

# Rural Pact Conference

Draft Agenda

## From vision to action: Empowering rural areas for the future

16 & 17 September 2025

**Venue:** Château du Biez. Rue de Lannoy 145

Pecq (near Kortrijk/Courtrai), Belgium

## 16 September 2025 (Day 1)

| Tentative timing | Draft agenda items  |
|------------------|---|
| 14.00 – 15.00    | <b>Registration to the event &amp; welcome coffee*</b>  |
| 15.00 – 15.45    | <b>Welcome and opening interventions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; <b>High-level opening</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mr Raffaele Fitto</b>, Executive Vice-President for Cohesion and Reforms, European Commission</li> <li>• <b>Mr Christophe Hansen</b>, Commissioner for Agriculture and Food, European Commission</li> </ul> </li> <li>&gt; <b>Living in Europe's rural areas today: A citizen perspective</b><br/>Member of the Rural Pact</li> </ul>  |
| 15.45 – 16.30    | <b>Setting the scene: Integrating EU policies at EU and Member State levels</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; <b>Advancing with the Rural Vision and Rural Pact in Member States</b><br/>A high-level representative of a national government</li> <li>&gt; <b>Key challenges and opportunities ahead for the future of rural areas</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ms Dorothée Allain-Dupré</b>, Head of the Regional Development and Multi-level Governance Division, Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and cities, OECD</li> </ul> </li> <li>&gt; <b>Amplifying rural voices through the Rural Pact</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Representative of the Rural Pact Coordination Group</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
| 16.30 – 17.00    | <b>Coffee Break</b>   |
| 17.00 – 18.15    | <b>Key priorities for the future of rural areas</b><br><u>Inter-institutional Panel:</u> High-level representatives from EU institutions/organisations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ms Themis Christopidou</b>, Director-General for Regional and Urban policy, European Commission</li> <li>• Council of the European Union</li> <li>• European Parliament</li> <li>• Committee of the Regions</li> <li>• European Economic and Social Committee</li> <li>• Representative Rural Pact Community</li> </ul>  |
| 18.15 – 18.30    | <b>Transition to the Networking session</b>   |
| 18.30 – 19.30    | <b>Networking session: the Rural Pact Community committing to action</b><br>Networking spaces led by key organisations within the Rural Pact Community for focused exchanges, networking and plan join actions on key topics.   |
| 19.30 – 21.00    | <b>Conference Dinner*</b>   |

*\*Shuttle buses will be arranged to transport participants to the conference venue and back to their hotels. Detailed information will be shared with confirmed participants to assist with their travel and accommodation arrangements.*



## 17 September 2025 (Day 2)

| Tentative timing | Draft agenda items   |
|------------------|--|
| 09.30 – 10.00    | <b>Introducing the 2nd day of the conference*</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; <b>Introduction of the agenda of the day</b><br/>Rural Pact Support Office</li> <li>&gt; <b>Acting for rural areas under a new political landscape</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ms Elisabeth Werner</b>, Director-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, European Commission</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

### 10.00 – 10.15 Transition to group discussions

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| 10.15 – 12.30 | <b>Actions and recommendations to strengthen the rural society, economy and way of living (session 1)</b> <p><u>Group discussions:</u> Participants will engage with peers to exchange insights on inspiring local initiatives and policies around key topics. These discussions will offer the opportunity to reflect on actions and policy recommendations needed to address pressing needs of rural communities and untap emerging opportunities. In addition, participants will collaborate to develop concrete proposals to update the Rural Action Plan or contribute to further develop ideas proposed by Commission services and advance with the Rural Pact.</p> <p>This session might focus on topics relevant for stronger, connected, resilient and prosperous rural areas such as**:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Rural society to the <b>digital</b> era</li> <li>&gt; Rural areas as key players in the <b>energy transition</b></li> <li>&gt; Making rural areas attractive places <b>young generations</b></li> <li>&gt; <b>Empowering local communities</b> to enhance resilience</li> </ul> <p><u>Focus:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify the main outstanding needs and emerging opportunities which require focus or attention.</li> <li>• Exchange on actions and policy recommendations needed to advance.</li> <li>• Develop concrete proposals to update the Rural Action Plan or contribute to further develop ideas proposed by Commission services, and advance with the Rural Pact.</li> </ul> |
|---------------|---|

\*\*The Group discussion topics outlined in this draft agenda might suffer modifications based on preferences expressed by participants and members of the Rural Pact community during the expression of interest to participate in the event.

### 12.30 – 13.30 Lunch Break

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| 13.30 – 15.45 | <b>Actions and recommendations to strengthen the rural society, economy and way of living (session 2)</b> <p><u>Group discussions:</u> Participants will engage with peers to exchange insights on inspiring local initiatives and policies around key topics. These discussions will offer the opportunity to reflect on actions and policy recommendations needed to address pressing needs of rural communities and untap emerging opportunities. In addition, participants will collaborate to develop concrete proposals to update the Rural Action Plan or contribute to further develop ideas proposed by Commission services and advance with the Rural Pact.</p> |
|---------------|---|

This group discussion session might focus on topics relevant for stronger, connected, resilient and prosperous rural areas such as\*\*:

- > Boosting innovative and competitive **rural economies** and **businesses**
- > Ensuring the **right to stay** of rural citizens combatting depopulation with adequate services
- > Building **inclusive rural communities**
- > Driving local prosperity through **bioeconomy**

Focus:

- Identify the main outstanding deficits and needs and emerging opportunities which require focus or attention.
- Exchange on actions and policy recommendations needed to advance.
- Develop concrete proposal to update the Rural Action Plan or contribute to further develop ideas proposed by Commission services and advance with the Rural Pact.

\*\*The Group Discussion topics outlined in this draft agenda might suffer modifications based on preferences expressed by participants and members of the Rural Pact community during the expression of interest to participate in the event.

**15.45 – 16.15**

**Coffee Break**

**16.15 – 17.15**

**Key recommendations for the future**

Report back of outcomes from group discussions

- > Stakeholder panel: Key messages, conclusions and recommendations for future action and policies, and ideas to update the Rural Action Plan and advance with the Rural Pact.

**17.15 – 17.30**

**Closing the event\***

- > **Final institutional remarks**  
European Commission (DG AGRI & DG REGIO)

*\*Shuttle buses will be arranged to transport participants to the conference venue and back to their hotels. Detailed information will be shared with confirmed participants to assist with their travel and accommodation arrangements.*