in rural areas, combining traditional sources of rural employment with new employability in emerging sectors.

d) The promotion of active employment policies that contribute to the constant improvement of the employability of people in rural areas and the reduction of temporary and part-time work, as well as social responsibility and the improvement of health and safety conditions at work.

e) To develop specific employment programmes aimed at combating depopulation, population grounding or strategic development.

f) To promote vocational training for employment, particularly for women and people over 50 years of age, in order to improve the skills of the rural population, through classroom training with a reduced ratio, tele-training, and mobile and virtual classrooms, as well as programmes that combine training and employment linked to business activity or emerging sectors, guaranteeing the provision of services in the territory and the professional retraining of its inhabitants, prioritising, among others, training and qualification in proximity services and care for dependent people or those in a situation of vulnerability.

g) Guaranteeing vocational guidance for all its inhabitants through a system adapted to the rural environment with a service of proximity and a flexible methodology that makes it possible to take advantage of the sources of employment and sustainability of these areas and with special attention to self-employment initiatives.

h) The design of information and training activities that facilitate the involvement of rural inhabitants in geological, ecological and mining tourism and other endogenous cultural uses.

i) Collaboration with local entities to bring the employment services of the Autonomous Community closer to the people living in the rural areas of the region.

Article 49. Support for economic and business promotion in rural areas.

In order to encourage the promotion of activities and companies in rural areas, the maintenance and improvement of economic activities, compatible with sustainable development, in sparsely populated areas or areas at risk of depopulation, will be encouraged by means of the following actions:

a) Encouraging economic activities and sectors that contribute to the modernisation and diversification of the regional economic structure.

b) Specific aid to guarantee the supply of basic necessities, through the financing of actions linked to commercial establishments.

c) The competent Regional Ministry and the regional public sector will promote programmes directly or through collaboration with financial institutions that facilitate financing through loans, guarantees or any other financial instruments aimed at business initiatives promoted in sparsely populated areas or areas at risk of depopulation.

d) Improve the network of advice and mentoring for entrepreneurs, consolidating entrepreneurial projects.

e) Improving access to international markets for SMEs located in sparsely populated areas or areas at risk of depopulation.

f) The digitalisation of companies in order to improve competitiveness in global international markets and the generation of quality employment.

g) Generational change, in order to encourage the maintenance and settlement of new young people in rural areas.

h) Measures to prevent the rural exodus of women and to improve their access to training and employment in rural areas.

i) The maintenance of the business fabric, developing aid programmes for business succession in rural areas.

j) To promote sustainable tourism, encouraging initiatives that contribute to the preservation of the natural and cultural elements of each area, including its infrastructures and its ecological, geological, historical and intangible heritage. Active tourism will also be promoted in order to encourage the creation of areas for the provision of sports services in rural areas.

k) Encourage the location of industrial activities in sparsely populated areas or areas at risk of depopulation.

l) Establish a strategy for the recovery of old occupations linked to crafts and arts.

Article 50. Financing programmes for business activity.

1. The Regional Administration may establish for projects that generate economic activity and employment in sparsely populated areas or areas at risk of depopulation, a system to complement the aid and subsidies obtained from the General State Administration, taking into account the aid limits set in the regional aid map of the European Union, subject to the scheme provided for in Article 75(2)(c) of Legislative Decree 1/2002, of 19 November, approving the Consolidated Text of the Castilla-La Mancha Finance Law.

2. The regional public sector shall provide specific financial instruments to support business initiatives implemented in rural areas with low population density or at risk of depopulation. These instruments must be in line with community provisions in this area.

3. Exceptionally, the criteria and measures referred to in Article 22(1) of this law may be applied to projects which, without being physically located in sparsely populated areas or areas at risk of depopulation, have a clear benefit for these areas by generating synergies with projects located in these areas.

Article 51. Support for the agricultural, livestock and forestry sector.

In order to support agricultural, livestock and forestry activity that is on a par in terms of profitability with that of other economic sectors, the actions of the Regional Administration shall be aimed at:

a) Improving the profitability and job creation of agricultural, livestock and forestry activity, promoting the development, consolidation and maintenance of farms and appropriate management models that guarantee their viability and sustainability.

b) Rejuvenate the agricultural, livestock and forestry sector, for which the Regional Administration will ensure that generational change is incorporated in all its actions. The incorporation of young people into the agricultural sector will be encouraged, within the framework of the different sectoral measures that develop the agricultural policy of the Autonomous Community of Castilla-La Mancha, incorporating as a priority criterion for access to aid, the condition of being a young farmer or a farmer who owns a farm or is in the process of taking over

ownership of the same, as well as effective residence in sparsely populated areas or areas at risk of depopulation.

c) The modernisation of economically viable agricultural, livestock and forestry holdings, with a view to improving their competitiveness, with particular emphasis on holdings owned by young holders and maintaining their effective residence in a sparsely populated area or an area at risk of depopulation.

d) Sustaining family and professional agricultural holdings and improving the quality of life of farm workers, both farm owners and farm employees.

e) Diversification of agricultural, livestock and forestry activities on farms, seeking economic alternatives, with special emphasis on the processing and direct sale of their own products.

f) Developing formulas to ensure the economic viability of agricultural holdings and the promotion of priority holdings. To this end, measures will be promoted aimed at maintaining or increasing the surface area of agricultural holdings, optimising their size and encouraging their transfer to professionals in the sector. Similarly, land consolidation will be promoted in a way that is compatible with existing natural values, the transfer of land between professionals and the development of support infrastructures that contribute to the structural reinforcement of a farm.

g) The development by agricultural, livestock and forestry holdings of production models compatible with the environmental and territorial functions of agricultural activity, in particular those related to the protection of the environment, natural resources, ecosystems and agricultural landscapes in the environmental field and, in the territorial field, those related to their value in preserving the territorial balance and preserving the socio-economic fabric of rural areas.

h) Promote the use of renewable energies in agriculture, livestock farming and forestry.

i) To promote vocational training for owners and workers of agricultural holdings, with the support of specific educational centres for agricultural education.

j) Favour access to financing under favourable conditions for projects involving the improvement of agricultural and forestry holdings and their competitiveness by promoting financing programmes through financial instruments from the regional public sector.

k) To promote, in coordination with local administrations, the conditioning and maintenance of rural roads to agricultural holdings.

Article 52. Support for the improvement of the position of farmers in the value chain.

In view of the fundamental value that the agri-food sector of Castilla-La Mancha represents for the economy of the region, the Regional Administration will promote the following actions:

a) The grouping of the first links in the food chain through the integration of agri-food associative entities into larger business structures and the associationism of both farmers and their associative entities.

b) The integral sustainability of industries in the economic, social and environmental spheres.

c) Environmental certification of company facilities.

d) Organic production.

e) Products under differentiated quality schemes.

f) Increasing the size of enterprises

- g) Participation of farmers in the value chain.
- h) The establishment of short marketing channels.
- i) Home delivery of agri-food products through telephone and online orders.
- j) Investments in marketing.
- k) Innovation and the introduction of new agri-food products and new presentations.
- l) The introduction of digital technologies in enterprises.
- m) Improving transparency and information in the food supply chain.

