

High-level Rural Policy Forum

Europe's Rural Future - Responding to rural priorities through integrated national and regional strategies and **LEADER**

RURAL PACT

3 - 4 November 2026

Naas, County Kildare, Ireland

Draft agenda



Tentative Timing (GMT)	Draft agenda items
02 November 2026	
18:30	Shuttle buses from Dublin Airport to the town of Naas
03 November 2026 – Integrated rural strategies at national and regional levels	
09:30 – 10:30	Registration and welcome coffee
10:30 – 11:15	Welcome and high-level opening interventions. Integrated rural development: From Cork 1.0 to today > Mr Dara Calleary, Minister for Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht > European Commission
11:15 – 12:30	Keynote speakers on integrated rural policies as engines for the future of rural areas > Enhancing policies for competitive, resilient and sustainable rural areas through integrated national rural strategies Mr Jose Enrique Garcilazo, Deputy Head of Division and Head of Regional and Rural Policy Unit, OECD > Designing a comprehensive policy response to address rural needs and opportunities in the future NRPPs Mr Mario Milouchev, Director, DG AGRI, European Commission > Experiences from Member States designing and implementing integrated, national and regional rural strategies • Our Rural Future: Advancing integrated support to rural communities (Ireland) Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht • National Strategy for territorial equity and the demographic challenge (Spain) Ms Angeles Marín, Director General, Ministry of ecological transition and the demographic challenge, Spain
12:30 – 14:00	Lunch
14:00 – 15:30	Panel Debate: How can whole-of-government policy approaches help foster rural attractiveness under future National and Regional Partnership Plans (NRPPs)? > Council of the European Union Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht > European Commission Mr Hugo Almeida, Head of Unit, DG AGRI, European Commission > Committee of the Regions Mr Emil Boc, Member of the Committee of the Regions (CoR) and Rapporteur of the Opinion on NRPP Fund Regulation (tbc)



15:30 – 16:00	Coffee break
16:00 – 17:45	Group discussions: Ensuring effective design of integrated rural strategies at national and regional levels > Group 1: A forward looking rural vision implemented through a whole-of-government strategy and rural proofing • France Ruralité (France) (tbc) • Rural Agenda of Catalonia (Spain) Mr Ramón Armengol, Director General, Department for Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Food of Catalonia (Spain) • Rural proofing in Ireland Ms Akriti Brady, Head of Public Transport Services & Governance at the Department of Transport (Ireland) > Group 2: Mechanisms to coordinate action and funding across governance levels to deliver innovative, place-based solutions • Finland's Rural Policy Council (Finland) Ms Antonia Husberg, Ministry of Agriculture and forestry, Finland • Participatory, integrated governance to boost local action in rural Tuscany (Italy) Ms Alessandra De Renzis, Expert to the President's Cabinet, Government of Tuscany, Italy • Simplify access to funding at local level in the region of Tyrol (Austria) Ms Juliane Weickert, Regional Government Tyrol, Austria > Group 3: Structures to engage rural communities and civil society with decision makers and build capacities • The Dutch Rural Pact (The Netherlands) Mr Ben van Essen, ERCA • A National Rural Parliament (Slovenia) Mr Primož Kroflič, Slovenian Rural Development Network Ms Prof Irma Slavič, University of Ljubljana • Example from Ireland
17:45 – 18:00	Transition to plenary
18:00 – 18:30	Report back from the Group Discussions
18:30 – 20:30	Networking dinner
21:00	Shuttle buses from the venue to the town of Naas



04 November 2026 – LEADER/CLLD

08:00	Shuttle buses from the town of Naas to the venue
08:30 – 09:00	Registration and welcome coffee
09:00 – 09:30	Opening > High-level opening: 35 Years of LEADER in Ireland: From local action to lasting impact Representative of the Irish Presidency of the Council of the EU > Introduction of the agenda of the day Rural Pact Support Office
09:30 – 10:45	LEADER: A European success story delivering value for rural communities and Europe > Stronger rural communities: The added value of LEADER/CLLD Ms Elena Pisani, University of Padova, Italy > Stakeholder Panel: Local stakeholder stories outlining their experience with LEADER and the impact in their territories • Mr Alistair Adam Hernández, University of Vechta, Germany • Ms Anita Selicka, Latvian Rural Forum, Latvia • Irish example
10:45 – 12:00	LEADER/CLLD in the future > LEADER/CLLD in the post-2027 EU policy Ms Iwona Lisztwan, DG AGRI, European Commission > Stakeholder Panel: Exchanging views about the future of LEADER/CLLD • Mr Klaus Heider, Deputy State Secretary & Head of Directorate-General Department of Regional Identity, Rural Areas, Social Policy in Agriculture, Innovation. Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Regional Identity (Germany) • Ms Beata Rodak, Head of LEADER unit, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (Poland) • Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries (Spain) (tbc) • Ms Marion Eckardt, Executive Director & Policy Lead, European LEADER Association for Rural Development (ELARD)
12:00 – 13:30	Lunch (combined with the LEADER showcase)
13:30 – 14:15	Panel Debate - Infusing the National-Regional Partnership Plan with strategic rural policy approaches: Conclusions from the Forum and next steps
14:15 – 14:30	Conference close



15:00

Shuttle buses to Dublin Airport



Ní neart go cur le chéile

Strength with unity