

# RUSTIK & GRANULAR FINAL CONFERENCE

24-25 June 2026, Brussels – Fondation Universitaire, Brussels  
Egmontstraat 11 rue d’Egmont – 1000 Brussels

## Day 1 – Evidence, data & tools to measure rural territorial complexity

The first day of the **GRANULAR & RUSTIK conference** is dedicated to understanding the **complexity and diversity of rural areas in Europe**. It focuses on the specific challenges and opportunities related to rural and territorial data, drawing on empirical evidence, Living Lab experiences, and the analytical frameworks and tools developed within the GRANULAR and RUSTIK projects.

Day 1 aims to address key knowledge gaps in how rural areas are defined, measured, and analysed, highlighting limitations in existing data, classifications, and indicators. Through EU-level perspectives, project results, and applied research, the sessions explore how rural diversity, multi-functionality, and rural-urban linkages can be better captured using more granular, functional, and context-sensitive approaches, drawing from the experiences from local actors.

The objective of this first day is to **establish a shared conceptual and analytical foundation** by showcasing robust methodologies, typologies, and tools that improve the understanding of rural territorial dynamics. By strengthening the evidence base on rural complexity, this sets the scene for the second day of the conference which will focus on how this knowledge can be translated into governance approaches, rural proofing, and effective place-based policymaking.

13:30 – 14:00

**Arrival & registration (welcome coffee)**

14:00 – 14:05

**Welcome & Introduction** – *Serafin Pazos Vidal, European Association for Innovation in Local Development (AEIDL)*

14:05 – 14:20

**Understanding territorial complexity in Europe**

- Opening remarks – *Michelle Marshalian, Joint Research Centre (JRC)*

14:20 – 14:40

**Introduction to GRANULAR & RUSTIK: scope, gaps and complementarities**

- *Tristan Berchoux, GRANULAR Coordinator*
- *Simone Sterly, RUSTIK Coordinator*

14:40 – 15:30

**Round table: Data and evidence to characterise rural and territorial challenges in Europe**

- GRANULAR: Data collection in rural areas – *Ian McCallum, International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) & Michael Kull, Natural Resources Institute Finland (Luke)*
- GRANULAR French Living Lab – *Louisse Chasset, Pays Pyrénées Méditerranée*
- RUSTIK: Monmouthshire Living Lab – *Demelza Jones, Monmouthshire County Council*
- *Marc Bournisien de Valmont, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)*

*Moderated by Alessandro Sorichetta, University of Milan*

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15:30 – 16:00

**Coffee break – Multi-Actor Labs stories**

16:00 – 16:50

## **Rural diversity and complexity: analytical approaches for rural areas**

- RUSTIK: Functional rural areas framework – *Francesco Mantino, Council for Agricultural Research and Economics (CREA)*
- GRANULAR Rural typology – *Carlos Tapia, Nordregio*
- *Theona Morrison, Scottish Rural Action*
- *Vasileios Margaras, European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS)*

*Moderated by Serafin Pazos-Vidal, AEIDL*

16:50 – 17:50

## **Tools & frameworks to understand rural complexity**

- GRANULAR indicators on quality of life – *Gundi Knies, Thünen-Institute*
- GRANULAR Dutch Living Lab – *Kimberly Wevers, P10*
- RUSTIK Geographical indication system “on the way to local food” – *Petya Slavova, Sofia University*
- *Carole Esclapez, DG AGRI, European Commission*

*Moderated by Serafin Pazos-Vidal, AEIDL*

17:50 – 18:00

## **Closing of the day**

- *Tristan Berchoux, GRANULAR Coordinator*
- *Simone Sterly, RUSTIK Coordinator*

18:00 – 19:00

**Networking cocktail**

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## Day 2 – From evidence to action: delivering place-based policies and rural proofing in the EU

After a first day focused on understanding the complexity of rural areas (their specific challenges and opportunities in terms of data, including the experiences of the Living Labs and the frameworks and tools developed within the two projects) the second day will concentrate on implementation.

It will address how to translate this knowledge into effective place-based policies in rural areas and how to integrate the results of GRANULAR and RUSTIK for the use by a broader range of actors, including regional authorities, local stakeholders such as Local Action Groups (LAGs), as well as national and European institutions.

The objective is to highlight the project's impact by demonstrating how the integration of knowledge can contribute to more informed, inclusive, and effective policy-making processes in rural areas that support just digital, ecological and social transitions. This second half-day session should enable policymakers to refine their assessment of the impact of **current and future policies on rural communities** (rural proofing, including sectoral or thematic policies (such as climate, energy, mobility, digitalisation, health and social inclusion), or policy frameworks designed to support transitions to sustainability in general, in order to tailor interventions to maximise opportunities for rural communities to contribute to and benefit from these transitions.

08:30 – 09:00

**Arrival & registration (welcome coffee)**

09:00 – 09:05

**Welcome & Introduction**

09:05 – 09:30

### Opening remarks

- Keynote speech – *Alexia Rouby, DG AGRI, European Commission*
- *Simone Sterly, RUSTIK Coordinator*
- *Tristan Berchoux, GRANULAR Coordinator*

09:30–10:30

### Making rural proofing operation: from methodology to policy impact

- *Bettina Bock, Wageningen University*
- *Giulia Martino, Ecorys*
- *Petri Kahila, University of Eastern Finland*
- *Francesco Mantino, CREA*
- *Nicoletta Merlo, European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)*
- *Betty-Ann Bryce, OECD*
- *Alexia Rouby, DG AGRI, European Commission*

*Moderated by Petya Slavova, University of Sofia*

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10:30-11:00

**Networking coffee break**

11:00-12:00

## **From experimentation to replication: scaling place based solutions for rural transitions**

- RUSTIK Garafagnana Lab – *Mirta Sutter, Local Action Group Montagnappennino*
- *Ingrid Machold, Federal Institute of Agricultural Economics, Rural and Mountain Research (BAB)*
- GRANULAR Scottish Living Lab – *Jonathan Hopkins & Chen Wang, James Hutton Institute*

*Moderated by Aimee Morse, Countryside and Community Research Institute*

12:00- 12:50

## **Place-based policies in practice: the role of community-led approaches**

- *Tom Jones, European Rural Community Alliance (ERCA)*
- *Piotr Sadlocha, European LEADER Association for Rural Development (ELARD)*
- *North Sweden European Office*

*Moderated by Valentine Neirinck-Fauvelle, Euromontana*

12:50-13:00

## **Closing remarks**

- *Radim Sršeň, Member of the European Committee of the Regions and of the Local Assembly of the Municipality of Dolní Studénky*

13:00-14:00

**Networking lunch**