Article 53. Support for the demand for agro-ecological products and products of differentiated quality from the region.

The Regional Administration shall support initiatives for responsible and sustainable consumption in rural areas, which contribute to local consumption and consumption of local, agro-ecological and differentiated quality products. In this respect, it shall regulate and promote the creation of consumption groups in the sphere of collaborative, inclusive, social and solidarity-based consumption.

Article 54. Enhancing the value of forest ecosystem services.

1. The Department responsible for forestry management shall promote the enhancement of the value of the externalities or services of forest ecosystems with the aim of increasing the value and income of the forests within the framework of international and national policies for the fight against climate change, the conservation of biodiversity and the commitments to environmental corporate social responsibility of the private sector.

2. For the purposes of this law, the following externalities or functions of forests are essential forest ecosystem services:

- a) The conservation of biodiversity and their capacity to provide refuge for fauna, especially where listed species are concerned.
- b) The capacity to fix carbon and therefore its contribution as a sink for CO₂ -greenhouse gas-.
- c) Soil conservation capacity and protection against the impact of erosion processes.
- d) The contribution to water regulation and the quality of surface and infiltrated water, and therefore their essential contribution to water uses in industry, agriculture and human consumption.
- e) The contribution to the diversification and beauty of the landscape.
- f) The historical and cultural value of the mountains for the population.
- g) The recreational use compatible with the conservation of their natural and cultural attributes.
- h) The scientific value associated with the elements they contain in their current state, as well as their natural evolution.

3. The Department responsible for forestry management shall undertake the calculation, accounting and valuation of the services of the forest ecosystems of the region, incorporating or developing the appropriate methodologies for their quantification, compensation and commercialisation; likewise, the Department responsible for forestry management shall ensure the development of measures and incentives that favour their enhancement.

4. For the purposes of its contribution to the improvement and management of the forests, a new fund called «externalities fund» shall be created, whose contribution and management system shall have the same rules as those applied to the improvement fund, in this case, based on the income or yields that may be obtained from the ecosystem services generated in the Public Utility Forests.

Article 55. Support for the commercialisation of the region's forest products.

In order to promote and guarantee the multiple and sustainable use of the forest resources of Castilla-La Mancha, the Regional Administration shall encourage the following actions:

- a) The development of the forest-industry-market-end consumer value chain, and the traceability of the chain of custody.
- b) Support for the production of natural resins and other non-timber forest products with the aim of guaranteeing the profitability of forests and rural employment in this sector.
- c) The introduction of new technologies in the sector.
- d) The introduction and promotion of sustainable management tools in the hunting and fish farming sector, including productive activity in game breeding centres and aquaculture centres.
- e) To promote the use of wood and its products in construction elements, incorporating them in sustainable public procurement processes, in line with the promotion of forest certification in public and private forests in the region and the promotion of the forestry industry associated with them.
- f) Quantify the value of forest ecosystem services to make them available to the corporate responsibility policies of companies and public bodies committed to offsetting their environmental footprint through the region's forests.

Article 56. Support for the bioeconomy.

In view of the potential that the bioeconomy sector in Castilla-La Mancha represents for the economy of the region, the Regional Administration will promote the following actions:

- a) The creation of new industries and economic activities and the diversification of productive activities, based on the transformation of biological resources and the development of new bioproducts and services, attracting local and international investment.
- b) Maximising the potential of the bioeconomy in rural areas, promoting the presence in new markets and the demand for this type of resources and products.
- c) Creating the right environment for business, connecting local talent with business.

Article 57. Access to banking services in rural areas.

1. Within the framework of State legislation, financial institutions operating in Castilla-La Mancha must take into account in their commercial and financial function strategies the access of the population of Castilla-La Mancha to banking services through offices, ATMs, financial agents, mobile offices, among other means, with the aim of providing solutions to those populations that do not have access to these banking services.

2. The public administrations of Castilla-La Mancha may enter into agreements with entities to implement technological solutions that facilitate access to financial services for people living in rural areas, especially payment methods in sparsely populated areas or areas at risk of depopulation.

Article 58. Promotion of research, development and innovation.

1. The promotion and encouragement of scientific research, development and technological innovation in the rural environment shall be a priority for the Regional Administration.

2. Research activity shall offer an adequate and permanent response to the scientific, technological, economic and social challenges facing the regional productive sectors, such as the bio-economy, agriculture and agri-food, forestry, or social services, and shall transfer practical, innovative and efficient solutions to productive economic activity that improve the competitiveness of these sectors.

3. The Agency for Research and Innovation of Castilla-La Mancha shall include among its functions the promotion of research on depopulation, demographic challenges and opportunities in the rural environment, with the aim of developing studies in those sectors that serve to economically and socially reactivate the territories with low population density in the region.

CHAPTER II

Social cohesion

Article 59. Reconciliation of personal, family and working life.

In order to encourage families and young people to stay and settle in rural areas, the Regional Administration shall progressively extend care services for children from 0 to 3 years of age, the elderly and dependent persons, with the participation of other administrations and the promotion of private initiatives.

Article 60. Childcare and support for families.

The Regional Administration shall guarantee adequate care for children, reinforcing the role of families in rural areas as an instrument to prevent depopulation and increase the new establishment of family groups in these environments, for which the following measures shall be promoted:

a) Favour and watch over the living conditions of children in the rural environment; with special attention to children living in more vulnerable families, and promote itinerancy and access

through new technologies to family support programmes, in order to favour care in the rural environment.

b) Promote family support policies to enable those who wish to do so to form a family in a favourable rural environment by adopting cross-cutting policies that facilitate the reconciliation of personal, family and working life and co-responsibility.

c) Promote access to teleworking and information and communication technologies (ICTs) for foster families living in rural areas, in order to favour their permanence in sparsely populated areas or areas at risk of rural depopulation, and guaranteeing the monitoring and support of these families through itinerancy and telematic attention, thus promoting the fostering of children in rural areas.

d) Favouring employment and settlement opportunities in rural areas for young people formerly under guardianship.

Article 61. Social inclusion.

The Autonomous Administration shall guide its actions in the rural environment in accordance with the following principles:

a) To promote the implementation of local or supra-municipal social inclusion projects in order to attend to the specific needs of persons or groups with deficiencies or with difficulties in social integration. The implementation of social or community intervention projects will be promoted, as well as support actions in rural areas, facilitating in a coordinated manner social care, education, access to housing and information and guidance for employment.

b) Adapt the system of economic benefits for social protection to respond to the circumstances that affect people in a situation of economic and/or social difficulty, so that coverage is extended beyond families in a situation of severe poverty. Support shall be given to families at risk or particularly vulnerable who reside in sparsely populated areas or areas at risk of depopulation in order to prevent them from entering social exclusion circuits.

Article 62. Housing.

