



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Office of the President Ms Ursula von der Leyen

Head of Cabinet

Brussels, 07. 10. 2026
Ares (2026) 7038596

Dear Mr Sadłocha,

President von der Leyen has asked me to thank you for your letter where you share the concerns of local action groups regarding equal development opportunities for rural and urban citizens under the 2028-2034 multiannual financial framework (MFF), and to reply to you.

The Commission is committed to addressing the challenges faced by rural areas and to ensuring that all citizens, wherever they live, have a right to stay. Fostering the attractiveness of territories, including via strategies for the integrated development of urban and rural areas, will be one of the objectives of the future National and Regional Partnership (NRP) Plans. Therefore, the Commission has proposed that support to sustainable urban development and to LEADER be mandatory in Member States' NRP Plans.

These regulatory requirements mirror those of the current and previous programming periods and are reflected in the respective ex post evaluations of the European Regional Development Fund and of LEADER for the 2014-2020 period, to which you refer.

Governance is of key importance in the context of such integrated territorial development strategies. These must be implemented under the responsibility of the relevant territorial authorities, who must select or be involved in the selection of operations. By comparison, Community-led Local Development (CLLD) strategies, including LEADER, have a bottom-up governance, based on citizen engagement and involving local actors in the decision-making process. The vast majority of CLLD strategies in the 2014 to 2020 cohesion policy programmes supported the development of rural areas. This support came in addition to the support provided by CLLD-LEADER in the 2014-2022 Rural Development programmes.

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Mr Piotr Sadłocha
President
European LEADER Association for Rural Development

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The Commission proposal for the next MFF continues to recognise the importance of territorial cohesion and tailored approaches responding to the specific needs and opportunities of different regions.

The continuous engagement of all stakeholders, rural and urban, is key for better understanding local challenges and helping these communities thrive. The Commission is committed to these objectives and we count on your support in the legislative process.

Yours sincerely,



Džoh Seibert