



AIM welcomes the very comprehensive and ambitious long-term vision for rural areas proposed by the European Commission.

AIM believes the “vision”, and the proposed “Rural Pact” and “Action Plan” have a clear potential to overcome the many challenges faced by rural areas and to boost their potential to contribute to a greener, healthier, and more social Europe. The proposals made by the European Commission are at the crossroads between the three important transitions of this century: demographic, green and digital. They testify that one of its main priorities is and remains to ensure that no one is left behind, an objective AIM fully subscribes to.

Aiming at more efficient, accessible and affordable healthcare and long-term care

AIM welcomes that the European Commission specifically mentions access to efficient, accessible and affordable healthcare and long-term care services as a main aspiration of its vision. In addition, AIM is convinced that many other initiatives aiming for example at better connecting rural areas or making them more attractive will also contribute to improving access to those essential services. Attracting people will for example also increase the demand for such services, which in turn will encourage practitioners, clinics, and pharmacists to settle in those areas.

AIM also believes that cross-border services are rightfully mentioned as a key aspect to focus on. In its [answer to the consultation](#) on the long-term vision for rural areas, AIM called on the European Commission and on neighbouring Member States to improve cross-border collaboration so as to ensure citizens’ access to timely and qualitative healthcare and long-term care services.

Promoting and supporting social economy, a key initiative for prosperous rural areas

AIM particularly welcomes the announced series of actions aiming at promoting and supporting social economy in rural areas. AIM agrees that social economy organisations “(...) hold a significant potential to increase residential attractiveness and empower citizens and communities”. Those organisations also play a key role in ensuring access to health and long-term care, while contributing to tackle inequities. AIM asks to include mutuals as a key model to be supported and fostered.

Ensuring a fair and inclusive digital transition

“Acquiring new skills is a prerequisite for accessible e-services ... [such as] eHealth”. AIM welcomes that the Rural Plan not only focusses on digital connectivity and technology, but also aims at developing widespread digital literacy thus closing the digital gap. In the above-mentioned consultation, AIM encouraged the European Commission and Member States to ensure that both the general population and healthcare professionals acquire the necessary skills to properly use innovative tools and make the most of innovation.

Contributing to achieve the objectives of the Green Deal

AIM agrees that rural areas have a central role to play in the European Green Deal, especially when it comes to climate change and circular economy. AIM is glad that the ‘long -term vision recognises that role and puts forward initiatives to allow rural areas to operate the necessary transitions. AIM is convinced that those actions, in synergy with the Common Agricultural Policy and the Farm to Fork Strategy (to cite but a few), will contribute to achieving more resilient and sustainable food systems.