In order to facilitate access to housing for people living in rural areas, especially for those who wish to reside in the nuclei of sparsely populated areas or areas at risk of depopulation, the Regional Administration shall contemplate measures and actions aimed at:

a) The creation of an Office for the promotion of rural housing, responsible for managing a Rural Housing Pool, which will enable those seeking housing to be connected with the existing supply.

b) Establish positive incentive criteria for applicants for publicly subsidised housing, who actually live in sparsely populated rural areas or areas at risk of depopulation, as well as for those who wish to establish their residence in the areas described.

c) To create a specific type of Rural Protected Housing, whose characteristics, which will be established by regulation, will take into account the architectural peculiarities of the rural environment.

d) To encourage the reuse of existing dwellings, the rehabilitation of dwellings and buildings, the improvement of the energy efficiency of existing dwellings, the preservation of

traditional rural architecture, and the declaration of rehabilitation areas in rural municipalities with the aim of recovering and preserving the rural heritage.

To this end, the public administrations of Castilla-La Mancha shall promote the studies that determine the rural areas that require the application of the execution procedure in building actions, foreseen in articles 132 and following of the Consolidated Text of the Law on Territorial Planning and Urban Development, approved by Legislative Decree 1/2010, of 18 May, or legal precept that replaces it.

e) To establish a financing programme for the construction or rehabilitation of housing, both for ownership and rental.

Article 63. Promotion of culture.

1. The public administrations of Castilla-La Mancha shall promote action plans to improve access to culture in sparsely populated areas or areas at risk of depopulation, through the creation of networks and platforms with specific cultural content, encouraging the use of information and communication technologies.

2. The Regional Ministry responsible for culture shall encourage the development of cultural resources located in these localities, in order to enhance their value from the cultural and heritage point of view and to generate employment, and shall promote professionalisation actions in the cultural industries, with special emphasis on the rural environment.

3. With the aim of implementing cultural services in rural areas, the library service shall be promoted in sparsely populated areas at risk of depopulation, including measures aimed at extending the dual-use public library model, school and public, increasing bookmobile services, and home delivery programmes for public library bibliographic collections, as well as fostering access to virtual services of the Castilla-La Mancha Public Library Network.

Article 64. Promotion of sport.

1. Public Administrations shall promote physical and sporting activity in sparsely populated areas at risk of depopulation with the aim of improving people's physical conditions, favouring socialisation among them, as well as intergenerational socialisation.

2. In order to comply with the provisions of this article, the Regional Administration will promote the formalisation of inter-administrative collaboration instruments with local entities in the region, promoting the grouped provision of sports services in sparsely populated areas at risk of depopulation.

Article 65. Promotion of responsible leisure.

The public administrations of Castilla-La Mancha will promote programmes and activities of responsible leisure free of gender violence, accessible and inclusive in the population centres of sparsely populated areas or areas at risk of depopulation, with the aim of fostering the enjoyment of leisure time, as well as greater social integration, implementing projects based on information and communication technologies, and agreements with the different audiovisual content platforms.

Article 66. Public resources for information and protection of the rights of consumers.

The Regional Administration shall guarantee universal access to public information and protection resources for consumers in rural areas, by means of telepresence services that avoid unnecessary travel in order to be able to submit queries and complaints.

Article 67. Social media.

The Regional Administration will promote measures that favour the access of citizens in rural areas to truthful information and that encourage human, cultural and economic exchanges among the rural population.

To this end, the Regional Administration will set up mechanisms to promote radio, television and any other means of social communication in rural areas, collaborating with the different media with a presence in the regional territory.

CHAPTER III

Territorial cohesion

Article 68. Territorial and town planning instruments.

1. The instruments of territorial and town planning that refer to territorial areas affected by the aims and objectives of this Law shall take these into consideration, and shall also promote the rational use of natural resources, harmonise the requirements of the economy, employment, social cohesion, equality of treatment and opportunities, the health and safety of persons and the protection of the environment, and contribute in particular to:

a) The effectiveness of measures for the conservation and enhancement of nature, flora and fauna and the protection of cultural, architectural and landscape heritage.

b) The appropriate protection of the rural environment and the preservation of the values of land that is unnecessary or unsuitable to meet the needs of urban transformation, making the best use of already built-up and urbanised areas that offer unused plots or houses in a state of ruin.

c) Adequate prevention of risks and hazards to public health and safety and the effective elimination of disturbances to both.

d) The prevention and minimisation of air, water, soil and subsoil pollution.

e) Territorial and economic cohesion, with particular emphasis on the interaction between the nearest urban and rural areas.

f) The preservation and promotion of the geographical, environmental, landscape, economic, social, demographic and cultural singularities of the area to which they refer.

g) The integration of the gender perspective and attention to the needs of citizens in general and especially minors, young people, the disabled and the elderly.

2. Without prejudice to the competences of other Administrations and in the terms indicated in the regulations on territorial and urban planning and local government, the Castilla-La Mancha Community Council may establish voluntary formulas for technical cooperation with the small municipalities of our region for the preparation and processing of their urban plans as suitable instruments both for the correct planning of their territory and for the enhancement of their cultural, landscape and architectural heritage and, in short, for their full development.

Article 69. Transport infrastructures.

The transport infrastructure planning instruments shall include specific programmes to guarantee accessibility to sparsely populated areas or areas at risk of depopulation, by means of the development of the existing network and its appropriate maintenance, conservation and operation.

Article 70. Promotion of renewable energies in rural areas.

Regional planning in this subject matter in rural areas will be geared towards the promotion and territorial balance of the same, for which purpose the use of renewable energies in rural areas will be promoted as a wealth-generating element, regulating to this end measures aimed at:

a) The production of energy, taking advantage of resources generated in the agricultural and livestock sector.

b) The production of energy from forestry biomass, in particular from fire prevention operations and sustainable forestry management plans.

c) The production of energy from sustainable biofuels

d) The production of renewable energies for collective, thermal or electrical use, and the development of technological systems or projects to reduce the use of non-renewable energies.

e) The substitution of public and private consumption of non-renewable energies, the reduction of CO₂ and other greenhouse gas emissions, the maintenance and increase of the performance of vegetation cover as a CO₂ sink and the adaptation to climate change.

f) Promotion and priority treatment of projects for electricity production facilities from renewable energy sources, which contribute with their electricity infrastructures to the expansion of the industrial and business fabric in the territory of Castilla-La Mancha or the consolidation of the same, sizing these infrastructures in order to enable them to meet future energy supplies/demands for these purposes in their area of implementation. Also included in this section is the promotion of projects for electricity production facilities from renewable energy sources linked to renewable energy communities.

g) Give priority in programmes, lines of aid and economic incentives aimed at promoting renewable energy, energy efficiency and sustainable mobility projects to sparsely populated rural areas at risk of depopulation, in order to encourage their energy transition and provide equitable and supportive treatment between territories in this transition.

Article 71. Efficiency in water consumption.

The objectives of optimising water use shall include measures aimed at:

a) Promoting a network of basic quality infrastructures taking into account the principles of effectiveness and efficiency, which guarantees access for the rural population, particularly in sparsely populated areas at risk of depopulation, to a quality water supply service for human consumption and economic activity, as well as the sanitation and purification of wastewater, introducing systems that are proportionate and appropriate to the number of inhabitants of the nucleus.

b) The implementation and execution of integrated water resource management plans for rural areas or associations of municipalities, guaranteeing availability for consumption in the communities.

c) The effective and efficient use of water for irrigation, giving priority to modernisation actions linked to water saving, efficiency in energy use and the use of renewable energies, without prejudice to the maintenance and support for the conservation of traditional irrigation systems whose cultural values justify their maintenance.

