TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE RURAL INTERNATIONAL ADVISORY BOARD (RIAB)

1. PURPOSE

These Terms of Reference define the nature, mission, composition, responsibilities and operating principles of the **Rural International Advisory Board (RIAB)** of RURDYNAMIX, hereinafter referred to as the RIAB. The RIAB is the permanent international advisory body of **RURDYNAMIX - International Conference on Territorial Dynamics, Resilience and Innovation**. The Board supports the strategic, interdisciplinary and international development of RURDYNAMIX in the medium and long term, contributing to the consolidation of a platform that brings together scientific research, public policy, professional practice, institutions and rural communities.

2. BACKGROUND

RURDYNAMIX was established to promote scientific and institutional debate on the challenges, transformations, and opportunities facing rural territories. One of the initiative's distinctive principles is the recognition that debates concerning rural territories should also take place within the territories themselves and in close engagement with their communities, fostering stronger connections between scientific knowledge, public policy, professional practice, and territorial realities. While rural geography constitutes one of its scientific foundations, RURDYNAMIX is explicitly interdisciplinary in nature, bringing together contributions from geography, sociology, economics, spatial planning, public policy, environmental sciences, agriculture, forestry, tourism, innovation, civil protection, and other fields relevant to the development, sustainability, and resilience of rural territories. This interdisciplinary approach reflects the complexity of contemporary rural challenges and the need to integrate different forms of knowledge, experience, and territorial expertise.

RURDYNAMIX is conceived as a long-term international initiative, extending beyond the organization of its biennial conferences. It seeks to foster scientific knowledge production, institutional cooperation, international networking, knowledge exchange, and the dissemination of conclusions and recommendations, while strengthening dialogue among researchers, policymakers, practitioners, institutions, civil society organizations, and rural communities. Over successive editions, RURDYNAMIX has progressively strengthened its institutional and international profile, receiving recognition and support from relevant national and European institutions. The initiative has received the High Patronage of the President of the Portuguese Republic and the High Patronage of the European Parliament, and is held under the auspices of the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe. RURDYNAMIX 2026 has also been recognized as an action for the EU's rural vision, becoming part of the European Rural Pact, promoted by the European Commission as a framework for cooperation and engagement in advancing the long-term vision for rural areas in the EU.

These developments reinforce RURDYNAMIX's ambition to evolve as a permanent international platform for dialogue, cooperation, and knowledge exchange on the future of rural territories. Within this framework, the establishment of the International Rural

Advisory Board (RIAB) represents a further step in consolidating the initiative's international reach, strategic continuity, and capacity to connect scientific research with public policy, institutional practice, and the priorities and experiences of rural communities.

3. NATURE OF THE RIAB

The RIAB is:

- a strategic and advisory body;
- a permanent international structure of RURDYNAMIX;
- a non-executive body with no administrative responsibilities;
- a multidisciplinary and multi-institutional network;
- a platform for dialogue between science, public policy, professional practice and rural communities.

The RIAB is not responsible for the operational organisation of the conference, financial management, abstract evaluation or routine administrative tasks.

4. MISSION

The mission of the RIAB is to support the consolidation of RURDYNAMIX as an international and interdisciplinary platform for debate, knowledge production and cooperation on the future of rural territories. The Board shall contribute to ensuring that RURDYNAMIX maintains its scientific relevance, international engagement, capacity to respond to emerging rural challenges, and close connection with the experiences, needs and priorities of rural communities.

5. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the RIAB are to:

1. Support the strategic and international development of RURDYNAMIX in the medium and long term.
2. Identify emerging challenges, opportunities and priorities affecting rural territories.
3. Strengthen the interdisciplinary nature of the initiative, ensuring that it is not confined to a single scientific discipline.
4. Promote dialogue among researchers, policymakers, practitioners, institutions, civil society organisations, rural networks and communities.
5. Support the internationalisation of RURDYNAMIX through institutional partnerships, scientific networks and opportunities for cooperation.
6. Contribute to translating conference debates into scientific and institutional outcomes and policy-oriented recommendations.
7. Encourage the representation of different territories, generations, disciplines and institutional perspectives.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE RIAB

The RIAB shall, in particular, be responsible for the following:

6.1. Strategic Guidance

- Advise on the positioning and long-term development of RURDYNAMIX;
- Identify emerging themes and future priorities for rural research and policy;
- Contribute to defining the themes of future editions of the conference;
- Advise on the continuity, expansion and international profile of the initiative.

6.2. Scientific and Interdisciplinary Guidance

- Contribute to maintaining an interdisciplinary approach to rural challenges;
- Suggest relevant themes, keynote speakers, workshops, roundtables, institutions and networks;
- Promote dialogue across different scientific disciplines and forms of knowledge;
- Support the integration of academic knowledge, territorial experience and knowledge generated by communities.

6.3. International cooperation and networking

- Support connections between RURDYNAMIX and international institutions, associations and networks;
- Identify opportunities for cooperation, dissemination and the development of joint initiatives;
- Facilitate knowledge exchange among members and their respective organisations;
- Contribute, whenever possible, to enhancing the international visibility of RURDYNAMIX.

