

# Which voices are heard in the debate?

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Ldnet

**“A new architecture of EU policies and funds post-2027  
– what place for local development?”**

**28 May 2025**

# What is AEIDL?

## The AEIDL story

AEIDL, the European Association for Innovation in Local Development, was founded in 1988 by like-minded individuals who believed that European integration could make a positive contribution to citizenship and to the sustainable development of local communities.

## AEIDL's expertise

Since its creation, AEIDL has been an active stakeholder in various policies introduced by Europe. Policies that targeted local initiatives, promoting communication and exchange at European level, identifying good practices, strengthening local capacities, empowering local actors, supporting cooperation, exploiting and disseminating knowledge, and evaluating results.

## AEIDL's Projects

LEADER/CLLD, ENRD/CAP Network, Rural Pact Support Office, CLLD for fisheries areas (FARNET/FAMENET), the EQUAL Community Initiative, numerous cooperation programmes, urban development initiatives (URBAN, URBACT), ESF and LIFE helpdesk, social enterprise and the social economy, migration (AMIF), socially responsible procurement and gender...10 Horizon Europe projects on Rural and Territorial Development



# ¿Is the EU Local development model in crisis?

- ▶ Separation of EAFRD, and rest of Structural Funds (ERDF, ESF, INTERREG), other EU programmes
- ▶ Multiplicity of rules, high management costs
- ▶ Results difficult to assess
- ▶ Innovation is not a priority
- ▶ Weak LAG representativeness
- ▶ Weak territorial link
- ▶ Excessive politicisation





## Contents

1. Preamble
2. The future of rural areas is a concern of our whole society
3. Rural challenges need urgent responses
4. The future rural development policy must take the needs of rural areas more seriously
5. Turning the long-term rural vision into a concrete strategy and realising the Rural Pact vision
6. Building local capacity and creating local ownership
7. Improving monitoring of EU spending on rural areas

As far as possible, the group that adopts its opinions, recommendations or reports by consensus. In the event of a vote, the outcome of the vote shall be decided by simple majority of the members. Members who have voted against or abstained shall have the right to have a document summarising the reasons for their position annexed to the opinions, recommendations or reports.

The opinions expressed are those of the Rural Pact Coordination Group only and should not be considered as representative of the European Commission's official position.



## Preamble

The Rural Pact is an initiative foreseen in the Communication on the long-term vision for the EU's rural areas to build cooperation between the various levels of governance and with stakeholders. The Rural Pact initiative is a bottom-up and multi-level governance process in which the European Commission acts as a facilitator.

The Rural Pact Coordination Group (RPGC) was established as a Commission special group to further develop the Rural Pact and steer its process. As members of the RPGC, we recognise the critical need for targeted intervention and policy innovation to address the numerous challenges arising from depopulation, green, digital and other transitions, and economic decline in rural regions. It should be recognised and reflected in the management of EU funds and policies, that the success of rural communities is critical not only to rural inhabitants, but to the broader economic, environmental, and social well-being of the European Union as a whole.

Our collective aim is to create vibrant, resilient rural communities capable of contributing to sustainable economic, environmental, and social transitions. Therefore, we, the members of the RPGC, have jointly developed this Declaration in response to the nine questions set out by the 'The long-term vision for the EU's rural areas: key achievements and ways forward', and adopted the Declaration on 12 December 2024.

Funded by the European Union



## FINAL DRAFT

## ECOPP STATEMENT ON THE FUTURE OF THE PARTNERSHIP PRINCIPLE

April 1, 2025

*Partnership implies close cooperation between public authorities, economic and social partners and bodies representing civil society at national, regional and local levels throughout the whole programme cycle consisting of preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.*

**Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 240/2014**

The European Union is at a crossroads. A growingly unstable global order and various internal challenges require fundamental changes to the way the European Union acts within and outside of



European Committee of the Regions



## LEADER and CLLD within European policies post 2027

Declaration of Brussels, December 2023

## Strengthening LEADER/CLLD post 2027



## SUBMISSION

EU's next long-term budget (MFF)

