



Amplifying rural voices through the Rural Pact

Radim Sršeň

Chair of the Rural Pact Coordination Group

Rural Pact Conference 'From vision to action: Empowering rural areas for the future'

Château du Biez (Belgium)

16-17 September



Rural Pact Coordination Group

Who we are?

- ▶ Informal Commission group **representing the Rural Pact community**



- ▶ Network of **EU-level institutions** and **organisations**
- ▶ **Develops and steers** the Rural Pact process by:
 - Suggesting action by the Rural Pact Support Office
 - Agreeing on activities to be taken by RPCG members individually or jointly
 - Disseminating, relaying and multiplying information about the rural vision and Pact

Joint initiatives of RPCG members

- ▶ Based on the RPSO Policy Briefing "[Making the Rural Pact happen in Member States](#)"
 - **Sending letters to all Member States governments** encouraging them to commit to the Rural Pact using the seven ingredients of the Briefing
- ▶ Prior to **European Parliament's elections in 2024**, sending **letters to relevant candidates** encouraging them to take action for EU rural areas
- ▶ **Declaration on the future of rural areas and rural development policy in the European Union** (December 2024)
 - **contribute** to the shaping of EU policies post-2027
 - respond to nine questions on the ways forward to support rural areas, outlined in the EC [report](#) '**The long-term vision for the EU's rural areas: key achievements and ways forward**'



Access the
Declaration online



Whom does the Declaration target?

Decision-makers participating in designing rural policies

- ▶ at EU level
- ▶ at national and regional levels

Stakeholders involved in advocacy and participation

- ▶ Civil society organisations and representative bodies
- ▶ Local-level actors (public, private, NGOs)
- ▶ Researchers and policy analysts



What is in the Declaration?

The Declaration



Asserts the **importance of EU rural areas** for the whole society



Specifies the **conditions to put in place** for the recommendations to work



Acknowledges **key challenges and opportunities** in need for targeted responses



Calls for **specific policy responses** to challenges and opportunities in rural areas



Calls for strengthening **governance structures and capacities**



The Declaration

Asserts the importance of EU rural areas for the whole society

- ▶ Contribute to **EU economy** (agriculture, forestry, energy, tourism, digital sectors)
- ▶ Safeguard **culture, tradition, and heritage**
- ▶ Ensure **social fabric**
- ▶ Play a central role in **climate change** mitigation and adaptation



Need to manage rural resources sustainably



The Declaration

Acknowledges challenges and need for urgent responses

- ▶ **Capacity constraints** (human resources, skills, targeted funding) limit communities' ability to act and access funding
- ▶ **Economic decline** and worsening **access to services**
- ▶ **Depopulation** and ageing
- ▶ Catching up with the **digital, green, and economic transitions**



Diversity of rural areas – targeted responses are needed

The Declaration

Calls for effective policy responses

- ▶ **Holistic and integrated** (not sectoral) rural policy
- ▶ **Rural proofing** of various policies
- ▶ **Coordinated funding** streams (all levels)
- ▶ Reinforced **community-led** and **place-based** approaches
- ▶ **Minimum allocation for LEADER/CLLD**
- ▶ **Flexibility** to EU Member States to **define priorities**



Mandatory allocation to rural development
Option: dedicated rural development programme and fund

The Declaration

Calls for strengthening structures and capacities

- ▶ Turn the long-term vision into **Rural Development Strategies** at all levels
- ▶ **Horizontal and vertical coordination** (Rural Pact model) – a condition for accessing the rural development share of funds
- ▶ **Build capacities** of managing authorities and local communities
- ▶ **Facilitate access to funding** for local beneficiaries
- ▶ Support **communities for innovation** and peer exchanges



Act in coordinated ways to answer rural needs

The Declaration suggests

Necessary conditions

- ▶ Improve **involvement of rural actors in policymaking**, make rural voices heard
- ▶ Strengthen **rural movements** and **bottom-up** initiatives
- ▶ Ensure effective **monitoring of policies, funding and results** (including territorial tagging)



Rural actors as equal partners in the policy dialogue





Thank you!

Join the Rural Pact Community and online platform

www.ruralpact.rural-vision.europa.eu/become-member_en



www.ruralpact.rural-vision.europa.eu

