

EVENT DESCRIPTION SHEET

PROJECT	
Coordinator:	Câmara Municipal de Vouzela
PIC number:	897501813
Project name and acronym:	Rural Alliance for Greater Democratic Participation - RurAll

EVENT DESCRIPTION	
Event number:	1st
Event name:	Introduction: Democratic Empowerment in Rural Communities
Type:	Conference
In situ/online:	[in-situ]
Location:	Santiago de Compostela, Spain
Date(s):	23-26 th March, 2025
Participants	
Female:	33
Male:	30
Non-binary:	0
From country 1 [Bulgaria]:	1
From country 2 [Croatia]:	2
From country 3 [France]:	3
From country 4 [Greece]:	1
From country 5 [Hungary]:	2
From country 6 [Italy]:	3
From country 7 [Latvia]:	1
From country 8 [Lithuania]:	1
From country 9 [Malta]:	2
From country 10 [Poland]:	2
From country 11 [Portugal]:	3
From country 12 [Slovakia]:	4
From country 13 [Slovenia]:	1

From country 14 [Spain]:	37		
Total number of participants:	63	From total number of countries:	14

Description

Provide a short description of the event and its activities.

Between 23 and 26 March 2025, Santiago de Compostela hosted the inaugural RurAll 1st Event, “Introduction: Democratic Empowerment in Rural Communities,” gathering 63 participants (30 men, 33 women) from 14 European rural territories.

Five inter-linked objectives framed the entire meeting: (1) boost rural electoral and wider civic engagement, (2) deepen understanding of EU decision-making, (3) share and learn from democratic innovations, (4) foster inclusive community bonds—especially for youth and women—and (5) consolidate long-term trans-European cooperation networks; these goals underpinned the three flagship learning tracks “Rural Voices in Europe,” “Democratic Dialogues,” and “Democracy in Action”.

The four-day schedule began on Sunday 23 March with airport transfers, hotel check-in and a welcome dinner that seeded first networking ties; Monday 24 March opened with presentations of participants Pintor Laxeiro High School, heard the keynote “Rural Voices in Europe: Strengthening Citizens’ Participation,” enjoyed an official Town-Hall welcome and dialogue with Mayor José Crespo before cultural walks, a traditional Galician lunch and a study visit to the cooperative cheese factory *Pazo de Anzuxao*; on Tuesday 25 March the group toured the early-morning fish market, then split the floor for two rounds of partner presentations (France, Portugal, Poland, Malta, Italy, Slovenia, Greece in round I; Latvia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Lithuania, Croatia in round II), lunched in the cloisters of the Monastery of San Martín Pinario, and proceeded to the Galician Parliament for the session “Democracy in Action: Exchange of Best Practices,” including an audience with President Miguel Anxo Santalices, before a guided walk along the UNESCO-listed old town and Camino de Santiago, an evaluation meeting previewing the next encounter in Poland, and a closing dinner; Wednesday 26 March was devoted to hotel check-out and staggered departures.

Throughout the tightly choreographed programme—interlacing conferences, field visits, institutional dialogues and cultural immersion—delegates explored concrete tools for boosting rural turnout, analysed EU decision-making, and showcased initiatives such as student-led heritage campaigns and local action-group consultation models; post-event questionnaires praised the agenda’s logical flow, rich networking mix and “dynamic yet efficient” structure while recommending slightly slower pacing in future editions.

Overall, the Santiago meeting not only fostered high satisfaction and empowered under-represented rural voices but also produced commitments to draft cross-border twinning agreements and co-author a RurAll handbook that will capture the democratic innovations identified for replication across Europe’s countryside.

Online questionnaires registered very high satisfaction with the programme’s logical flow, thematic relevance and networking value, while recommending slightly longer reflection breaks in future editions.

Conclusions and key results drawn from the experience are:

- Enhanced civic competence – direct dialogue with regional institutions and live examples of participatory governance strengthened participants’ understanding of EU frameworks and their rural applicability.
- Network consolidation – trust-building across 14 territories laid a durable foundation for sustained cooperation and resource sharing.
- Validation of a hybrid methodology – combining conceptual seminars with on-site observation proved an accelerator of mutual learning and kept democratic theory anchored in everyday rural realities.
- Operationalisation of subsidiarity – discussions highlighted the principle as a guiding axis for tailoring policies to local specificities while remaining aligned with EU values.
- Systemic inclusion of youth and women – purposeful facilitation ensured that traditionally under-represented voices shaped the debate, reinforcing the legitimacy and diversity of rural democratic renewal.

HISTORY OF CHANGES		
VERSION	PUBLICATION DATE	CHANGE
1.0	01.04.2022	Initial version (new MFF).