– Implementing EU funding with Member States and regions



The place of the local level  
in a European project that faces new challenges

Contribution by AEIDL to the Public consultation on the next MFF: Implementing EU funding with Member States and regions, May 2025



NAT-VII/044

164th plenary session, 19 and 20 February 2025

## OPINION

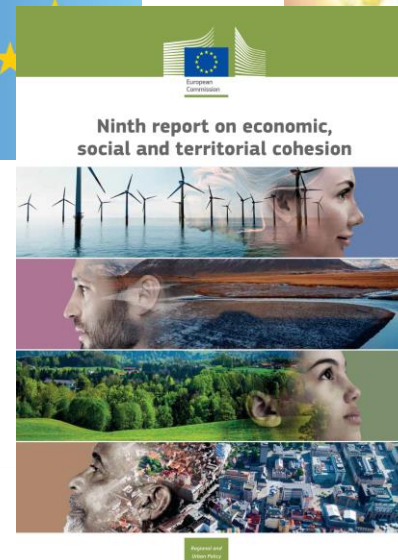
t-27 LEADER and CLLD programming could contribute to better  
plementation of the long-term vision for the EU's rural areas



# Future of Europe



ENRICO LETTA



# Key positions (I)

## Context

- ▶ **Increased Resources:** The next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) must have increased resources compared to the 2021-2027 period to address evolving needs and crises.
- ▶ Focus on **European Public Goods:** Emphasis on financing projects with clear European added value, avoiding fragmentation, and promoting convergence.
- ▶ **Opposition to National Single Plans:** Commissioner Serafin stated “Regional Single Plans” as well
- ▶ **Opposition to European Competitiveness Fund** (Horizon research) – Von Der Leyen vows for separate “Horizon Europe but connected to ECF”

## Strategic Priorities

- ▶ **Competitiveness and Innovation:** Boosting competitiveness, decarbonising the economy, and enhancing innovation capacity are central priorities.
- ▶ **Social, Economic, and Territorial Cohesion:** Continued support for cohesion to reduce inequalities and promote convergence.
- ▶ **Green and Digital Transitions:** Support for achieving climate neutrality by 2050 and accelerating digital transformation.

## Sector-Specific

- ▶ **Agriculture and Food Security:** Support for the competitiveness and resilience of the farming and fisheries sectors, small-scale and young farmers and fishers. Increasing productivity, ensuring a fair standard of living for farmers, and guaranteeing food security (Crisis response). Safeguarding budget from possible cuts and maintaining its integrity and commonality..
- ▶ **Defence and Security:** Increased investment in defence infrastructure and capabilities, moving towards a genuine Defence Union.
- ▶ **External Action and Enlargement:** Continued engagement with third countries, supporting peace, stability, and development globally.

## Financial Management

- ▶ **Sustainable Financing:** Introduction of new own resources to ensure sustainable repayment of borrowing costs and to meet higher spending needs.
- ▶ **Results-Focused Budget:** Aligning spending with strategic policy aims and ensuring effective coordination with national spending.

# Key positions (II)

## Governance and Implementation

- ▶ **Simplification and Transparency:** Simplifying rules and reporting requirements, ensuring transparency and accountability: 12 instruments for local development
- ▶ **Crisis Response Capacity:** Enhanced flexibility and crisis response capacity within the MFF. At the moment only 4% MFF is not earmarked
- ▶ **Rule of Law and Fundamental Rights:** Stronger links between respect for the rule of law and access to EU funds.

## Local Development

- ▶ **Partnership Principle:** Cohesion policy must follow a decentralized, place-based, multilevel governance approach, fully involving local and regional authorities and relevant stakeholders.
- ▶ **LEADER Programme:** continued support for local development in rural areas through community-led local development strategies – Digitalisation and Innovation.
- ▶ **Inclusive Development: continuation Rural Action Plan and Rural Pact,** ensuring that resources are directed where they are most needed to reduce regional disparities and promote inclusive development.

