REPORT

of

Consultative Meeting on the Development of a Roadmap for the Implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2025)3 on the social, economic and political participation of rural youth

15-16 September 2026 | European Youth Centre Budapest

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Executive summary

The consultative meeting on the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2025)3 (hereinafter Recommendation) took place on 15-16 September 2026 at the European Youth Centre Budapest. It brought together ten participants, including two members of the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ), four representatives of rural youth and youth organisations, a member of the Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ), two youth delegates from the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (hereinafter Congress) of the Council of Europe and a representative of the Rural Pact Support Office. Several stakeholders, such as members of the Congress and a representative of the European Youth Foundation, joined some of the sessions via web conferencing. The aim of the meeting was to develop the main elements of an implementation roadmap, using the measures included in the Recommendation as a starting point.

The discussions showed that having policy commitments in place does not necessarily mean that young people can make use of the available participation opportunities. In practice, they may still face difficulties related to transport, internet access, limited services, insufficient organisational capacity or the lack of clear channels through which they can contribute to decision-making. At the same time, these challenges are not the same in every rural area. Participants therefore highlighted the need for a common direction that would still allow member States and other stakeholders to adapt their actions to their specific contexts and priorities.

Based on the discussions held on Day 1, the main inputs on the challenges and enablers were grouped under four headings: *Reach, Ability to Act, Governance and Follow-through*. These headings were used to structure the working-group discussions on Day 2. The groups developed proposals related to access to information, capacity and resources, institutional responsibilities, the involvement of rural youth, evidence and cooperation (synergies). During the final discussion, participants continued to discuss the approach that should be taken, favouring a hybrid structure for the roadmap. This means, it is suggested that strategic actions should be grouped by stakeholders, while milestones would be used to assess progress. The four headings would explain the overall logic of the roadmap but would not become separate chapters.

The report of the consultative meeting summarises the discussions, examples and proposals that can be used in the next stage of drafting. It also reflects the issues that still need further consideration, including the wording of actions and milestones, possible monitoring arrangements and the support that the Council of Europe and its partners could provide.

I. Background and context

Rural youth face challenges that affect their access to opportunities and their participation in community and public life. These are often connected. Limited transport can make it difficult to access education or employment, while poor internet connectivity and the lack of local youth structures can further restrict participation. Demographic changes and unequal access to services also need to be considered when addressing the situation of rural youth.

However, rural areas are not all the same, and neither are the experiences of young people living in them. The situation in a remote community with declining services can be quite different from that of a rural settlement close to a city. Within the same community, young people's opportunities may also differ depending on their gender, socio-economic situation, family responsibilities and access to employment and transport. These differences are relevant for implementation, as measures that work in one context may need to be adapted in another.

Recommendation CM/Rec(2025)3 on the social, economic and political participation of rural youth was adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 7 May 2025. It calls on member States to promote and apply the measures set out in its appendix, considering the diversity of rural youth. Local and regional authorities and youth civil society are to be involved in implementation and the review of progress. The Recommendation also calls for its dissemination, together with supporting materials, in formats accessible to relevant stakeholders. A review by the Committee of Ministers is foreseen five years after adoption.

Recent research also points to the need to strengthen the response to the challenges faced by rural youth. The EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership study (2026) *Here to stay? The transitions of rural youth before and after the Covid-19 pandemic* examines education, support systems, participation, employment, mobility and access to leisure, culture and sport. It identifies continuing policy gaps, including the need for better coordination and stronger representation of rural youth. These findings were relevant to the meeting's discussions on how to move from policy commitments to implementation.

The Pilona Method, drawing on the experience of the European Rural Youth Forward Conference held in 2026 and organised by Rural Youth Europe in collaboration with EPA! - Rural Youth of Spain, provided another reference for the discussions. It describes how young people worked on concrete rural challenges and developed possible responses before discussing them with decision makers. Particular attention was given to diversity and learning, while local culture and contact with the community helped connect the work with everyday rural life. The report also makes practical proposals for the implementation roadmap, including giving young people space and support to develop and test ideas, bringing in institutions with relevant responsibilities to assess what could work, and ensuring feedback and follow-up. It suggests creating

rural youth experimentation spaces where this work could take place, with approaches adapted to different national and local contexts.