Article 72. Information and communication technologies.

1. The planning instruments shall promote the use of information and communication technologies in the rural environment, providing for measures aimed at:

a) Guarantee reliable and quality digital connectivity for 100% of localities, broadband and mobile, by means of infrastructure networks that allow for adequate data transmission between citizens, companies and the Administration, in order to achieve equal opportunities and network access capacities for all territories, social groups and all companies in the region.

b) Promote a territorially inclusive deployment of fast and ultra-fast broadband network infrastructures and services in any area or territory of the region, encouraging their contribution to increased economic productivity, social progress and territorial structuring.

c) Guarantee access to information media and audiovisual content, whether in a familiar format such as radio and television, or other more innovative formats such as current streaming audiovisual content platforms or digital media, through a broadband connection to guarantee plurality.

d) Improve the quality of ICT service penetration in the various sectors of economic activity in rural areas, particularly in sparsely populated areas or areas at risk of depopulation.

e) Promote the training of citizens in digital skills in rural areas, especially in sparsely populated areas at risk of depopulation.

f) Promote the full incorporation of women in the information society, through the development of specific programmes, especially in terms of access to and training in information and communication technologies in order to reduce the gender digital divide.

2. The Regional Administration, through the Department responsible for telecommunications, shall carry out periodic inspections, actions or audits to verify and check compliance with the connectivity offered by telecommunications operators.

TITLE V

Financing of measures for the development of the rural environment and to combat depopulation

Article 73. General criterion on institutional financing.

1. The financing of the measures and actions favouring the development of the rural environment and the fight against depopulation linked to this Law shall be the responsibility of the Regional Administration, with the assistance of funds that are applicable in accordance with the

development of the cohesion policies of the European Union, as well as the budgets of other public administrations.

2. The actions provided for in the planning instruments derived from this Law shall be financed from the different institutional aid programmes in each sectoral area, and shall be carried out in accordance with the administrative and financial control procedures in force.

3. The regional budgets shall specifically include the appropriations earmarked, in each of the sections and programmes, for the implementation of the actions established in the planning instruments regulated in this Law, and in any case they shall be identified as oriented towards and prioritised for the development of the rural environment and to combat depopulation.

4. The planning instruments provided for in this Law shall include a report indicating the funding allocated, in which the source of funding shall be made explicit. Likewise, the general objectives assigned and the indicators that make it possible to measure the degree of compliance with them shall be made explicit.

Article 74. Financing from the Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) and other financing instruments of the European Union.

1. The Regional Operational Programmes of the Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), and those other financial instruments of the European Union, shall allocate part of their financial resources to support the actions foreseen in the Planning Instruments established by this Law.

2. In the case of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), it shall give priority financial support to the lines of action linked to sparsely populated areas and areas at risk of depopulation.

3. The management of the Operational Programmes of these institutional funds shall be the responsibility of the regional government department designated as Managing Authority or Intermediate Body.

4. Notwithstanding the provisions of the previous paragraph, an integrated approach may be applied, either for all or part of the rural areas of Castilla-La Mancha, in accordance with the applicable European Union legislation.

TITLE VI

Tax measures against depopulation

Article 75. Measures for the reduction of tax burdens in rural areas.

In order to revitalise the economy of sparsely populated rural areas or areas at risk of depopulation, the Castilla-La Mancha Community Council, in the exercise of its regulatory powers in the field of taxation, shall establish tax benefits specifically aimed at taxpayers residing in such areas. The aforementioned benefits may affect both own taxes and assigned taxes.

TITLE VII

Governance

Article 76. *Regional Council for the Development of the Rural Environment and to Combat Depopulation.*

1. In order to guarantee the coherence of the planning carried out in the rural environment, the Regional Council for the Development of the Rural Environment and to Combat Depopulation shall be created as a body for collaboration and cooperation between the territorial administrations of the region in this area.

Likewise, in order to achieve effective participation of citizens in decision-making in rural areas, which will improve the effectiveness of applicable policies, the Council will include in its composition the most representative social and economic actors in rural areas.

2. The Council shall exercise the following functions:

a) To promote collaboration and the exchange of information between the regional, local and provincial administrations in the definition of rural development policies and in the fight against depopulation.

b) To promote mechanisms for cooperation and collaboration between territorial administrations in the design and development of public policies for the demographic challenge and to combat depopulation, as well as for the provision of services in the rural environment.

c) To promote the participation of social and economic actors in the configuration of policies that affect the rural world, contributing experiences and initiatives to improve the living conditions of the rural population.

d) Any other function attributed by the applicable regulations.

3. Its composition and functions shall be determined by Decree of the Governing Council, and the *ERDR* and the *ERD* shall report to it prior to its approval. This report shall replace that of other collegiate bodies which, having a bearing on the same material area covered by the report, incorporate equivalent components with respect to this Council.

Article 77. *Public management and governance of the planning instruments for rural areas.*

The planning instruments provided for in Article 17.1 of this Law shall establish their governance model, guaranteeing the effective participation of local bodies and of the most representative economic and social actors present in the regional territory.

First additional provision. Creation of a fund for the financial support of business projects in sparsely populated areas or areas at risk of depopulation.

1. The creation of a fund for the financial support of viable business projects in sparsely populated areas or areas at risk of depopulation is hereby authorised, with an initial allocation of 10,000,000 euros, which may be supplemented with contributions from public or private entities, whether or not they are part of the financial system.

2. In accordance with the provisions of Article 50.2 of this Law, the management of this fund shall be entrusted to the regional public sector with competences in the creation of financial instruments.

Second additional provision. *Adaptation of the typology of rural areas.*

1. The typology of the rural areas referred to in Article 11 of this Law may be adapted by Agreement of the Governing Council in order to maintain coherence and alignment with the Agreement on the Application of the Regional Map of aid of the Government of Spain and the classification of the territorial units for statistics (NUTS).

2. Rural areas forming part of a NUTS3 whose overall population density rate is less than 12.5 inhabitants per square kilometre shall be considered as sparsely populated areas, in accordance with the categories in Article 12(2) of this Law.

3. The necessary adaptation of the areas provided for in Article 11 of this Law to the national regulations applicable in the area of demographic challenge shall be carried out by means of an Agreement of the Governing Council.

Third additional provision. *Adaptation of specifications in the contracting of voice, data and similar communication services of the Castilla-La Mancha Community Council.*

The technical specifications that are approved by the contracting bodies of the regional public sector, after the entry into force of this Law, for the contracting of voice, data and similar communication services, will incorporate:

a) The obligation on the part of the successful bidders to connect all the buildings they own by fibre optic, with the exception of those which, due to their location in isolated areas, require the study of alternatives to facilitate their connection to the telecommunications networks.

b) The obligation to guarantee mobile connection to the corporate network and management applications used by employees in the regional public sector in all locations in the region.

c) Among the award criteria, the improvement consisting of the connection of buildings owned by local entities in sparsely populated areas or areas at risk of depopulation to telecommunication networks.