## Urban Development

- ▶ **Enhanced Access to Funding:** cities, regions, and urban authorities to tackle key challenges such as demographic change and depopulation. (Agenda for Cities in Q3 2025)
- ▶ **Support for Housing:** Emphasizes the need for enhanced support for housing (affordability and energy efficiency) through the Union budget, particularly via cohesion policy and other funding sources like the European Investment Bank (EIB) Group.

# The EU policy cycle

Year	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Existing policies	<b>Jun:</b> Mid Term MFF Review <b>Dec:</b> End 2014-2027 Programming period	<b>Feb:</b> Mid Term Review EU Budget agreed & Review Next Generation EU	<b>April:</b> Mid Term Review Cohesion	<b>Dec:</b> End NGEU	<b>Dec:</b> End MFF 2021-27	<b>Jan:</b> Start EU Budget 2028-2034	
Political Developments		<b>Jun:</b> EP elections  <b>July:</b> New EU Priorities  <b>Nov:</b> New Commission	<b>Jan:</b> new CoR Mandate  <b>Jan:</b> Vision Agriculture Food  <b>Feb:</b> Competitiveness, Defence, Procurement  <b>May:</b> MFF Consultation  <b>Q3:</b> Agenda for Cities	<b>Q1:</b> State Aid and Procurement  <b>Q3:</b> Right to Stay	<b>Jan:</b> EP midterm switch		<b>May/Jun:</b> EP Elections
New Programmes/ EU policies		<b>March-April</b> post 2027 Commission ideas (9CR, LTVRA, Letta)	<b>July:</b> 2028-2034 MFF tabled  <b>Oct:</b> New Fund Regulations tabled	<b>Feb:</b> Draft Reports / positions  <b>July:</b> EP/ Council Vote  <b>Sept:</b> EP- Council trilogues	<b>Jun:</b> MS start Drafting Plans  <b>Dec:</b> Regulations Agreed	<b>Dec:</b> End Drafting PA/CSP/OPs	<b>Jan:</b> new 2028-34 programmes start



# Financial Management

## Cross-cutting Local Development approach in post 2027 EU funds:

- ▶ **Simplification and Transparency:** Simplifying rules and reporting requirements, ensuring transparency and accountability: 12 instruments for local development
- ▶ more funds are devoted to rural development beyond farming in Cohesion Policy (€45.6 billion) than in CAP (€24.6bn).
- ▶ high overlap in eligible activities between the RRF and Cohesion Policy
- ▶ Over 12 instruments for local development across EU funds and policies
- ▶ 8% for local development CAP & 8% for Sustainable Urban Development in ERDF
  - **EU-wide 8% earmark for local development within EU funds under shared management** that should then be embedded in the forthcoming National and Regional Single Plans.