The new text of the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life (adopted by the Committee of Ministers in March 2026) provides a further policy reference through its emphasis on meaningful and inclusive participation at local and regional levels. Alongside the Recommendation, the research and practices outlined above informed the discussions on how the roadmap could support implementation, clarify responsibilities and strengthen cooperation between the actors involved.

II. Purpose and objectives of the consultative meeting

The consultative meeting was organised to develop the basis for a roadmap supporting the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2025)3 on the social, economic and political participation of rural youth. While the Recommendation sets out the measures to be taken, there is a need to consider how these can be implemented in practice, who should be involved and what support would be needed.

The roadmap is intended to help member States and other stakeholders identify priorities, agree on actions and responsibilities, and strengthen cooperation. At the same time, it should allow them to adapt their work to their own contexts rather than follow the same approach everywhere. It should also provide a way to assess progress, with rural youth involved in the process.

The meeting provided an opportunity to bring together different experiences and discuss what could support implementation. The discussions were intended to inform the roadmap, drawing on available evidence and the realities of rural youth across member States.

More specifically, the consultative meeting aimed to:

- establish a shared understanding of the key challenges affecting rural youth participation across member States;
- identify existing policies, practices and initiatives that can support implementation efforts;
- share promising practices among stakeholders;
- agree on key priorities and strategic objectives that should guide the roadmap;
- identify potential actions, partnerships and opportunities for cooperation among relevant stakeholders and institutions;
- ensure the meaningful involvement of rural young people throughout the roadmap development process.

III. Overview of the consultative meeting process

The consultative meeting started with welcome remarks from the Executive Director of the European Youth Centre Budapest, Balint Molnar, who addressed the participants and highlighted the importance of the process of translating policy frameworks into practice. It was followed by a presentation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2025)3 and the possible formats for the roadmap. Participants discussed stakeholder-oriented, thematic, phased or time-based, results-oriented and hybrid options. The discussion focused on what each format would offer in practice, particularly in terms of identifying responsibilities, keeping the connection with the Recommendation's five areas and following progress.

Participants then shared national, local and European experiences. The presentations included examples of cooperation between ministries, community initiatives, regular dialogue with rural youth, territorial policies, research and foresight, and European networks. The Congress presented its report on regional exodus, looking at how local identity, housing, transport, connectivity and services affect young people's opportunities to remain in rural areas.

Despite the differences between the initiatives, several challenges were raised throughout the day. These concerned the division of responsibilities between institutions, access to information, insufficient resources and the continuity of the work. Recognition of youth organisations and arrangements for monitoring were also discussed. Then, the participants were asked to individually brainstorm and put down their ideas about the challenges and enablers (expectations) that each stakeholder should have based on four stakeholder groups (member States, Rural youth and youth organisations, Local and regional authorities, Council of Europe). Based on these inputs and their synthesis, the main implementation gaps were grouped under four headings: **Reach**, **Ability to Act**, **Governance** and **Follow-through** (see the challenges in *Section IV*). These were used to structure the working groups on Day 2.

The second day began with the European Youth Foundation's presentation of the support available for youth initiatives. Then a summary of Day 1 and the four groups of implementation gaps were presented to the participants to reflect on and structure their contributions. The participants were invited to join one of four groups according to their interests. Each working group was asked to suggest possible actions and indicate the lead and contributing actors based on a provided template. The groups also had to consider whether their proposals could be useful across member States without prescribing the same approach for everyone. An important part of the task was to explain how the proposed actions would help implement the Recommendation, rather than repeat what it already contains.

The proposals included stakeholder mapping, outreach, accessible information, joint training, dialogue platforms, sustainable support and monitoring (details in *Section VII*). Some were initially formulated as individual activities, such as developing a toolkit, creating a contact pool or organising a training course. In discussing these

proposals, the groups looked at the wider purpose of each activity. A contact pool, for example, could support the identification of relevant actors and continued cooperation between them. Similarly, a training course could be one part of longer-term support for capacity development.

In the closing plenary, participants discussed the roadmap format again and further clarified the hybrid approach they had initially preferred. The roadmap would be organised by stakeholder, with cross-cutting strategic actions and milestones to follow progress. Participants did not consider it necessary to include a separate “gap addressed” field or to assign every action to one of the Recommendation’s five substantive areas. These links would be explained in the introductory text, without having to repeat them for each action.