Fourth additional provision. *Management assignments in public forests owned by the Castilla-La Mancha Community Council and local entities.*

1. The Regional Ministry responsible for forest management may entrust the Public Company for Environmental Management of Castilla-La Mancha (Geacam) with the execution of forest exploitation and silvicultural treatments, as well as other types of management actions defined in the projects and forest management plans of the public forests of the Castilla-La Mancha Community Council, in order to guarantee and enhance the socially and environmentally responsible forest management in an uninterrupted and effective manner, in accordance with the planning established for Geacam by the Regional Ministry.

The mobilisation of these forest resources will respond to the principles of efficiency and effectiveness, ensuring that their classification, collection and placing on the market respond to the expectations of quality and best use in the value chain.

All of the above will be carried out in line with the objectives of sustainability, energy transition, circular economy and creation of economy in the rural environment, including the dynamisation, collaboration and participation of the private forestry sector in this forest management.

2. Within the framework of the provisions of current legislation on public sector contracts, the Public Company Geacam shall be at the disposal of the owners of other public forests in the

region to carry out functions similar to those set out in the previous point, including the execution of the tasks defined in the improvement plans for these forests.

3. The Geacam Public Company shall draw up an annual report, which shall be sent during the first quarter of the year to the Regional Ministry responsible for forestry policy and management for submission to the Governing Council, on the results obtained by the management of the forests and the use of the resources obtained during the previous year.

4. In those cases in which it is considered necessary for a more efficient management of the exploitation of the forests owned by the Castilla-La Mancha Community Council and entrusted in accordance with paragraph 1, the contracting of the same may be carried out by the Public Company Geacam, in accordance with the requirements and within the limits established in the applicable legislation.

Fifth additional provision. *Pilot experiences.*

1. With the aim of adapting the conditions for the provision of the services and programmes referred to in this Law to the needs of sparsely populated areas or areas at risk of depopulation, the Regional Administration may promote pilot schemes for a specific period of time and territorial scope.

2. By agreement of the Governing Council, the conditions under which the pilot experience shall be developed shall be established, as well as the indicators and periodicity of the reports that will serve as a basis for the new regulation of the services or programmes.

3. When the provision of the services or execution of the programmes requires some type of authorisation or licence from the Regional Administration, the agreement referred to in the previous point shall incorporate the provisional authorisations or licences necessary for the development of the pilot experience.

Sole repealing provision. *Repeal of regulations.*

Any regulatory provisions of equal or lower rank that oppose the provisions of this Law are hereby repealed.

First final provision. *Amendment of Law 3/2000, of 26 May 2000, on the Creation of the Castilla-La Mancha Public Broadcasting Corporation.*

Paragraph 4 of Article 11 of Law 3/2000, of 26 May, on the Creation of the Castilla-La Mancha Public Broadcasting Corporation, is amended and shall be worded as follows:

«4. The Governing Council, at the proposal of the Director General and in agreement with the Board of Directors, may agree to the creation of subsidiary companies in the areas of marketing, production, communication, agencies, radio broadcasting, local television, written and digital media or other similar areas in order to achieve more efficient management. The constitution and capital of these companies shall be subject to the limitations that are legally applicable to them, and the Castilla-La Mancha Public Broadcasting Corporation may maintain a minority shareholding in them».

Second final provision. *Modification of Law 8/2000, of 30 November, on the Health System of Castilla-La Mancha.*

Paragraph 3.b) of Article 20 of Law 8/2000, of 30 November, on the Healthcare System of Castilla-La Mancha, is amended and a paragraph 4 is introduced into the said Article 20.

One. Paragraph 3.b) of Article 20 shall read as follows:

«b) Telemedicine, which shall include the appropriate use of new information and communication technologies to improve coordination between health centres and professionals, and the provision of services to sick persons.

In sparsely populated areas or areas at risk of depopulation, telemedicine shall promote specific and appropriate care in the areas of geriatrics, psychological care and paediatrics.»

Two. A paragraph 4 is inserted in Article 20 with the following wording:

«4. The Castilla-La Mancha Health System shall design a network of ongoing care points in order to guarantee that any population centre in sparsely populated areas or areas at risk of depopulation, as defined in Law 2/2021, of 7 May, on Economic, Social and Tax Measures to Combat Depopulation and for the Development of the Rural Environment in Castilla-La Mancha, that is less than 30 minutes away from them 24 hours a day.

Likewise, a land or air medical transport service, or a combination of both, as required by the clinical situation of the patients, shall be guaranteed to provide 24-hour emergency and urgent medical care with the same quality and scope for all the population centres in the region».

Third final provision. *Modification of Law 5/2005, of 27 June 2005, on the Organisation of the Pharmaceutical Service of Castilla-La Mancha.*

Article 5 of Law 5/2005, of 27 June 2005, on the Organisation of the Pharmaceutical Service of Castilla-La Mancha is amended to read as follows:

«Article 5. *Dispensing conditions.*

1. Dispensing may only be carried out in establishments authorised to do so by this Law and under the conditions established therein, in the General Health Act, the Medicines Act and the provisions that develop them.

2. The dispensing of medication shall be carried out by or under the supervision of a pharmacist.

3. The dispensing of medication for veterinary use must be carried out in the establishments determined in article 74 of this Law, by means of the corresponding pharmaceutical services.

4. In the dispensing of medication between authorised establishments and the public, intermediation for profit by third parties, entities or companies is prohibited.

5. In relation to indirect, itinerant or door-to-door sales, the provisions of State legislation on pharmaceutical products shall apply.

6. Exceptionally, users residing in sparsely populated areas or areas at risk of depopulation may be dispensed medicines healthcare products, with informed delivery of the same at home and in compliance with the guarantees in terms of dispensing medicines and healthcare products imposed by the applicable regulations, by a pharmacy office in the pharmaceutical area, with the

direct intervention of the pharmacist of the pharmacy office in the dispensing being guaranteed in order to carry out the mandatory and prior personalised advice in accordance with the provisions of articles 19. 4 and 86.1 of Royal Legislative Decree 1/2015.

In any case, in the cases referred to in the previous paragraph, the guarantees on quality and health control for any of these deliveries must be strictly complied with, for which the necessary control methods or systems will be incorporated, as well as the direct responsibility of the dispensing pharmacist for the transport and delivery of the medicine, ensuring that it does not suffer any alteration or reduction in its quality.

7. Likewise, the corresponding hospital pharmacy service may carry out the informed delivery at the place of residence of the users, and in compliance with the guarantees regarding the dispensing of medicines and healthcare products imposed by the applicable regulations, of those medicines whose dispensing is restricted only to the hospital setting in accordance with the state regulations in force, delivery in which the pharmacy offices in the area may collaborate.

This procedure may only be applied on an exceptional basis in sparsely populated areas or areas at risk of depopulation, as well as in other cases to be determined, in order to favour continuity of care and avoid the patient having to travel to hospital.

