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# Participant Guide

## Policy Lab

### Strengthening a diversified rural economy in the post-2027 period

Kotka, Finland

**29 September – 1 October 2026**

*Satama Areena, Kotka, Finland*

Funded by
the European Union

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# 1. Introduction

The Rural Pact Policy Action Lab ''Strengthening a diversified rural economy in the post-2027 period'', organised by the Rural Pact Support Office in cooperation with the Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the Finnish Rural Network and the Finnish Rural Policy Council, will take place in Kotka (Finland) from 29 September to 1 October 2026. The Policy Action Lab will bring together the Rural Pact Community to reflect on how rural economies can be strengthened in the post-2027 EU policy framework.

This guidance document is for participants of the Policy Lab and contains relevant information on the venue, accommodation, transportation and other practical information.

# 2. Programme overview

The overview below provides a snapshot of the three-day programme, highlighting the main activities and timings for each day. The latest version of the full programme is available on the dedicated Rural Pact event page.

- **29 September - Informal opening of the Policy Lab and networking dinner:** The Policy Lab will begin with a welcome reception on the evening of 29 September at 20:00.
- **30 September, Policy Lab**: the Policy Lab will start at 9:00 (with registration from 8:30) and will end at 17:00. A networking dinner hosted by the Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry is scheduled at 19:00.
- **1 October, Study visit with the Finnish Rural Network**: on the final day participants can take part in a study visit organised by the Finnish Rural Network. The journey will start in Kotka at 8:30 and conclude at Helsinki Airport at 14:00 at the latest.

# 3. Venue

- **Main event venue**

The Policy Lab will take place at the Satama Areena located at Tornatorintie 102 in Kotka, Finland (see the venue location on Google Maps). The venue is accessible on foot from the Sokos Hotel Seurahuone and the walk takes about 10 minutes. A guided walk will leave from the hotel at 8:15. Wi-fi access will be available at the venue, with access details provided on-site.

- **Welcome reception 29 September**

  The welcome reception will take place at Merikeskus Vellamo (Maritime Center Vellamo) located at Tornatorintie 99 in Kotka, Finland (see the venue location on Google Maps). The Maritime Center is accessible on foot from the Sokos Hotel Seurahuone and the walk takes about 10 minutes. A guided walk to the venue from the hotel will depart at 19:40. The welcome reception is hosted by the City of Kotka and the Finnish Rural Network.

- **Networking dinner 30 September**

  The networking dinner will take place at Villa Meriniemi located at Meriniementie 1 in Kotka, Finland (see the restaurant location on Google Maps). The restaurant is accessible on foot from the Sokos Hotel Seurahuone and the walk takes about 20 minutes. The guided walk from the hotel starts at 18:30. The networking dinner will be offered by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Finland.

# 4. Accommodation

Participants have already been informed by the Rural Pact Support Office of their acceptance to attend the conference via email. The acceptance email specifies whether participants are expected to cover their own expenses or if their travel and accommodation will be organised through the Rural Pact Support Office.

Participants who need to cover their own expenses are invited to book their accommodations at the Sokos Hotel Seurahuone, located at Keskuskatu 21 in Kotka (see the hotel location on Google Maps). The hotel is within walking distance of the Satama Areena (ca. 13 minutes).

### > Booking your accommodation

You can reserve your room via the website: www.sokoshotels.fi with a booking code: BRUO260928 or by phone: +358 300 870 000 (Mon–Fri 8.30–16.30). The room price using this code is €129 (single room), including breakfast.

Reservations made using this booking code must be guaranteed with a credit card or paid at the time of booking. The last day of cancelling an individual reservation without charge is 4 days before the arrival date. We recommend making reservations through the website. The accommodation is available at this rate until 17 August 2026.