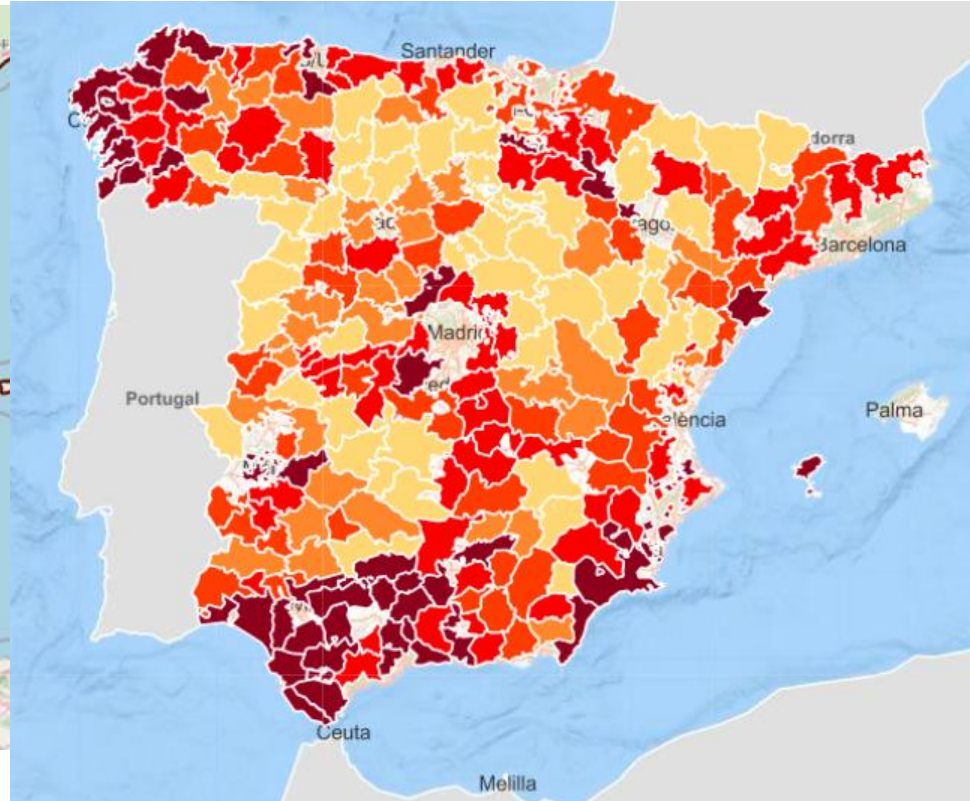
## Horizon rules for Local Development

- ▶ LAGs and equivalent EU Funded local development structured the streamlined financial practices used in **Horizon Europe** projects for rural and territorial development.
- ▶ Both Horizon Europe projects to address local development, smart innovation, innovative local/value chain agricultural practices have a similar average size of circa €5m and many of its activities are identical.
- ▶ however, the Cohesion and CAP funded LAGs/CLLD and ITD are penalised by a much more burdensome regime than those financed by Horizon Europe:
  - 75% advance payment
  - no-cofinancing required to public and civil society beneficiaries,
  - simplified expenditure certification (no proof of expenditure is submitted)
  - only 3 reporting periods.