IV. Main findings: implementation gaps and enabling conditions

The points raised during the discussions were brought together under four groups of implementation gaps. These helped participants identify the difficulties in applying the Recommendation and consider possible responses. The focus was on the practical conditions needed for implementation, without suggesting that the Recommendation requires additional commitments.

- *Reach: awareness, accessibility and territorial realities*

The discussions showed that the availability of the Recommendation and related opportunities does not necessarily mean that they reach rural youth and relevant local actors. Information may circulate mainly within established institutional networks, while local authorities and organisations receive it late, in inaccessible formats or without a clear explanation of how they can use it. Participants highlighted the need for clear language, youth-friendly communication and appropriate channels. Information would also need to be adapted to national, regional and local contexts.

At the same time, access to information is only part of the issue. Young people may still be unable to use services or take part in activities because of distance, transport costs, poor connectivity or the absence of services in their area. The group therefore also considered shared and multifunctional premises, cooperation between neighbouring communities, outreach and mobile services. These measures, alongside transport and connectivity, would need to be considered according to local circumstances and the difficulties rural youth face.

- *Ability to Act: capacity, resources and continuity*

The discussions around ability to act considered the capacities of both rural youth organisations and public authorities. Rural youth organisations may have limited staff time and funding, as well as insufficient knowledge of how policy responsibilities are divided. Public authorities, in turn, may need a better understanding of rural youth

realities and methods for involving young people in decision-making. These gaps can affect cooperation even where both sides are willing to work together.

Participants discussed joint learning between civil servants and rural youth organisations, peer exchanges, practical materials and support beyond individual events. The Council of Europe's long-term training approaches and policy assistance were mentioned as possible resources. The intention was to support the knowledge and working relationships needed for implementation, rather than propose a uniform training package for all contexts.

The group also addressed the continuity of this work. Short funding cycles, staff turnover and changing political priorities can interrupt cooperation and lead to the loss of accumulated knowledge. Structural support for rural youth organisations was therefore discussed, together with arrangements to maintain contacts, responsibilities and access to decision-making between projects and during institutional changes.

- *Governance: coordination, ownership, participation and legitimacy*

The discussions gave particular attention to coordination, as rural youth issues concern several policy areas, including youth policy, education, employment, agriculture, transport, housing, culture, social services and territorial development. Where there is no clear responsibility for coordination, proposals may be passed between departments without being taken forward. The group considered mapping the relevant competences and establishing regular cooperation between sectors and levels of government.

The Spanish *La Mesa!* was brought up as an example to show how an interministerial space with rural youth representation can connect existing programmes and public responsibilities around specific challenges. Its relevance for the roadmap was in bringing the institutions concerned together and ensuring follow-up to young people's contributions. The discussions noted that this would not require the same structure to be reproduced in other countries, but arrangements that serve this purpose within their own institutional contexts.

Another issue concerned the recognition of rural youth and their organisations as partners. Existing youth bodies do not always represent rural youth, and an invitation to participate in a meeting does not necessarily give them influence over decisions. Their involvement was therefore considered throughout the process, including identifying needs, developing responses, implementing actions and reviewing progress. Youth councils could provide one channel where they exist, while networks, organisations or other locally appropriate arrangements may be needed elsewhere.

- *Follow-through: evidence, monitoring, review and synergies*

The discussions around follow-through focused on monitoring progress and using the experience of implementation to inform the five-year review. Evidence would need to support comparison and shared learning, while taking into account differences in the definitions of rurality and institutional arrangements across countries.

The participants highlighted the need for national responsibility for tracking implementation which could be facilitated with provision of a light common approach by the Council of Europe, and regular exchanges of practices and evidence. Periodic reviews would involve rural youth and civil society alongside public authorities. A possible European stakeholder or research arrangement was also mentioned; however, its form and mandate would require further discussions and development.

The group also considered how existing data collection could better reflect rural conditions. Where feasible, national data could be disaggregated by territory or rural area, with rural-specific issues included in future collection. This information would need to be complemented by qualitative accounts from young people and local actors. Relevant European and international evidence sources could also contribute, subject to the agreement of the organisations concerned.

