RURAL PACT

COMMITMENT TO THE RURAL PACT

for public authorities

The **government of Hungary**, represented by Dr. Mátyás Szabó, State Secretary (Ministry for Regional and Rural Development), wishes to submit a commitment to the Rural Pact to advance towards the **10 shared goals of the long-term vision for the EU's rural areas**. These objectives summarise the common aspirations of EU rural communities and stakeholders in rural areas by 2040.

The government of Hungary thus would like to formally commit to the Rural Pact by engaging to work towards:

- **Structures and mechanisms to engage with rural communities**: the Hungarian Ministry for Regional and Rural Development is committed to engaging with rural stakeholders and communities through networks, umbrella organisations and other representative bodies active in rural development. The Ministry will maintain dialogue with organisations that demonstrate a commitment to the interests of rural communities and citizens, beyond sector-specific concerns.

  Following the emergence of civil society initiatives related to the Rural Pact in 2026, the Ministry will set up appropriate mechanisms for structured engagement with organisations and networks that contribute to the sustainable development, resilience and well-being of rural areas within the framework of the Rural Pact.

  Consultations at least twice a year, as well as an annual conference with the direct participation of representatives of rural communities (with support of the national rural network), will be organised with relevant civil society organisations and other stakeholders to identify key challenges and priorities, discuss possible responses, and inform the development, implementation and monitoring of the government's rural development strategy and vision, the St. Stephen Programme (Szent István Program). These consultation mechanisms and processes will be formalised within the framework of the Rural Pact.

- **A designated government member and dedicated services to deal with rural issues across policies**: the Hungarian government has established a dedicated Ministry for Regional and Rural Development to ensure that rural issues receive sufficient attention and that support for rural development is effectively integrated into regional development policy. By bringing responsibility for both rural and regional development under a single ministry, Hungary aims to strengthen policy coherence and create synergies across relevant policy areas.

  A dedicated Ministerial Commissioner for EU Rural Development Planning and Coordination will facilitate cooperation and regular consultation with ministries whose policies have a significant impact on rural areas, including economic development,

Funded by the European Union

transport, security, education, healthcare, social policy, digitalisation and environmental policies, with the objective of ensuring that rural considerations are reflected across government action.

The Commissioner will also serve as the national coordinator of the Rural Pact and as a point of contact for stakeholders seeking to contribute to rural policy development. In this role, the Commissioner will support structured dialogue between public authorities, civil society, local communities, research organisations and other relevant stakeholders at local, national and European levels.

- **Capacity-building and networking support for a broad array of stakeholders**: the Rural Development Unit of the CAP Network shall work in close cooperation with the new Ministry for Regional and Rural Development to strengthen the capacity of rural stakeholders and facilitate their active participation in rural development processes. The Rural Development Network Support Unit coordinates networking, information-sharing and capacity-building activities, facilitates exchanges between rural stakeholders, and contributes to improving access to funding opportunities and development initiatives. Its structure and work programme under the new government are currently being set up (expected by the end of the year).

  Particular attention will be given to ensuring that opportunities are accessible to a diverse range of rural actors, including local communities, civil society organisations, local authorities, young people, women, entrepreneurs and other groups that may be underrepresented in policy discussions.

  A dedicated annual capacity-building and networking event for rural communities will be organised to promote knowledge exchange, peer learning and cooperation among stakeholders. The Ministry is also committed to supporting LEADER, Smart Villages and other community-led approaches through dedicated institutional structures and support mechanisms.

- **A forward-looking vision implemented through a holistic strategy**: the Ministry for Regional and Rural Development has committed to strengthening the long-term resilience, attractiveness and vitality of rural communities through an integrated rural development approach. To support this objective, the Ministry is developing a new rural development strategy, the St. Stephen Programme (Szent István Program), which will provide a long-term framework for coordinated action across policy areas affecting rural communities.

