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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	AOB item for the meeting of the “Agriculture and Fisheries” Council on 23-24 June 2025: Congress of Rural Renewal and Development (Poznań, 8-10 May 2025) <i>- Information from the Presidency</i>

The European Congress of Rural Renewal and Development, held on 8-10 May 2025 in Poznań, emerged as the biggest event of the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union. It was attended by some 5,000 participants.

The theme of the Congress was multi-faceted rural development. The event provided a platform for the exchange of experiences and discussions on:

- global challenges facing the modern countryside and agriculture,
- a vision of the future,
- cultural heritage strengths,
- people, the local community and their empowerment,
- key values for preserving the specificity and vitality of rural areas
- possible systemic solutions and policies for rural areas in Poland and Europe

Representatives of various circles presented their knowledge and opinions: political figures, local government officials and representatives of the scientific community, state institutions of key importance for rural areas, banks, national agricultural organisations and food producers, Local Action Groups, practitioners and creators of model solutions and many others.

The three-day programme of the Congress included: **Wielkopolska**, Local Development and Youth Day (8 May), **European Day** (9 May) and **Poland Day** (10 May).

The Day of Wielkopolska, Local Development and Youth (8 May) highlighted the role of Wielkopolska's self-government in local development, in particular the organisation and results of the Wielkopolska Village Renewal programme. Foreign and regional partners cooperating with the voivodeship's self-government were included in the presentation of key challenges an educational, cultural, health, demographic nature, as well as those related to sports activity and the life prospects of young people. Proposed responses to these challenges were also presented. The role of community banks was also highlighted in the discussions. The programme for the day began with a theme that was one of the main strands of the Congress, i.e. the importance of agriculture and food production as an essential part of rural functioning and identity. The role of science was also discussed in this context

Europe Day (9 May), attended by Christophe Hansen, EU Commissioner for Agriculture and Food, was dedicated to the presentation of the Vision for Agriculture and Food and views on the future of Europe's rural areas. Panel discussions with a wide range of foreign guests (from Austria, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Cyprus, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Moldova, Spain and Italy) emphasised the importance of agriculture on the road to multifunctional development and put forward proposals for changes to the CAP after 2027 (including a two-pillar CAP).

Representatives of the European Parliament of Rural Areas¹ and participants in the Polish Parliament of Rural Areas gave a civic voice to the debate on the directions of the transformation of European rural areas and the expectations of the Polish Presidency in this regard. Presentations of good practices and approaches to rural development from individual regions (Bavaria, Brittany, Castile-Leon and Saxony) were an important element of Europe Day. Among other things, they deepened knowledge of methods and regional solutions for carrying out village renewal. ARGE, the Association for Renewal and Rural Development (an association of 21 countries, regions and Länder) presented its work methods and vision for the future of the European countryside, made possible through participation and widespread civic involvement.

A panel on depopulation (using Spanish solutions as an example) and a panel on the relationship between agglomerations and the countryside were of great interest.

¹ <https://europeanruralparliament.com/>

The Polish Day (10 May) discussed issues already raised earlier, but this time from a national perspective. Individual panels summarised the more than 20 years of the Polish countryside in the European Union, assessed the state of the countryside from the perspective of local government in municipalities and voivodships. Representatives of self-governments at various levels and organisations working for the benefit of rural areas formulated postulates to strengthen the 2nd pillar of the CAP rural development and support systems for animating local development. Panel "Future of villages - directions of change" pointed to the role of bottom-up development methods, in particular village renewal and the foundations of this process in the form of strengthening community, the key role of leaders and local development concepts and in general the use of intangible development factors. Attention was drawn to the importance of creating places that strengthen the bond of the inhabitants with their local identity and become an impulse for community development.

The Congress was full of **accompanying events**, i.e. meetings, thematic and training seminars, conferences or workshops. The accompanying events broadened the issues discussed at the Congress in the areas of agriculture, the application of digital technologies, construction, the environment and climate change, rural education, the creation of village development strategies, the skills of rural leaders, youth involvement and the role of women in rural communities.

The European Congress on Rural Renewal and Development was an event that highlighted the importance of the countryside and the role of the rural community as the essence of rural areas. The inclusion of the term 'village renewal' in the name of the congress accentuates the important role of local people and the need to strengthen their participation in the processes of change, especially when the need to build resilience and readiness to respond to the challenges posed by climate change and military threats comes to the fore. It is also an expression of the response to strengthening security, a key priority of the Polish Presidency of the EU.

The course of the Congress showed that agriculture is an integral part of rural areas. There is an urgent need to reconcile its development with the housing function of the modern countryside. It is the countryside, with its key resources and features, that should guide rural policy.

The speakers at the congress provided many valuable, pertinent insights into such rural needs as ensuring equal access to healthcare and education, safeguarding the productive functions of the countryside or providing career prospects for young rural residents.

The congress was also an opportunity to discuss the European Commission's document 'A Vision for Agriculture and Food' and the future of the Common Agricultural Policy. In the discussion, speakers raised a number of important issues for Europe, i.e. the preservation of the two-pillar character of the Common Agricultural Policy and direct payments to farmers.

Post-Congress publications will be issued with a summary and conclusions from the debates.