The discussions further covered connections between existing policies, programmes, research networks and funding arrangements. Mapping these could help identify available support and avoid duplication. Participants saw value in strengthening cooperation between existing initiatives around the implementation of the Recommendation before proposing new structures.

V. Lessons from initiatives and practices shared during the meeting

The initiatives presented during the meeting showed how institutions and communities can support rural youth participation.

The Spanish *La Mesa!* initiative, presented by **Antonio Miguel Seron** (INJUVE - Spanish Institute of Youth) and **Matías Rubio** (EPA! - Rural Youth of Spain), showed how ministries can work together through an interministerial space where rural youth are also represented. This helps connect existing programmes and clarify who is responsible for what. Moreover, it allows different ministries to consider rural youth in their policies, as many of the issues affecting young people's lives cannot be addressed through youth policy alone and rural youth perspectives should be mainstreamed in all policies.

The Hungarian *Közös Lépés* initiative, presented by **Virág Komenda** (Youth Delegate to the Congress), focused on participation in community life. Young people can become involved through local activities and opportunities to put their ideas into practice, before taking part in formal policy discussions. A sense of belonging and regular contact within the community can help maintain this involvement and reach young people who are not connected to youth organisations.

The European Rural Youth Parliament and the Slovenian Rural Parliament experience, presented by **Eva Kotnik** (Rural Youth Europe), also showed why continued involvement matters. Regular meetings allow young people and other actors to return to earlier discussions and follow up on proposals. These experiences also highlighted

the importance of involving rural youth throughout the policy cycle, rather than only during an initial consultation.

The French approach to rural youth policy, presented by **Juliette Rania M'Hadhebi** (French Ministry of Sports, Youth and Voluntary organisations), looked at how rural youth are included in wider policies for rural areas. Rural Educational Areas brought schools, local authorities and other partners together to improve educational and career opportunities. Local and mobile services brought employment, social and health support closer to young people, while support for youth-led projects helped them develop their own activities. However, using these approaches elsewhere would require looking at what services are already available and what young people still have difficulty accessing.

Francisco Simões, Chair of the European Rural Youth Observatory, presented research and foresight methods for understanding young people's current situation and possible future needs. These methods involve young people and other stakeholders in exploring how conditions might change. They can help those developing policies and programmes prepare for emerging needs alongside addressing the problems young people already face.

Haude Blanc, Networking and Project Officer at the Rural Pact Support Office, presented the EU Rural Pact, which connects public authorities with civil society, researchers, businesses and communities. It offers opportunities to share practices and knowledge, find partners and learn about available support. These existing networks could help actors work together on implementation of the Recommendation and reduce the need to create new structures.

The Congress contribution, prepared by **Eke Folkerts and Urs Janett,** rapporteurs on regional exodus, looked at the conditions affecting young people's opportunities to remain in rural areas. It covered housing, transport, connectivity and services, alongside local identity and demographic change. The contribution also showed why local and regional authorities need to address participation alongside the everyday conditions that affect young people's ability to take part.

On the second day, **Mara Georgescu** (Programme Manager at the European Youth Foundation) presented the available support within the Foundation's activities for youth-led initiatives. Funding could help organisations carry out activities contributing to implementation. Project funding would need to be considered alongside the wider need for organisational support and continuity.

VI. Proposed Framework for the roadmap

Recommendation CM/Rec(2025)3 already sets out measures to support rural youth participation. The roadmap would help member States and other actors put these into practice. It should make clear who is expected to act and how others can contribute, while supporting cooperation between institutions and rural youth organisations. It would also provide a way to follow progress. The intention is to guide implementation across the Recommendation without producing new measures or a collection of projects.

Participants favoured a common direction that leaves room for national and local decisions. Member States would identify priorities by looking at the situation in their rural areas, the policies already in place and the evidence available. This would include considering where services or support are missing. The roadmap should help with these decisions, without requiring every country to address the same measures in the same order.

The four groups of implementation gaps helped explain how the proposals had been developed. However, participants did not consider it necessary to include a separate "gap addressed" field in the roadmap. They also did not favour assigning every action to one of the Recommendation's five areas, as proposals concerning coordination, outreach or monitoring could support several areas at once.

