



# Position Paper of the Rural Pact Coordination Group

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RPCG Meeting 07

5 May 2026



# The process

- ▶ Drafting of the Position Paper and consulting members – refinements (including pervious RPCG meeting)
- ▶ Finalisation of the **Position Paper + respective legislative amendments**
- ▶ Additional consultation to ensure endorsement by Euromontana + EESC
- ▶ More than 50% voted (17) & 82% in favour (no objections)

## Position Paper of the Rural Pact Coordination Group on Recent Legislative Developments

*The Rural Pact Coordination Group (RPCG) – set up to steer the process of the Rural Pact contributing to the Long-term vision for rural areas (LTVRA) - plays a central role in articulating shared priorities and ensuring that the challenges and opportunities of rural territories are effectively reflected in EU policies and funding instruments.*

*One year after the adoption of the RPCG Declaration in December 2024 — which underscored the critical importance of targeted policy intervention, innovation and adequate resourcing to address depopulation, economic decline and the green and digital transitions in rural regions — this Position Paper assesses the extent to which those commitments are being reflected in the emerging framework for the post-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). It also reflects on recent political developments and puts forward concrete and practical proposals on how to better integrate the provisions of the Declaration in the future MFF.*

### 1. Acknowledging the value of an integrated single-fund approach and flexibility

The RPCG acknowledges the efforts of the EU legislators to introduce a single-fund and integrated approach in the post-2027 MFF, which has the potential - when combined with adequate earmarking - to ensure that rural areas benefit from multiple funding sources in a coherent and complementary manner. This approach also opens up the possibility for the needs of rural communities to be more systematically integrated into the cohesion policy logic, in line with the territorial cohesion objectives set out in Article 174 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).

The RPCG further acknowledges the flexibility granted to Member States to adapt programmes to their specific national and territorial contexts, provided (1) this flexibility is exercised within a common EU framework that clearly reflects shared priorities, including mandatory support for rural areas and communities; and (2) this flexibility does not translate into excessive centralisation at the national level, but rather support the devolution of responsibilities in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, empowering regions and local public authorities.

Furthermore, the RPCG positively notes the increased use of simplified cost options and performance-based funding, which are particularly important for reducing administrative burden and access to funds for local, small-scale and place-based development approaches, including LEADER/CLLD and other community-led and territorial cooperation initiatives, such as smart villages.

### 2. Need for dedicated and visible rural support beyond agriculture

The RPCG reaffirms the need for more focused and dedicated funding for rural priorities, communities and citizens in the post-2027 MFF, aligned with the LTVRA<sup>1</sup>. While agriculture remains a cornerstone of rural economies and food security, nearly 90% of residents in predominantly rural regions work outside agriculture. Rural development policy must therefore address the broader social, economic and territorial realities of rural life.

EU policies – especially cohesion policy – and supporting EU funds<sup>2</sup> must guarantee the right to stay also for rural citizens (farmers and non-farmers alike) by ensuring effective and clearly differentiated non-agricultural rural support, including access to quality services (such as education, health, housing and mobility), connectivity, renewable energy, local entrepreneurship, culture and territorial competitiveness<sup>3</sup>.

### 3. Ensuring proportionate and fair share of EU funds for rural citizens to support the 'right to stay'

While the RPCG welcomes the renewed political recognition of rural areas, including recent statements highlighting the importance of rural funding envelopes, the currently proposed allocation and definition of

<sup>1</sup> See proposed amendments to Articles 2, 3 & 22 of the Draft MFF Regulation.

<sup>2</sup> In particular those funding NRPPs and the European Competitiveness Fund.

<sup>3</sup> See proposed amendments to Preamble Point 44, Articles 22 & 35.

# Key statements (1)

- ▶ **1. Acknowledging the efforts of EU legislator integrated single-fund approach and flexibility** ... *“provided that it includes mandatory support for rural areas and communities & flexibility does not translate into excessive centralisation at the national level”*
- ▶ **2. Need for dedicated and visible rural support beyond agriculture** ... *EU policies – especially cohesion policy – and supporting EU funds must guarantee **the right to stay** also for rural citizens (farmers and non-farmers alike) by ensuring effective and clearly differentiated non-agricultural rural support*
- ▶ **3. Ensuring proportionate and fair share of EU funds for rural citizens to support the ‘right to stay’** ... *the currently proposed allocation and definition of rural areas remain insufficient... no less than a share of EU funds (beyond support to the farming/ agricultural sector) that is proportionate to the share of citizens living in rural communities should support citizens + integrated within cohesion policy framework*

## Key statements (2)

- ▶ **4. Mandatory allocation to community-led place-based approaches ...** *earmarked funding for LEADER/CLLD and rural communities with locally led, integrated strategies ('smart villages') ... The RPCG calls for the integration of the proposals developed by RPCG member organisations, particularly those developed by ELARD and the Smart Village Network Services*
- ▶ **5. Strengthened rural proofing and partnership principle ...** *should also strengthen rural proofing and the effective involvement of rural partners within the NRP partnership principle ... Rural Pact model*
- ▶ **6. A functional and effective 'rural' definition and monitoring system ...** *call for clearer minimum requirements for defining "rural areas", "rural communities" and "rural development support" at the local level*

## Next steps

- ▶ Layout of Position Paper (complemented with legislative amendments) & Dissemination
- ▶ How members can use, disseminate and share?
- ▶ Discussion on next steps

# Post-2027 EU policy framework for rural areas



**What are the elements of the position paper that you are going to promote to maximise its impact?**

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# Post-2027 EU policy framework for rural areas



**What are the actions the RPCG members  
might want to take as next step?**

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