# 5. Transportation

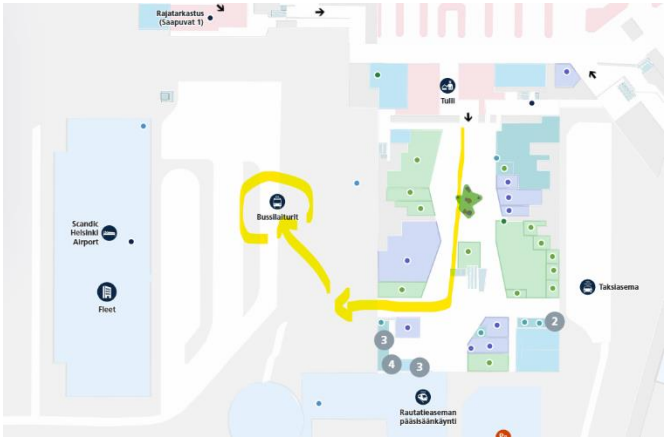
### > Shuttle buses

To help participants arrive in Kotka, the Rural Pact Support Office has organised shuttle buses between Helsinki airport and Kotka (located 130 km from the airport). Participants are advised to use the organized shuttle service.

The shuttle service will operate throughout the three-day event. The section below provides an estimated time schedule. Participants will be informed of the confirmed departure point for the shuttle buses in due course. The Shuttle buses will have specific signs to help you identify them.

**29 September**

• Transfer from Helsinki airport to Kotka: departure from Helsinki airport at 17:30. The shuttle buses will depart from the coach station of the airport, please follow the signs for coaches – on leaving baggage claim and customs go straight, and then turn right to get to the coach station. Rural Pact representatives will be present at the airport to help guide participants.



Any participants that are expecting to land too late to be able to make this shuttle bus are asked to inform the Rural Pact Support Office by writing to pawel@rural-pact.eu.

**30 September**

• Transfer from Kotka to Helsinki Airport (for participants not attending the study visit): Departure at 17:30, with estimated arrival at the airport before 19:00.

**1 October**

• Departure of the study visit transfers from Sokos Hotel Seurahuone at 08:30. Arrival at Helsinki airport following the study visits by 14:00.

Please note that participants who choose not to use the transportation service provided by the organizers are responsible for arranging their own transportation to and from Kotka.

> **Public Transport**

It is possible to travel from Helsinki Airport to Kotka by public transport. Participants can take a train from Helsinki Airport to Helsinki Central Station, then continue by long-distance bus to Kotka. The journey takes approximately 2.5-3 hours, depending on the connections.

For more information, please visit the websites below:

- From Helsinki Airport to Helsinki Central Station: Airport train | Visitors | Travelling | HSL.fi
- From Helsinki downtown to Kotka by bus: https://www.matkahuolto.fi/en and https://www.onnibus.com/home
- There is also a possibility of taking the train from Helsinki to Kotka, but the bus is faster. From Helsinki Central Station to Kotka by train: Welcome on a journey together with us – trains are a climate-friendly way to travel - VR

> **Taxi**

For taxi services from Helsinki airport to Kotka and from Kotka to Helsinki airport, please contact: Mr. Jari Kulmakivi, jari.kulmakivi@gmail.com or telephone +358 44 300 0954. Taxi rides should be booked in advance whenever possible.

General information about taxi services at Helsinki airport: https://www.finavia.fi/en/for-businesses/taxi-service-helsinki-airport?id=

## 6. Practical information

> **Time zone**

Please note that Finland follows Eastern European Summer Time (EEST), which is 1 hour ahead of Central European Summer Time (CEST). All times provided in this guide refer to the EEST time zone.

> **Contact Details / Event Support**

If you encounter any issues during the event, please contact a member of the organising team for assistance:

- Ann-Sofi Backgren – Finnish Rural Network (phone +358 503 241 318)
- Manuela Gervasi – Rural Pact Support Office (phone +32 27365643 - (ext. 222))

> **Emergency Contacts**

In case of an emergency, please call 112 (the European emergency number – free of charge).

### > Currency

The official currency in Finland is the euro (€). Credit and debit cards are widely accepted.

### > Electric plugs

The standard two-pin European plug is used.

## 7. Additional Information

### > Clothing

Participants are advised to check the weather forecast before travelling and to bring suitable clothing. In case of rain, please bring a small umbrella with you, as some walking outdoors will be required between the hotel and the Policy Lab venues as well as during the study visit. Participants are welcome to dress comfortably and appropriately for a professional setting.

### > Meals

The organisers have taken note of participants' dietary requirements and will ensure suitable options are available for all participants. On Day 1 (29 September), a welcome reception is organized in the evening. On Day 2 (30 September), welcome coffee, coffee breaks, and a lunch and dinner will be provided. On Day 3 (1 October), a lunch will be provided to participants participating in the study visit.