The proposed format would therefore contain four elements: **lead stakeholder, strategic action, contributing stakeholders and action-specific milestones**, which may be related to addressing one or more of the gaps that informed the actions (e.g. addressing all the identified gaps under Reach through the relevant strategic actions could mark a first milestone). The milestones also show the pathway of the roadmap and can be time-bound, with clear sequencing of the actions needed to move from one milestone to the next.

VII. Proposed content by stakeholder group

The proposals below bring together the roles and actions discussed for each stakeholder group. They include practical suggestions that can lead to broader strategic actions for the implementation roadmap of the Recommendation.

- Member States

The discussions gave particular attention to responsibility for implementation. Participants proposed identifying the ministries and departments concerned with rural youth and bringing together the policies already in place. ***Working tables and other spaces for dialogue*** could connect national and local authorities with rural youth organisations. A permanent platform with its own governance arrangements, working groups and regular meetings was also proposed. These arrangements would need to

allow for different national contexts. Ministries or departments responsible for youth policy were identified as leads for this coordination.

A pool of contacts (stakeholder mapping) was proposed to identify the departments, programmes and organisations involved and, where possible, their available resources and needs. This could help actors find the right people and understand what others are already doing. Existing youth spaces should also be mapped through the relevant departments of different ministries in cooperation with national youth councils (where they exist) or other umbrella youth organisations. The networks/youth councils would help launch and promote this work. Participants also proposed looking at connections between national research, programmes and strategies and creating spaces for joint work on implementation.

Proposals on access to information included making relevant ***documents available in member States' official and minority languages*** and using clear, youth-friendly wording. Member States and the Council of Europe were identified as leads for this work, with local and regional authorities contributing. A ***national communication programme*** was also proposed, with rural youth organisations involved in its development. Local and regional authorities would adapt and deliver it in their contexts. Public ***information services should also be utilised to reach rural and remote areas*** and provide information about opportunities for participation.

Member States, including local and regional authorities, were also identified as stakeholders with leading roles for ***improving rural infrastructure, including digital connectivity and public buildings and spaces.*** The proposals covered affordable public transport between rural and urban areas, with approaches adapted to local conditions. Where infrastructure development is not realistic, actions could focus on ***improving rural young people's access to existing services****.*

Rural youth may need a better understanding of institutional responsibilities and funding opportunities, while public authorities may need support to understand the needs of rural youth and involve them in their work. The groups proposed ***joint training and peer exchanges*** between civil servants and youth organisations. One proposal linked this to a possible sequence: first identify contacts and bring actors together, then organise joint learning, and use the experience to develop a ***practical toolkit with follow-up support.***

Continuity was another concern. Unstable funding, changing political priorities and short-lived programmes can interrupt cooperation*.* ***Clear institutional responsibilities and structural funding*** would also help implementation continue beyond individual projects.

Member States were identified as responsible *for* ***following progress and bringing evidence into reviews****.* This responsibility could form part of the national coordination arrangements (be included in the Terms of Reference). Annual meetings were suggested to review progress and support implementation. Where possible**,** ***national data could be broken down by territory or rural area****,* with rural-specific questions

included in future collection. The mapping (initial assessments) and later reviews could draw on this information together with local experience. Young people's feedback would help establish whether the changes are reaching them.

- Local and regional authorities

As it was discussed, many of the conditions affecting participation are shaped locally. The location of services, transport connections and available meeting places can make a considerable difference to young people's opportunities. Settlement patterns and the capacity of local institutions also need to be considered. Local and regional authorities would therefore have a role in ***adapting national priorities to their areas*** and reporting on what works. Their role would also include ***adapting and delivering the national communication programme*** and helping public information services reach rural and remote areas.

The groups discussed ***investment in digital connectivity and public infrastructure,*** including buildings and spaces used by the community. Member States and local and regional authorities were identified as joint leads for this work. They also proposed involving local communities and youth organisations working in rural areas or targeting rural youth in identifying needs and developing responses. For transport, the discussion covered ***affordable connections between rural and urban areas,*** coordination between different modes of transport and possible cooperation across regional boundaries.

The practices shared by the participants also provided further examples, including ***shared facilities, mobile services and local educational partnerships.*** These could inform implementation where they respond to a particular access problem based on the local and regional contexts. Area specific actions should be identified to tackle the issue of access.

