

RUSTIK & GRANULAR FINAL CONFERENCE

24-25 June 2026, Brussels – Fondation Universitaire, 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
14:05 – 14:20	Keynote Speech: Understanding territorial complexity in Europe
14:20 – 14:40	Introduction to GRANULAR & RUSTIK: scope, gaps and complementarities
14:40 – 15:30	Roundtable: Evidence on rural and territorial challenges in Europe
15:30 – 16:00	Coffee break – Multi-Actor Labs stories
16:00 – 16:50	Rural diversity and multi-functionality: analytical approaches for rural areas
16:50 – 17:50	Roundtable: Tools and frameworks to understand rural complexity
17:50 – 18:00	Closing of the day
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
09:30 – 10:30	Panel discussion: Making rural proofing operational: from methodology to policy impact
10:30 – 11:00	Coffee break – Multi-Actor Labs stories
11:00 – 12:00	Roundtable: From experimentation to replication: scaling place-based solutions for rural transitions
16:50 – 17:50	Panel discussion - Place-based policies in practice: how to improve and ensure the governance of community-led approaches
12:50 – 13:00	Closing remarks
13:00 – 14:00	Networking lunch