# Functional Rural Areas

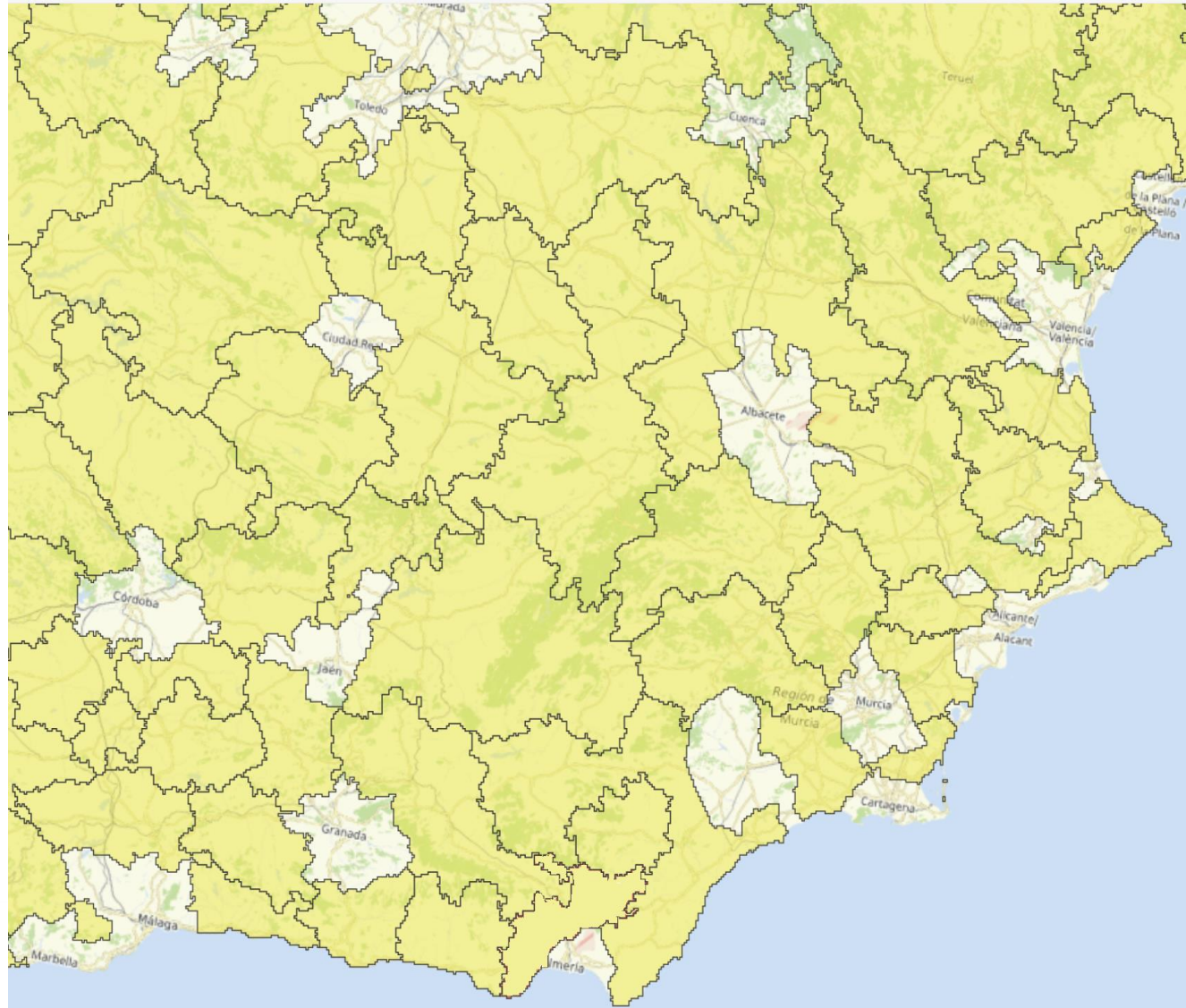
Functional Rural Areas

LEADER LAGs



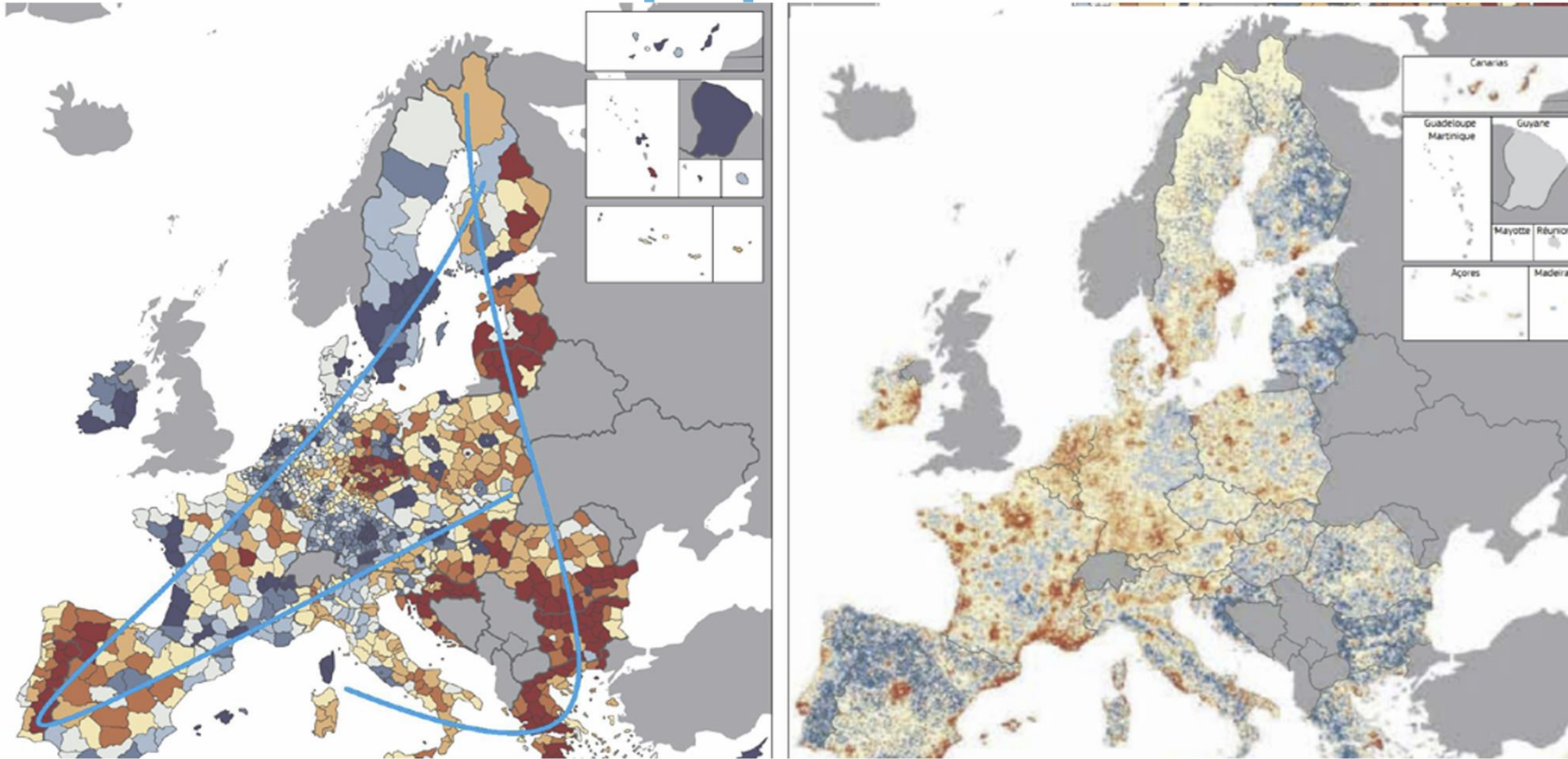
# Basic Services

- Right to Stay (Letta)
- Service deserts
- Functional area cooperation
- Rural Proofing labs
- Alternative to municipal mergers
- Interterritorial development





# The new EU Definition of depopulation



*Left: Total population change by NUTS 3, 2010-2021/ Right: Average population change per decade by area of 5x5km, 1961-2021*

*Source: 9th Cohesion Report*

# Recommendations

- ▶ Influence: SG, DG BUDG, Ministries of Finance, ECON MEPs, CoR > AGRI or REGIO
- ▶ Lobby period Oct 2025-Jun 2025
- ▶ 8% horizontal earmark for local development in Single National and Regional Plans
- ▶ Use of the simplified Horizon Europe rules in LEADER/CLLD/ITD finances