Participants proposed ***closer links between local authorities and non-governmental organisations (NGOs)*** already working with rural youth. They also suggested supporting local youth activities to reach regional and national discussions. ***Mapping existing youth spaces*****,** with the involvement of national youth councils (where existing) and/or umbrella youth organisations and the relevant ministry departments, could help identify where cooperation is possible and where support is missing. Depending on the area, partners might include youth organisations, schools, youth workers, community bodies or informal groups. Participants emphasised that involvement must come with adequate resources and a real possibility to influence decisions.

- Rural youth and youth organisations

The discussions during the meeting explicitly highlighted that rural youth and youth organisations should be considered as ***equal partners from the beginning of implementation.*** Their experience can help identify barriers that are not visible in official records and assess whether proposed actions respond to local needs. They

can also reach young people who are not involved in established participation structures. This is particularly relevant when priorities are being selected and local arrangements are being developed.

Local youth organisations can ***bring community experience into regional and national discussions***. National and European networks can, in turn, ***help smaller groups access information and connect with peers or policy processes***. Larger organisations may be able to support those with fewer resources. However, this should leave space for youth from the communities concerned to speak for themselves. Where formal representative bodies do not exist, other locally trusted arrangements may be needed.

The proposals also included youth organisations in ***developing the national communication programme and identifying local infrastructure needs*****.** They would take part in joint learning with civil servants and contribute their experience to the resulting practical guidance.

Rural youth and youth organisations should also be involved in ***monitoring and reviewing implementation*** at national level. Their views, along with those of member States and other civil society actors, would help inform periodic reviews. These reviews could also draw on research and available data.

- Council of Europe

The meeting identified several possible forms of Council of Europe support, including ***practical guidance, policy assistance and capacity development***. Its educational experience and longer-term training approaches could help institutions and youth organisations work with the Recommendation. Participants specifically suggested that the Youth Department could bring the relevant actors, especially decision makers, together for ***joint learning.*** Peer exchanges and practical materials could follow from this work.

Participants also proposed ***awareness-raising and advocacy support through the Council of Europe Youth Department*** to help member States implement the Recommendation and maintain attention to rural youth in national and European policy debate.

Cooperation within the Council of Europe was considered important. The Youth Department and statutory bodies could work with the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, while the EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership could further contribute to research, evidence gathering and knowledge sharing. The aim would be to connect these contributions, rather than leave implementation within one part of the Council of Europe.

Participants proposed a ***European overview of relevant actors, research and policy initiatives*** to help identify connections between existing work and opportunities for cooperation. The proposals called for equal involvement of the Youth Department and Congress in this work. Possible links with the European Commission, the EU Rural

Pact and other European and international bodies should be explored. At the same time, participants noted that cooperation at European level should not be limited to EU frameworks. It would need to remain relevant to all Council of Europe member States, including those that are not members of the EU.

Input from the CDEJ and CCJ would inform the overview, with the results presented to the Joint Council on Youth. Participants also suggested making the results publicly available, for example through a website, and sharing the roadmap and opportunities for joint work with the stakeholders identified.

Further proposals concerned ***collecting and sharing evidence of implementation***, as well as making initiatives and practices more widely available. A ***common, light monitoring approach*** would include a practical framework or template and regular exchanges between countries. The Youth Department was identified as the lead for this work and periodic reviews. Relevant European and international evidence, including data from International Labour Organisation, could contribute alongside national sources.

Participants also proposed a ***European stakeholder consortium*** with research capacity to monitor implementation, together with a ***monitoring and evaluation protocol****.*

For ***periodic review****,* participants proposed combining feedback from member States and civil society with research and publicly available data on rural youth. *A* ***working group involving researchers and the youth statutory bodies*** was suggested to support this process, with the Youth Partnership and the Congress also contributing. The reviews would also consider relevant Council of Europe activities, including Secretariat work, co-managed activities and projects supported by the European Youth Foundation. This would help identify achievements, challenges and areas requiring further support.