6.4. Conference conclusions and outcomes

- Review the main conclusions arising from each edition of RURDYNAMIX;
- Contribute to the interpretation and consolidation of cross-cutting conference outcomes;
- Provide comments on recommendations addressed to research, public policy, institutions and rural communities;
- Review and provide strategic validation of the biennial RURDYNAMIX conclusions document;
- Advise on the dissemination and potential application of conference outcomes.

The strategic validation provided by the RIAB does not constitute scientific peer review and does not imply formal institutional endorsement by all organisations represented on the Board.

7. KNOWLEDGE SYNTHESIS AND POLICY IMPACT

RURDYNAMIX will produce a biennial strategic publication entitled **RURDYNAMIX Rural Futures Outlook: insights and policy recommendations for rural territories**. The publication will bring together the main conclusions arising from each edition of the conference and may include:

- Emerging Challenges And Opportunities For Rural Territories;
- Research And Knowledge-Production Priorities;
- Recommendations For Public Policy And Governance Models;

- Relevant Practices, Initiatives And Case Studies;
- Priorities For Future RURDYNAMIX Activities.

To support the preparation of the **RURDYNAMIX Rural Futures Outlook**, the Organising Committee will establish a structured mechanism for collecting and systematising the conclusions of scientific sessions, roundtables, workshops and other conference activities. Whenever possible, each session will have a rapporteur or designated person responsible for recording the main conclusions, identified challenges, proposals, recommendations and emerging issues.

The resulting session summaries will subsequently be consolidated by an editorial team appointed by the Organising Committee. Where appropriate, these summaries may be submitted for review by moderators, thematic coordinators and other relevant contributors. The consolidated material will provide the basis for the preparation of the **RURDYNAMIX Rural Futures Outlook**, which will subsequently be submitted to the RIAB for strategic review, comments and validation in accordance with the provisions set out in these Terms of Reference. The final publication will clearly identify the nature and scope of the RIAB's contribution, ensuring transparency regarding its advisory and strategic role.

8. RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

The RIAB and the Scientific Committee have **distinct but complementary responsibilities**.

8.1. Scientific Committee

The Scientific Committee is responsible for:

- evaluating and selecting submitted abstracts;
- ensuring the scientific quality of accepted contributions;
- supporting the scientific organisation of conference sessions;
- advising on presentation standards and academic quality criteria;
- contributing to the selection and review of contributions intended for scientific publication.

8.2. Rural International Advisory Board

The RIAB is responsible for:

- Providing strategic and international guidance;
- Identifying emerging priorities for rural territories;
- Promoting interdisciplinary and institutional networks;
- Reviewing the overarching conclusions of the conference;
- Contributing to the strategic review of recommendations and long-term outcomes;
- Advising on future editions and the overall development of RURDYNAMIX.

In summary, the Scientific Committee is responsible for safeguarding the scientific quality of the contributions submitted and presented, while the RIAB supports the strategic interpretation, consolidation and international relevance of RURDYNAMIX outcomes.

9. COMPOSITION

The RIAB will be composed of individuals of recognised standing and representatives of institutions, associations, networks and organisations active in areas relevant to rural territories, including:

- Universities and research institutions;
- International and European organisations;
- Scientific and professional associations;
- Public policy and territorial development institutions;
- Rural and community organisations;
- Youth and civil society networks;
- Organisations working in the fields of innovation, resilience, sustainability and rural development.

The composition of the RIAB should seek to ensure an appropriate balance between:

- Academic and non-academic perspectives;
- Different scientific disciplines;
- Countries and geographical regions;
- Institutional, professional and community experience;
- Different generations and career stages;
- Balanced gender representation.

Members will normally participate in a personal and advisory capacity, unless they have been formally designated to represent an institution, association, professional body, network or other organisation.

10. CHAIRMANSHIP

The RIAB will be led by a **Chair**, invited by the **RURDYNAMIX Organising Committee**.

The Chair shall:

- Provide strategic guidance to the board;
- Support the definition of the RIAB's discussion priorities;
- Chair RIAB meetings, whenever possible;
- Facilitate dialogue among members;
- Advise the organising committee on the development of the board;
- Represent the RIAB in relevant RURDYNAMIX activities;
- Contribute to the strategic review of the **RURDYNAMIX rural futures outlook**.

The first Chair of the RIAB is **Professor Michael Woods**, invited by the RURDYNAMIX Organising Committee. The role of Chair is **strategic and honorary in nature** and does not entail responsibility for the operational, administrative or financial management of RURDYNAMIX.

11. APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS

Members will be invited by the **RURDYNAMIX Organising Committee**. The Chair of the RIAB will be informed of new appointments and, whenever appropriate, consulted regarding the identification and invitation of future members. During the initial establishment phase of the RIAB, members already invited by the Organising Committee may be recognised as **Founding Members**.

The selection of members should take into account:

- Recognised merit, experience and relevant expertise;
- Relevance to the mission and strategic development of RURDYNAMIX;
- Contribution to disciplinary, institutional and geographical diversity;
- Capacity to strengthen cooperation between research, public policy, professional practice and rural communities;
- Links to institutions, associations, networks, organisations or communities considered relevant to the objectives of the RIAB.