  The Programme will complement existing initiatives, including the Hungarian Village Programme, and seeks to address rural challenges through a holistic approach that integrates economic development, access to services, infrastructure, housing, mobility, culture, healthcare and community development. Particular emphasis will be placed on empowering local communities to shape their own development pathways and priorities.

  As announced in the election programme, the St. Stephen Programme will allocate dedicated resources to rural communities - HUF 1 billion (approximately EUR 2.8 million) for every 10 villages annually from 2027 onwards is foreseen - with local actors playing a central role in determining how funding is used to address local needs and opportunities.

  The Programme also aims to improve access to land and finance, strengthen local economies and employment opportunities, and support integrated development

initiatives that build on the concept of functional rural and urban areas. Appropriate indicators will be defined to measure progress and results beyond outputs (the programme aims to improve on current practices of infrastructural investments making these better connected to community development and long-term sustainability and impact).

- **Effective rural proofing and adequate data systems**: The Ministry for Regional and Rural Development has committed in its programme to introduce rural proofing as a tool for assessing the potential impacts of new legislation, policies and programmes on rural areas. The objective is to ensure that rural considerations are systematically taken into account in public decision-making and that unintended negative impacts on rural communities are identified and mitigated. Implementation arrangements for rural proofing are developed as part of the Government's broader rural policy framework.

  Hungary also benefits from established territorial information systems, including the National Regional Development and Spatial Planning Information System (TEIR), which integrates data from multiple sources and provides valuable information for regional and rural development planning. The Ministry will explore how existing data systems can support the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of rural policies and rural proofing processes.

- **Appropriate governance systems to facilitate coordination**: the Ministry for Regional and Rural Development is committed to ensuring effective coordination of rural development policies across sectors and governance levels.

  In terms of horizontal coordination, the Ministry for Regional and Rural Development carries out regular consultation with other ministries to promote policy coherence and ensure that rural considerations are reflected across government action. Particular attention is given to cooperation with ministries responsible for agriculture, economic development, transport, education, healthcare, digitalisation, environmental policy and other policy areas with a significant impact on rural communities. The Prime Minister's Office provides overall coordination across government, while the Ministerial Commissioner for EU Rural Development Planning and Coordination within the Ministry for Regional and Rural Development will support inter-ministerial dialogue on rural issues.

  In terms of vertical coordination, the Government will promote structured dialogue between national, regional and local actors through the National Rural Pact framework and other consultation mechanisms. These arrangements will facilitate exchanges between public authorities, civil society organisations, local communities, businesses and other relevant stakeholders, helping to identify common priorities, strengthen cooperation and support the implementation of rural development policies across governance levels.

  The Rural Pact will contribute to creating a shared understanding of rural challenges and opportunities and provide a platform for dialogue between stakeholders involved in shaping the future of rural areas.

- **Mechanisms to coordinate the allocation of funding and ensure synergies:** the establishment of the Ministry for Regional and Rural Development creates unique new opportunities for the coordinated planning and implementation of funding instruments supporting rural areas. By bringing responsibility for rural and regional development within a single institutional framework, the Ministry aims to strengthen synergies between

previously fragmented funding streams and policy instruments, including those supported through the Common Agricultural Policy, Cohesion Policy and national development programmes.

The coordinated development of the St. Stephen Programme (Szent István Program) has already initiated closer cooperation between departments responsible for rural and regional development. The Ministry will coordinate the post-2027 National and Regional Partnership Plan, helping to ensure that different funding sources contribute to shared rural development objectives.

The Government is further committed to improving access to funding for rural communities, municipalities, civil society organisations and local businesses. Building on the experience and technical expertise of LEADER Local Action Groups, 'one-stop-shop' support mechanisms will be developed to provide assistance with funding applications, contributing to a more accessible support system.

Dr. Mátyás Szabó
State Secretary,
Ministry for Regional and Rural Development of Hungary

14 August 2026 (Brussels, Belgium)

This document is hereby issued on 14 August 2026, recognising the commitment of the Hungarian Ministry for Regional and Rural Development to the EU rural vision and its objectives.