VIII. Next steps

The proposals provide a basis for further drafting of the roadmap and help clarify what it should add to the Recommendation. However, they differ in scope and detail. Some concern responsibilities and arrangements for cooperation. Others describe activities or outputs, such as training, a toolkit or a pool of contacts. Further drafting would set out broader strategic actions and explain how these practical suggestions could support them.

The wording of actions and milestones also remains to be developed. This includes clarifying what progress the milestones would mark and how actions would build on one another where a sequence is needed. Participants also agreed that the group would meet online again, if needed, to discuss the draft roadmap. The draft would be brought to the Joint Council on Youth (CMJ) for further consultation and discussions.

References

Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers. *Recommendation CM/Rec(2025)3 on the social, economic and political participation of rural youth.* Adopted on 7 May 2025.

EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership. *Here to stay? The transitions of rural youth before and after the Covid-19 pandemic.* 2026.

EPA! - Rural Youth of Spain. *The Piloña Method: A framework for rural youth participation, policy experimentation and co-creation.* September 2026.

Council of Europe. *European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life (CM/Rec(2026)3).* Adopted by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in October 2025 and by the Committee of Ministers in March 2026.

Agenda

Monday, 14 September

Arrival and registration of participants at the European Youth Centre

19:00 Dinner in the European Youth Centre

Tuesday, 15 September

08:00 Registration of participants

09:30 Welcome and opening of the meeting

Welcome addresses by

Balint MOLNAR, Executive Director, European Youth Centre Budapest

Dylan VERDIN-POL, Advisor, Education, Training and Cooperation Division

Introduction to the programme and objectives

Getting to know each other

10:00 Presentation of the Recommendation CM/Rec(2025)3 on the social, economic and political participation of rural youth

"How moving forward?" – first reflections on the format of a roadmap

How can we design a roadmap that addresses the structural challenges outlined in the Recommendation and remains practical for implementation by member states, local authorities and rural youth organisations

10:30 Presentation of the main outcomes of the European Rural Youth Forward Conference (24 February-01 March 2026, L'Infiestu, Piloña, Spain)

11:00 Break

11:30 Sharing of relevant initiatives and projects by the participants

Discussion and reflection

What existing initiatives, policies or projects promoting and reinforcing rural youth participation can be shared as best practices or learning opportunities?

- European Rural (Youth) Parliament
- "Közös Lépés - Together for Participation" initiative
- La Mesa! initiative in Spain
- Youth participation in rural areas in France
- European Rural Youth Observatory
- Rural Pact
- others

13:00 Lunch

14:30 Roadmap to implementation of the CM/Rec(2025)4 on the social, economic and political participation of rural youth - identifying current needs and priorities for rural youth participation at national and European level

How can the roadmap remain adaptable and responsive to current and future challenges and opportunities for young people in rural areas?

15:40 Break

16:00 Presentation of the "Regional exodus in Europe: addressing the causes and creating new opportunities for rural communities" report by Eke Folkerts and Urs Janett, co-rapporteurs from the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities *(online contribution)*

Discussion and reflection

17:00 Break

17:15 Reflections and feedback round

18:00 Closing of the day

19:00 Dinner in the European Youth Centre

Wednesday, 16 September

09:30 Opening of the meeting and review of the previous day

09:45 European Youth Foundation – presentation of and exchange on support measures for rural youth's initiatives *(online contribution)*

10:30 Proposals for a roadmap on rural youth participation

Mapping opportunities, challenges, support measures and roles of stakeholders for the implementation of the roadmap

How can we ensure the roadmap supports meaningful cooperation and accountability between members states, authorities, youth organisations and rural communities?

11:00 Break

11:30 Second part of the session

13:00 Lunch

14:30 Presentation and summing of the proposals

Creating synergies – sharing and exchange about possible next steps: policy action, joint projects and upcoming activities in 2027

What current and future initiatives or activities could contribute to raising awareness and strengthening advocacy for the participation of young people in rural areas?