8. Likewise, in the same terms and cases contemplated in sections 6 and 7 of this article, said patients and users may receive the pharmaceutical care they require from the pharmacy office at home, including that related to pharmacotherapy follow up, adherence to treatments with personalised dosage systems, adverse reactions, and the actions inherent to the programmes that are agreed with the competent Administrations».

Fourth final provision. *Modification of Law 14/2005, of 29 December 2005, on the Regulation of the Transport of Persons by Road in Castilla-La Mancha.*

Law 14/2005, of 29 December, on the Regulation of the Transport of People by Road in Castilla-La Mancha, is modified as follows:

One. Article 45 is amended and shall be worded as follows:

«Article 45. *Capacity and mode of contracting.*

1. Transport services in passenger vehicles shall be authorised for a maximum of nine seats, including the person driving, and shall be of discretionary nature, and shall be carried out, with the exception provided for in the following paragraph, by means of a global contracting by the transport operator of the total capacity of the vehicle.

2. Notwithstanding the provisions of the previous paragraph, in areas of low population density, difficult accessibility and low traffic that are not duly served by regular passenger transport services, the municipalities, following a favourable report from the competent Regional Ministry in the matter, or the latter in the case of area or inter-urban services, may authorise the hiring of a seat with individual payment".

Two. A new Second Additional Provision is included, which will be worded as follows:

«Second additional provision. *Subcontracting.*

The Regional Ministry responsible for transport, in accordance with European regulations, may establish subcontracting in public service contracts for the transport of passengers. In any

case, the contract specifications shall determine whether subcontracting is necessary and shall establish the conditions and modalities of its application».

Sixth final provision. *Modification of Law 3/2008, of 12 June, on Forestry and Sustainable Forest Management of Castilla-La Mancha.*

Law 3/2008, of 12 June, on Forestry and Sustainable Forest Management of Castilla-La Mancha, is amended as follows:

One. Article 39(4) shall read as follows:

«4. In forests under the general administrative regime, when the harvesting consists of the felling of trees or shrubs of non-protected species, and their ecological significance is not relevant and, in addition, they are dry, semi-dry, dominated, decrepit or defective trees with no commercial value, whose total volume does not exceed five cubic metres of wood or twenty steres of firewood, the owner of the forest or his representative will only be obliged to inform the environmental agent within whose area the forest is located, prior to felling, who will give his written consent to the felling, for which he will have to verify that the tree or trees affected are in the conditions described».

Two. Article 42 is amended to read as follows:

«Article 42. *Improvement Fund.*

1. Without prejudice to the provisions of Articles 38.2 and 38.3, local bodies owning listed forests shall apply to an improvement fund an amount of twenty per cent of the amount for which the forest harvests have been awarded, or of the yields obtained from authorisations, concessions or other activities carried out on the forest, which may be voluntarily increased by the said bodies. This percentage will be one hundred percent in the case of forests owned by the Castilla-La Mancha Community Council. The fund will be used for the planning and execution of forest management and its certification, as well as for the conservation and improvement of the forests or groups of listed forests of the local entity where it is generated, in accordance with a plan approved by the Regional Ministry. These funds may also be used to access further financing through European funds and others that require their own co-financing.

2. In general, the Regional Ministry shall be responsible for the administration of the improvement fund, except in the event that it is entrusted to the local entity owning the forest in accordance with the implementing provisions of this law.

3. In those cases in which there are external funds whose purpose is forest management, and provided that it is necessary to apply a percentage of co-financing by the beneficiary entity, the budget appropriations of the improvement fund may be used for this purpose».

Seventh final provision. *Modification of Law 7/2010, of 20 July, on Education in Castilla-La Mancha.*

Law 7/2010, of 20 July, on Education in Castilla-La Mancha, is hereby amended as follows:

One. Article 6(c) shall read as follows:

«c) To develop educational policies for children, progressively expanding the supply of school places in the first cycle of early childhood education with the participation of other Administrations, especially the local Administration, and private initiatives. Specific formulas shall be devised in rural areas for the promotion of initiatives that guarantee a sufficient supply for the first cycle of early childhood education».

Two. Paragraph 3 of Article 69 shall read as follows:

«3. The initial vocational training offer shall be decided by the competent Regional Ministry of Education in collaboration with the competent Regional Ministry of Labour, the social and economic agents represented in the Castilla-La Mancha Vocational Training Council, and the local corporations, without prejudice to the provisions of the twenty-eighth Additional Provision of Organic Law 2/2006, of 3 May, on Education. In its planning, the needs of the local productive scheme of Castilla-La Mancha and the interests and expectations of the citizens will be taken into account, with special protection for the productive sectors linked to rural development and the fight against depopulation.

The participation of companies from the rural environment will be facilitated in the Dual Vocational Training modalities and in the implementation of the Workplace Training module.

The Regional Ministry responsible for education shall promote internships in companies, institutions and administrations in rural areas, favouring the mobility and employability of vocational training students".

Three. Article 93(1)(d) shall be worded as follows:

«(d) Social cohesion, paying special attention to disadvantaged groups, with basic training or labour integration needs and to the rural environment which, due to population dispersion, have difficulty in accessing adult education centres».

Four. A new paragraph 3 is added to Article 128, with the following content:

«3. The Regional Ministry responsible for education shall maintain a public educational centre in those localities where there are at least four students attending infant and primary education levels.

If an educational centre has fewer than four pupils and the prospect of incorporating new pupils in the following school years is favourable, it may exceptionally remain open with fewer than four pupils".

Five. Article 128(4) is amended to read as follows:

«4. The Department responsible for education shall have an adequate network of transport or school residences to bring pupils from public schools to compulsory and post-compulsory secondary education, including vocational training, and also to facilitate their access to artistic and language education, which will particularly address the needs of students in sparsely populated areas or areas at risk of depopulation, as defined in Law 2/2021, of 7 May, on

Economic, Social and Tax Measures to Combat Depopulation and for the Development of the Rural Environment in Castilla-La Mancha».

Ninth final provision. *Modification of Law 8/2013, of 21 November, on Tax Measures of Castilla-La Mancha.*

Law 8/2013, of 21 November, on Tax Measures of Castilla-La Mancha, is amended as follows:

One. A new article 12 bis is introduced with the following wording:

«Article 12 bis. *Deduction for habitual residence in rural areas.*

1. Taxpayers whose habitual residence is in any of the municipalities included in the areas referred to in Article 12 of Law 2/2021, of 7 May, on Economic, Social and Tax Measures to Combat Depopulation and for the Development of the Rural Environment in Castilla-La Mancha, and who also meet the requirement of effective residence therein under the terms provided for in Article 5 of the aforementioned law, may apply the corresponding of the following deductions to their regional tax liability:

a) For habitual residence in a municipality included in an area of intense depopulation:

- If the municipality has a population of less than 2,000 inhabitants: 20 %.
- If the municipality has a population of 2,000 or more but less than 5,000 inhabitants: 15 %.

b) For habitual residence in a municipality included in an area of extreme depopulation:

- If the municipality has a population of less than 2,000 inhabitants: 25 %.
- If the municipality has a population of 2,000 or more but less than 5,000 inhabitants: 20 %.

