

05. 02. 2026
Brussels,
Ares (2025) 9975091

Dear Mr Sadłocha,

Thank you for your letter, your detailed proposals on the future support for rural areas, and your continuous efforts to bring the European LEADER local action groups and wider rural stakeholders into a constructive dialogue with the European Commission.

I can assure you that rural communities and rural areas matter, and that rural voices have been heard and listened to.

On 16 July 2025, the Commission proposed a simpler, more agile, and more strategic EU budget architecture. The National and Regional Partnership Plans aim to support economic, social, and territorial cohesion, with ring-fenced amounts to agriculture and fisheries. In addition, the plans will need to demonstrate how they intend to improve the attractiveness and living standards in rural areas. Member States will have the opportunity to fully integrate and create synergies across cohesion, agricultural, and fisheries policies. Member States and regions are expected to build a coherent agenda of measures addressing specific rural challenges. This can include, inter alia, support to rural businesses, services, LEADER community led local development and other forms of local cooperation.

I want to reassure you that I fully recognise the value of LEADER for supporting development of local communities across the EU. That is why the Commission proposed LEADER to be a mandatory element of the future policy toolbox and opened the opportunity for fully integrating it with regional, employment, social and coastal policies in a single intervention.

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Mr Piotr Sadłocha

President

European LEADER Association for Rural Development (ELARD)

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In the ongoing negotiations with the European Parliament and the Council, at the November meeting with the Presidents of the other two Institutions, I also proposed to reinforce the recognition of continued support to rural areas by setting an additional spending target for rural areas. In my letter of 6 January 2026, I detail how Member States could ensure that additional resources reach and address the needs of farmers and rural communities as of 2028.

I remain committed to ensuring that the future EU budget and policy framework delivers on the complex challenges of rural areas.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ursula von der Leyen', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ursula von der Leyen