



FUTURAL

Empowering the **FUT**ure through innovative Smart
Solutions for **rURAL** areas

**2nd EU Rural Innovation Forum - From Smart Villages
to Smart Rural Futures: experiences from the Baltic
region**

5-6 May 2026

**Jonava Cultural Centre (Žeimių g. 15, LT-55158)
Jonava, Lithuania**



Co-funded by
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Context

Rural communities experience simultaneously many challenges and many opportunities. In this framework, innovation is key to ensure that rural communities exit the vicious cycle of depopulation, brain drain, decrease of essential services, and environmental degradation.

Smart Villages were born to help rural communities to innovate and capture this potential through dedicated strategies. Since 2023, some EU countries integrated Smart Villages into their CAP Strategic Plans and allocated specific funding to smart community-led innovation.

This event aims to take stock of experiences, progresses and lessons learned from the planning and implementation of **Smart Villages** in the Baltic region. A variety of hand on experiences which can help to understand the real potential of these initiatives at local level and how to improve them in the future.

A virtual webinar will follow up this event approximately two weeks later, to engage broader audience in this discussion.

This event is the **second edition of [EU-wide Rural Innovation Forum](#)** (EU-RIF), a networking opportunity to meet stakeholders from the rural ecosystem, rural innovation network representatives, policymakers and implementers, EU-funded R&I projects, organisations, and entrepreneurs with the aim to set the groundwork for **capacity building** and **expertise sharing** on **smart community-led innovation in rural areas**. The event is organised in the framework of the Horizon Europe [FUTURAL](#) project (*Empowering the future through innovative smart solutions for rural areas*). The project aims at testing and piloting with rural communities a set of community-led, social, technological and business innovations to make rural areas future-oriented and equipped to navigate world's transformation.

Objectives

This event aims to:

- Discuss and **learn from experiences** in the implementation of **Smart Villages**
- **Explore** other examples of **smart rural innovations** (e.g. *FUTURAL innovation, invited projects*)
- Discover **tools** to empower rural innovators (e.g. *Metasearch platform, business models, policies, governance frameworks*)
- **Discuss** how Smart Villages and other smart rural tools **should evolve in the future** to fit the needs of rural communities

Contact

For any questions on the agenda, you can get in touch with futural.eurif@aeidl.eu.

Draft agenda

1st day of the 2nd EU Rural Innovation Forum: 05/05/26

Time	Session	
11.00 am	Welcome	<i>Institutional representatives</i>
11.15 am	Objectives of the EU Rural Innovation Forum and purpose of the day	<i>Ari Lomis, Agricultural University of Athens, FUTURAL Coordinator</i>
11.30 am	Understanding Smart Villages: From concept to practice	<i>Smart Villages: What they are, why they matter, and how local authorities can implement them</i> <i>Experts panel</i>
1.00 pm	Lunch Break	
2.15 pm	What does it mean to be “smart”?	<i>Co-creation experiences, innovations and challenges from rural communities</i> <i>Workshop</i>
4.30 pm	Tea & Coffee Break	
5.00 pm	Tools for Smart Villages and other rural innovators	<i>FUTURAL Metasearch platform and other smart tools</i> <i>University POLITEHNICA of Bucharest</i>
5.45 pm	Wrap-up & closing	

2nd day of the EU Rural Innovation Forum: 06/05/26

Time	Session	Presenter
9.00 am	Purpose of the day	<i>FUTURAL project</i>
9.15 am	Enabling smart rural futures: capacities, conditions and contexts	<i>To explore the competences, enabling conditions, barriers and interpretations needed to implement Smart Villages across different contexts</i> <i>Capacity building workshop</i>

10.45 am	Tea & Coffee Break	
11.15 am	Sustainable business models for rural innovation	<i>Business models validation workshop led by Reframe Food</i>
12.15 am	How can policies integrate Smart Villages in the future?	<i>Governance frameworks for smart rural communities Panel led by AEIDL (European Association for Innovation in Local Development)</i>
1.00 pm	Conclusion and next steps	<i>Ari Lomis, Agricultural University of Athens, FUTURAL Coordinator</i>
1.00 pm	Lunch Break	