2. Failure to comply with any of the requirements indicated in the previous paragraph shall give rise to the inclusion of the amounts deducted in the full regional tax liability for the financial year in which the non-compliance occurs, with the corresponding interest for late payment».

Two. A new Article 12 ter. is introduced with the following wording:

«Article 12 ter. *Deduction for the acquisition or refurbishment of the habitual residence in rural areas.*

1. Taxpayers may deduct from their regional tax liability 15 percent of the amounts paid during the tax period for the purchase or refurbishment of the dwelling that constitutes or will constitute their habitual residence, provided that the following requirements are simultaneously met:

a) That the dwelling is located in one of the municipalities included in the areas referred to in Article 12 of Law 2/2021, of 7 May, on Economic, Social and Tax Measures to combat

Depopulation and for the Development of the Rural Environment in Castilla-La Mancha, and that the population of the same is less than 5,000 inhabitants.

b) That the acquisition or rehabilitation of the dwelling has taken place after the 1st of January 2021.

2. The basis for this deduction shall be constituted by the amounts paid for the purchase or refurbishment of the dwelling, including the expenses incurred that have been borne by the purchaser and, in the case of external financing, the amortisation, interest, the cost of the instruments for covering the risk hedging instruments for the variable interest rate of the mortgage loans regulated in article nineteen of Law 36/2003, of 11 November, on Economic Reform Measures, and other expenses derived from the same. In the case of application of the aforementioned hedging instruments, the interest paid by the taxpayer shall be reduced by the amounts obtained from the application of the aforementioned instrument.

The total maximum base for the deduction shall be 180,000 euros, or the amount of the acquisition or refurbishment of the property giving rise to the deduction, whichever is less, less the amounts received from the Castilla-La Mancha Community Council as subsidies for the acquisition or refurbishment of the property. In turn, the maximum base to be applied in each financial year shall be 12,000 euros.

3. When a habitual residence is acquired having already benefited from the deduction provided for in this article, the total maximum base of the deduction shall be reduced by the amounts invested in the acquisition of the previous dwellings, insofar as these amounts have been subject to deduction.

When, on the disposal of a principal residence for which the tax credit provided for in this article has been taken, an exempt capital gain is generated by reinvestment, the tax credit base for the acquisition or refurbishment of the new home shall be reduced by the amount of the capital gain to which the reinvestment exemption applies. In this case, no deduction may be made for the acquisition of the new home as long as the amounts invested in it do not exceed both the price of the previous home, insofar as it has been subject to deduction, and the exempt capital gain for reinvestment.

4. In the event of marriage annulment, divorce or legal separation, the taxpayer may continue to take this deduction, under the terms provided for in the state personal income tax regulations, for the amounts paid in the tax period for the acquisition of the home that was their habitual residence during the duration of the marriage, provided that it continues to have this status for the common children and the parent in the company of whom they remain.

5. The application of this deduction shall require that the verified amount of the taxpayer's assets at the end of the tax period exceeds the value shown by its verification at the beginning of the same by at least the amount of the investments made, excluding interest and other financing expenses. For these purposes, increases or decreases in value during the tax period of assets which at the end of the tax period still form part of the taxpayer's assets shall not be taken into account.

6. For the application of the deduction provided for in this article, the following concepts shall be taken into account:

a) In general terms, the taxpayer's habitual residence shall be considered to be the building that constitutes his or her residence for a continuous period of at least three years. However, it shall be understood that the dwelling was considered to be the taxpayer's habitual residence when, despite this period not having elapsed, the taxpayer dies or there are other circumstances that necessarily require a change of address, such as marriage, separation, transfer of employment, obtaining the first job, or change of employment, or other similar justified circumstances. In order for the home to constitute the taxpayer's habitual residence, it must be effectively and permanently inhabited by the taxpayer within a period of twelve months from the date of acquisition or completion of the works. However, it shall be understood that the dwelling does not lose its character of habitual residence when the death of the taxpayer occurs or when

other circumstances occur that necessarily prevent the occupation of the dwelling, under the terms provided for in the previous paragraph. When the exceptions provided for in the two preceding paragraphs are applicable, the deduction for the acquisition of a home shall be applied until such time as the circumstances that necessarily require the change of home or prevent the occupation of the home arise.

b) The acquisition of a principal residence shall be understood to be the acquisition in the legal sense of the right of ownership or full ownership of the same, even if this is shared, the legal transaction that gives rise to it being indifferent.

The construction or extension of the dwelling shall be assimilated to the acquisition of a dwelling, in the following terms:

Extension of the dwelling: When the living area is increased, by enclosure of an open area or by any other means, on a permanent basis and at all times of the year.

Construction: When the taxpayer pays directly the expenses derived from the execution of the works, or pays amounts on account to the developer of the works, provided that the final work certificate is issued within a period not exceeding four years from the start of the investment.

c) Those works whose main purpose is the reconstruction of the dwelling by means of the consolidation and treatment of the structures, façades or roofs and other similar works shall be considered as refurbishment of the habitual residence, provided that the overall cost of the refurbishment operations exceeds 25 per cent of the purchase price if this had been carried out during the two years immediately prior to the start of the refurbishment works or, in other cases, of the market value of the dwelling at the time of the start of the refurbishment works. For these purposes, the proportional part corresponding to the land shall be deducted from the purchase price or market value of the dwelling».

Two bis. A new Article 12 quater is introduced with the following wording:

«Article 12 quater. *Deduction for relocation of the main residence.*

1. The taxpayer may deduct 500 euros from the regional tax liability in the tax period in which the change of residence takes place, as well as in the following one, for the expenses incurred when moving the habitual residence for work purposes to a municipality of Castilla-La Mancha included in the areas referred to in Article 12 of Law 2/2021, of 7 May, on Economic, Social and Tax Measures to Combat Depopulation and for the Development of the Rural Environment in Castilla-La Mancha, under the following circumstances:

a) The taxable base of the tax period in which the deductions referred to in the previous point would have started to be applied, must be less than 22,946 euros in individual taxation or 31,485 euros in joint taxation.

b) The amount of the deduction may not exceed the autonomous community part of the gross tax liability arising from the income from work and economic activities in the financial year in which the deduction is applicable.

c) In the case of joint taxation, the deduction of 500 euros shall be applied, in each of the tax periods in which the deduction is applicable, for each of the taxpayers who transfer their residence under the aforementioned terms, with the limit of the Autonomous Community part of the total tax liability from earned income and economic activities that corresponds to the taxpayers who generate the right to the application of the deduction.

d) In order to consolidate the right to the deduction, the taxpayer must remain in the new habitual residence during the year in which the transfer takes place and the following three years.

2. Failure to comply with either of the two previous requirements shall give rise to the refund of the amounts deducted from the regional tax liability for the year in which the non-compliance occurs, with the corresponding interest for late payment».