- ▶ LEADER LAGs as an application for rural functional areas and access to basic services & rural proofing labs
- ▶ LEADER LAGs as capacity building → reinforcement of LEADER networks in regional governments and nationally
- ▶ Support the new EU definition of depopulation (-7,5/1,000 hab.)





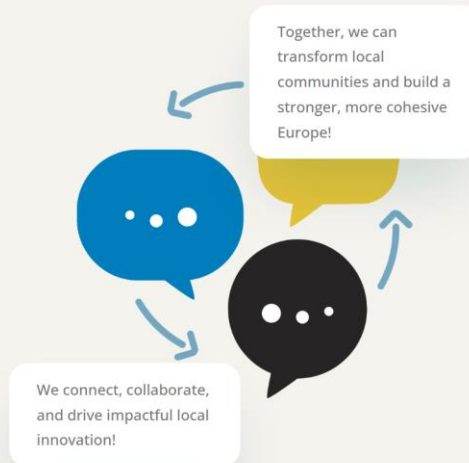
WELCOME TO THE FORUM

## European Local Innovation Forum

ELIF is a space for experts and organisations operating and connected at the local level in both urban and rural settings, to facilitate the **exchange** of ideas, **learn** from experiences and **draw** lessons to boost innovation in local communities from across Europe.

Currently, we are working on our 2025 Action Plan.

JOIN THE FORUM



<https://www.aeidl.eu/forum/>

# Thank you!

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