16:00 Break

16:30 Key takeaways and final remarks

17:00 Closing of the meeting

19:00 Free evening, self-organised dinner

Thursday, 17 September

Departure of participants

List of participants

NAME AND ORGANISATION	
Matías RUBIO	EPA! - Rural Youth of Spain
Francisco SIMÕES	European Rural Youth Observatory
Haude BLANC	Rural Pact Support Office
Kristian SIVULA	Rural Youth Europe – Finland
Hadley GLOVER	Rural Youth Europe – United Kingdom
Karen AYVAZYAN	Rapporteur

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ)

Eva KOTNIK	Rural Youth Europe

European Steering Committee on Youth (CDEJ)

Antonio Miguel SERON	INJUVE - Spanish Institute of Youth
Juliette Rania M'HADHEBI	French Ministry of Sports, Youth and Voluntary organisations

Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

Samanta SLANA	Youth Delegate to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities – Croatia
Virág KOMENDA	Youth Delegate to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities – Hungary
Eke FOLKERTS	Member of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities - Netherlands *(online)*
Urs JANETT	Member of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities – Switzerland *(online)*

Secretariat

Dylan VERDIN-POL	Policy Advisor
Mara GEORGESCU *(online)*	Programme Manager, European Youth Foundation
Zoe ZAHORAK	Programme Assistant

Concept note

Across Europe, young people living in rural areas continue to face persistent and interconnected barriers that limit their full and meaningful participation in democratic, social, cultural, and economic life. These challenges are structural in nature and often mutually reinforcing. Geographic isolation, demographic decline, limited access to quality education, training and employment opportunities, insufficient public services, digital exclusion, restricted mobility, and a lack of accessible participation mechanisms all contribute to widening disparities between urban and rural youth.

While the realities of rural areas vary significantly across and within member States, many young people in rural areas encounter similar challenges in accessing opportunities, services and participation processes. These challenges are shaped by a combination of territorial, social, economic and demographic factors, which can affect young people's ability to engage in community life, influence decisions and fully realise their potential. Recognising the diversity of rural contexts while addressing these common structural issues is essential for developing effective and inclusive policies that respond to the needs, aspirations and experiences of rural youth.

It is within this context that the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted Recommendation CM/Rec(2025)3 on the social, economic and political participation of rural youth.

The Recommendation provides member States with a framework for strengthening policies and measures aimed at fostering the participation and inclusion of young people living in rural areas. It promotes an approach that recognises rural youth as important actors in community life and seeks to enhance opportunities for their meaningful involvement in decision-making processes and in the development of responses to challenges affecting rural areas.

The Recommendation provides guidance to member States in a number of areas relevant to the participation of rural youth and emphasises in particular the need to:

- strengthen enabling and accessible environments for youth participation;
- promote democratic engagement and participation opportunities for all young people;
- reduce territorial inequalities in access to services, infrastructure and economic opportunities;
- strengthen youth work and quality education, both formal and non-formal;
- support youth-led initiatives and community engagement in rural areas.

The implementation of the Recommendation should also be considered in conjunction with the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life, adopted by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. The Charter reinforces the principles of inclusive, meaningful and structured youth participation at local and regional levels, emphasising co-management, co-decision and the creation of enabling environments that empower young people to actively contribute to democratic life and local development.

Objectives of the consultative meeting

While Recommendation CM/Rec(2025)3 provides a comprehensive normative and policy framework, its implementation presents an opportunity to identify practical approaches and mechanisms that can support its objectives. The development of a structured and action-oriented roadmap could contribute to this process by providing a framework to assist member States and relevant stakeholders in operationalising the Recommendation in a coherent, measurable and participatory manner.

Such a roadmap should not be conceived as a prescriptive instrument, but rather as a flexible framework that identifies common priorities, outlines strategic directions, and proposes concrete actions, responsibilities and mechanisms for cooperation.

Within this context, the consultative meeting will allow a collective development of the roadmap supporting the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2025)3 on the social, economic and political participation of rural youth. The meeting will provide a platform for dialogue, exchange of experiences and practices, and the joint development of approaches, ensuring that the resulting framework is both evidence-based and responsive to the realities of rural youth across Council of Europe member States.

More specifically, the consultative meeting aims to:

- establish a shared understanding of the key challenges affecting rural youth participation across member States;
- identify existing policies, practices and initiatives that can support implementation efforts;
- share promising practices among stakeholders;
- agree on key priorities and strategic objectives that should guide the roadmap;
- identify potential actions, partnerships and opportunities for cooperation among relevant stakeholders and institutions;
- ensure the meaningful involvement of rural young people throughout the roadmap development process.