Three. Article 19(2) is amended and shall be worded as follows:

«2. The reduced rate of 6 per cent shall be applied to transfers of property whose purpose is the acquisition of the taxable person's first habitual residence, provided that the actual value of the property does not exceed 180,000 euros and the following conditions are met:

a) That the acquisition is more than 50 per cent financed by means of a mortgage loan on the property acquired arranged with any of the financial institutions referred to in Article 2 of Law 2/1981, of 25 March, on the Regulation of the Mortgage Market, the amount of which does not exceed the declared value of the property acquired; and that the acquisition of the property and the arrangement of the mortgage loan are made on the same date.

b) That the real value of the home is equal to or greater than the value assigned to it in the appraisal carried out for the purposes of the aforementioned mortgage.

However, when the transfer of property is for the purpose of acquiring the first habitual residence located in any of the municipalities included in the areas referred to in Articles 12 and 13 of Law 2/2021, of 7 May, on Economic, Social and Tax Measures to Combat Depopulation and for the Development of the Rural Environment in Castilla-La Mancha, the reduced rate to be applied shall be as follows:

1.) Properties located in municipalities included in areas at risk of depopulation: 5 per cent.

2.) Properties located in municipalities included in areas of intense depopulation: 4 per cent.

3.) Properties located in municipalities in areas of extreme depopulation: 3 per cent.

Four. A new paragraph 5 is added to Article 19, with the following wording:

«5. The following tax rates shall apply to the transfer of real estate used as the registered office or work centre of companies or business premises, and which are located in any of the municipalities included in the areas referred to in Articles 12 and 13 of Law 2/2021, of 7 May, on Economic, Social and Tax Measures to Combat Depopulation and for the Development of the Rural Environment in Castilla-La Mancha:

a) Properties located in municipalities included in areas at risk of depopulation: 3 percent.

b) Properties located in municipalities included in areas of intense depopulation: 2 per cent.

c) Properties located in municipalities in areas of extreme depopulation: 1 per cent.

Five. Article 21(2) is amended and shall be worded as follows:

«The rate of 0.75 per cent shall be applied to the first copies of deeds and notarial deeds documenting transfers of real estate whose purpose is the acquisition of the taxable person's first habitual residence, provided that the actual value of the property does not exceed 180,000 euros and the following conditions are met:

a) That the acquisition is financed by more than 50 per cent by means of a mortgage loan on the property acquired, arranged with any of the financial institutions referred to in Article 2 of Law 2/1981 of 25 March, on the Regulation of the Mortgage Market; that the amount of the mortgage loan does not exceed the declared value of the property acquired; and, in turn, that the acquisition of the property and the arrangement of the loan are made on the same date.

b) That the real value of the home is equal to or greater than the value assigned to it in the appraisal carried out for the purposes of the aforementioned mortgage.

However, when the property whose acquisition is documented is located in any of the municipalities included in the areas referred to in Articles 12 and 13 of Law 2/2021, of 7 May, on Economic, Social and Tax Measures to Combat Depopulation and for the Development of the Rural Environment in Castilla-La Mancha, the reduced rate to be applied shall be as follows:

1. Properties located in municipalities included in areas at risk of depopulation: 0.50 per cent.
2. Properties located in municipalities included in areas of intense depopulation: 0.25 per cent.
3. Properties located in municipalities in areas of extreme depopulation: 0.15 per cent».

Six. A new paragraph 5 is added to Article 21, with the following wording:

«5. The following tax rates shall be applied to the first copies of deeds and notarial deeds documenting the transfer of real estate used as the registered office or work centre of companies or business premises, and which are located in any of the municipalities included in the areas referred to in Articles 12 and 13 of Law 2/2021, of 7 May, on Economic, Social and Tax Measures to Combat Depopulation and for the Development of the Rural Environment in Castilla-La Mancha:

- a) Properties located in municipalities included in areas at risk of depopulation: 0.25 percent.
- b) Properties located in municipalities included in areas of intense depopulation: 0.15 per cent.
- c) Properties located in municipalities in areas of extreme depopulation: 0.10 percent.

Seven. Article 25 is reworded as follows:

«Article 25. *Reductions in tax rates for actions on industrial and tertiary land in rural areas.*

1. A rebate is established on the tax liability for property transfer tax and documented legal acts, in the modality of documented legal acts, for the first copies of deeds and notarial deeds documenting acts of grouping, aggregation, segregation and division carried out on land intended for industrial or tertiary use, and located in any of the municipalities included in the areas referred to in articles 12 and 13 of Law 2/2021, of 7 May, on Economic, Social and Tax Measures against Depopulation and for the Development of the Rural Environment in Castilla-La Mancha.

2. Depending on the municipality where the land on which the acts mentioned in the previous number are carried out is located, the amount of the allowance will be:

- a) Land located in municipalities included in areas at risk of depopulation: 75 percent subsidy.
- b) Land located in municipalities included in areas of intense depopulation: 85 per cent subsidy.

c) Land located in municipalities included in areas of extreme depopulation: 95 per cent subsidy.

3. The application of the bonus provided for will require that the deed or notarial deed documenting the act of grouping, aggregation, segregation and division expressly states that the land on which the action is taken is intended for industrial or tertiary use».

Eight. The Sole Additional Provision is now called the First Additional Provision.

Nine. A new Second Additional Provision is introduced with the following wording:

«Second additional provision. *Updating of population centres in which Articles 12 bis, 12ter and 12 quater are applied.*

For the purposes of applying the deductions provided for in Articles 12 bis, 12 ter and 12 quater, the population of the municipalities shall be taken to be that which, according to their respective municipal registers, they had on the 1st of January of each year.

However, for the purposes indicated in the previous paragraph, variations in population with respect to the 2021 municipal census that entail a reduction or non-application of the deductions that would be applicable in accordance with the same shall not be taken into consideration. In such cases, said deductions may continue to be applied under the conditions and in the amounts that would be applicable in accordance with the population of the aforementioned municipal census».

Tenth final provision. *Modification of Law 6/2019, of 25 November, on the Statute of Rural Women of Castilla-La Mancha.*

Letter i) of Article 3 of Law 6/2019, of 25 November, on the Statute of Rural Women of Castilla-La Mancha, is deleted by the definition contained in Article 5.1.b) of Law 2/2021, of 7 May, on Economic, Social and Tax Measures to Combat Depopulation and for the Development of the Rural Environment in Castilla-La Mancha.

Eleventh final provision. *Adaptation to the content of the regulation.*

The Governing Council and, where appropriate, the competent Regional Ministries, shall adapt the content of their sectoral regulations to the provisions of this Law, within six months of its entry into force.

Twelfth final provision. *Authorisation for regulatory development.*

Within three months of the entry into force of this Law, the Governing Council shall approve the Decree determining the rural areas of Castilla-La Mancha, in accordance with the typology established in Article 11.

Likewise, the Governing Council is authorised to issue as many provisions as may be necessary for the development and application of this Law.

Thirteenth final provision. *Entry into force.*

This law shall enter into force on the twentieth day following its publication in the «*Diario Oficial de Castilla-La Mancha*».

Toledo, May 7, 2021.-The President, Emiliano García-Page Sánchez.

(Published in the «Diario Oficial de Castilla-La Mancha», number 90, of May 12, 2021)

evc: BOE-A-2021-11513
Verifiable at <https://boe.es>