

Policy Lab

Strengthening a diversified rural economy in the post-2027 period

29 September – 01 October 2026

Kotka, Finland (Satama Arena)

Draft agenda

Tentative Timing (EEST)	Draft agenda items
29 September 2026 – Arrival and Welcome reception (Day 1)	
From 18:00	Shuttle to venue
20:00 – 21:30	Welcome reception Informal opening of the Policy Lab and networking among participants.
30 September 2026 – Policy Lab (Day 2)	
08:30 – 09:00	Reception and welcome coffee
09:00 – 09:30	Welcome and introduction to the day > Welcoming words • Pekka Pesonen, Permanent secretary of the Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry • Pierre Bascou, Deputy Director General, DG AGRI, European Commission > Introduction to the day Rural Pact Support Office
09:30 – 10:30	Setting the scene: The contribution of rural areas to a stronger and more competitive European economy > Drivers of a thriving and resilient rural economy Keynote speaker > Service provision and growth Michelle Marshalian, Joint Research Centre (JRC) > The rural economy in the post-2027 EU policy framework and the NRPPs Hugo Almeida, DG AGRI, European Commission (tbc) > Experience from a Member State / region on boosting the rural economy Member State/Region representative
10:30 – 11:00	Coffee break
11:00 – 12:30	What are the main needs to boost the rural economy, including in eastern boarder regions (round 1) <u>Group discussions</u> > Group 1: Strengthening the competitiveness and sustainable growth of rural economies > Group 2: Capitalising on new business models and economic opportunities for rural areas > Group 3: Enhancing the attractiveness of rural areas for workers and businesses
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch break



13:30 – 15:00 **Translating needs into actionable measures and investments in the future NRPPs (round 2)**

- > **Group 1: Strengthening the competitiveness and sustainable growth of rural economies**
- > **Group 2: Capitalising on new business models and economic opportunities for rural areas**
- > **Group 3: Enhancing the attractiveness of rural areas for workers and businesses**

15:00 – 15:30 **Coffee break**

15:30 – 16:30 **Conclusions, recommendations and next steps**

Report back from the group discussions

Panel with Member States

16:30 – 17:00 **Closing remarks**

- > **Next steps**
Rural Pact Support Office
- > **Closing words**
 - [Minna-Mari Kaila](#), Head of Department, Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
 - [Hugo Almeida](#), DG AGRI, European Commission (tbc)

19:00 **Networking dinner**

Hosted by the Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry

- [Sari Essayah](#), Minister of Agriculture and Forestry of Finland

01 October 2026 – Study visits with the Finnish Rural Network (Day 3)

08:30 – 09:00 **Departure to the field visits**

09:00 – 13:00 **Field visits to rural economy initiatives in Finland**

Site visits organised by the Finnish Rural Network across Southeast and Southern Finland. The journey starts in Kotka at 08:30 and concludes at Helsinki Airport at 14:00 EEST. During the field visit, participants will explore the Finnish countryside and examine what **'Right to Stay'** means in practice from the perspectives of entrepreneurs and local communities as well as rural innovation, civil preparedness and security of supply. The visit will also provide an opportunity to learn about the role of EU funds in supporting the development of Finnish rural areas, including in the eastern border region context. Lunch will be provided during the trip, followed by the transfer of all participants to Helsinki Airport.

Transfers to the airport

Estimated time of arrival to the airport around 14h EEST (tbc)

