

# 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> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ms Lina Noreikaitė-Rimkienė</b>, Member of the Rural Pact Community, Lithuania</li> </ul> </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> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ms Sari Essayah</b>, Minister of Agriculture and Forestry of Finland</li> </ul> </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>• <b>Mr Radim Sršeň</b>, Member of the Committee of the Regions and Chair 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> <p>Introductory remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; <b>Towards impactful and efficient action for rural areas for long-lasting results</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ms Iliana Ivanova</b>, European Court of Auditors</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Panel debate: High-level representatives from EU institutions/organisations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>European Commission</b> <b>Ms Themis Christophidou</b>, Director-General for Regional and Urban policy</li> <li>• <b>Council of the European Union (DK presidency)</b> <b>Mr Jacob Jensen</b>, Minister for Food, Agriculture and Fisheries of Denmark (tbc)</li> <li>• <b>European Parliament</b> <b>Mr Adrian-Dragoș Benea</b>, Chair of the Committee on Regional Development (tbc)</li> <li>• <b>Committee of the Regions</b> <b>Mr Vasco Alves Cordeiro</b>, Chair of the Commission for Territorial Cohesion Policy and EU Budget (tbc)</li> <li>• <b>European Economic and Social Committee</b> <b>Ms Lidija Pavić-Rogošić</b>, Member of the Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment Section</li> <li>• <b>Rural Pact Coordination Group</b> <b>Ms Edina Ocsko</b>, E40 European Smart village network services, Vice-chair of the Rural Pact Coordination Group</li> </ul>

18.15 – 18.30

### Transition to the Networking session

18.30 – 19.30

#### Networking session: the Rural Pact Community committing to action

Networking spaces led by key organisations within the Rural Pact Community for focused exchanges, networking and plan joint actions on key topics:

- > **Rural Youth: Together for the present and the future of rural development**  
Rural Youth Europe; European Rural Youth Observatory & Meridaunia Local Action Group, Italy
- > **Rural research & evidence-based policy making for the long-term vision for rural areas**  
University College Dublin (UCD), Ireland; Natural Resources Institute (LUKE), Finland; & European Rural Development Network (ERDN)
- > **Bringing the Rural Pact at local level through LEADER Local Action Groups (LAGs)**  
European LEADER Association for Rural Development (ELARD)
- > **Bottom-up village plans: Communities building their own future**  
Rural Pact Netherlands
- > **Implementing the rural vision in Member States and Regions**  
Ministry of Agriculture of Hungary
- > **Village vibes: Smart villages for rural future**  
Smart Villages Network
- > **Sustainable rural development in mountain areas**  
Euromontana
- > **Environmental actions for community-led transition**  
European Network for Community-Led Initiatives on Climate Change and Sustainability (ECOLISE)
- > **Community-led innovation in action**  
PREPARE Network
- > **Rural tourism**  
European Federation of Rural Tourism (Ruraltour)

19.30 – 21.00

### Conference Dinner\*

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



## 17 September 2025 (Day 2)

Tentative timing	Draft agenda items
09.30 – 09.50	<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> 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>
09.50 – 10.00	<b>A closer look at rural Europe</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; <b>Better rural statistics for evidence-based policymaking</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ms Teodora Brandmueller</b>, Team Leader, Eurostat, European Commission</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
10.00 – 10.15	<b>Transition to group discussions</b>
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 in 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> <p>**The Group discussion topics outlined in this draft agenda may be adjusted based on preferences expressed by participants and members of the Rural Pact community during the expression of interest to participate in the event.</p>
12.30 – 13.30	<b>Lunch Break</b>
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</p>

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.

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**' in rural areas: addressing demographic challenges through place-based approaches and access to 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 may be adjusted 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**
  - **Mr Hugo Sobral**, Deputy Director-General, DG REGIO, European Commission
  - **Mr Mihail Dumitru**, Deputy Director-General, DG AGRI, European Commission

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