Acceptance of the invitation must be confirmed in writing.

12. TERM OF MEMBERSHIP

Members will normally serve for an **open-ended term**, reflecting the long-term and permanent nature of the RIAB. During the initial establishment phase, members already invited by the Organising Committee may be recognised as **Founding Members**.

Membership will remain in effect unless:

- The member chooses to step down;
- The represented institution, association, network or organisation designates a replacement;
- The represented institution, association, network or organisation **ceases to exist, is dissolved or substantially changes its nature or mission**;
- The organising committee, following consultation with the chair of the RIAB where appropriate, considers that a change is necessary;
- Continued participation is no longer feasible.

This approach is intended to ensure **continuity, stability and institutional memory**, while allowing the composition of the RIAB to evolve over time as new expertise, institutions and networks become relevant to the mission of RURDYNAMIX.

13. PARTICIPATION AND COMMITMENTS

Participation in the RIAB is:

- Voluntary;
- Unpaid;
- Advisory in nature;

- Flexible and compatible with each member's availability;
- Free from financial, administrative or operational responsibilities.

Members are not required to:

- Participate in every edition of RURDYNAMIX;
- Contribute to the operational organisation of the conference;
- Evaluate abstracts;
- Perform routine administrative tasks;
- Provide financial or institutional support;
- Formally endorse all RURDYNAMIX activities, outputs or publications.

Whenever possible, members are invited to:

- Participate in RIAB meetings;
- Respond to occasional strategic consultations;
- Share knowledge, experience and institutional perspectives;
- Suggest partnerships, speakers, networks and relevant themes;
- Support the dissemination and international visibility of RURDYNAMIX through their professional and institutional networks;
- Contribute to the review and strategic discussion of the **RURDYNAMIX Rural Futures Outlook** and other relevant long-term outputs of the initiative.

14. MEETINGS AND CONSULTATIONS

The RIAB will normally hold **one joint online meeting between each biennial edition of RURDYNAMIX**, with additional meetings convened whenever considered relevant.

Additional consultations may also take place:

- By email;
- Through online meetings dedicated to specific topics;
- Through direct consultation with selected members;
- Through temporary thematic working groups.

Meetings and consultations may address:

- Emerging challenges affecting rural territories;
- Priorities and themes for future editions of RURDYNAMIX;
- Strategic partnerships and opportunities for international cooperation;
- Key conclusions arising from the conference;
- Scientific, institutional and policy-oriented outcomes;
- The preparation and strategic review of the **RURDYNAMIX rural futures outlook**;
- Other strategic matters relevant to the long-term development of RURDYNAMIX.

Participation in meetings and consultations will remain **flexible and adapted to the availability of individual members**.

15. DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

The RIAB is an advisory body and will operate primarily through dialogue, consultation and the pursuit of consensus. Formal voting will not normally be required. Where different views or perspectives arise, these may be recorded and reflected in the advice, observations or recommendations communicated to the RURDYNAMIX Organising Committee. The RIAB's role is advisory and strategic. Final responsibility for operational, financial and organisational decisions remains with the RURDYNAMIX Organising Committee and the entities formally responsible for the initiative.

16. USE OF INSTITUTIONAL NAMES AND AFFILIATIONS

Members' institutional affiliations may be displayed for identification purposes, **with their consent**. The participation of an individual affiliated with an institution, association, network or organisation does not automatically imply:

- Formal membership or endorsement of the RIAB by that institution or organisation;
- Financial support;
- Sponsorship;
- Endorsement of all RURDYNAMIX activities, outputs or publications;
- Authorisation to use the institution's or organisation's logo.

Institutional or organisational logos may only be used with the **express authorisation of the respective institution or organisation**.

17. CONFIDENTIALITY, INDEPENDENCE AND INTEGRITY

Members shall respect the confidentiality of any documents, information or discussions that are **expressly identified as confidential**. RIAB members shall act in accordance with the principles of:

- Independence;
- Integrity;
- Respect for scientific evidence;
- Openness to different disciplinary, institutional and territorial perspectives;
- Transparency regarding any actual or potential conflicts of interest.

Any relevant **conflict of interest** shall be disclosed in relation to the specific consultation, discussion or activity concerned.

18. RESIGNATION, SUSPENSION AND REPLACEMENT

Members may end their participation in the RIAB at any time by providing written notice to the **Chair of the RIAB** or the **RURDYNAMIX Organising Committee**. Membership may be **suspended or terminated by the RURDYNAMIX Organising Committee** where:

- An institutional or organisational representative is formally replaced;
- The institution, association, network or organisation represented **ceases to exist or is dissolved**;
- Continued participation is no longer possible;
- A member's conduct is incompatible with the **values, principles or reputation of RURDYNAMIX**;

- Prolonged absence or lack of engagement makes continued membership impracticable;
- Other exceptional circumstances justify suspension or termination in order to safeguard the proper functioning, integrity or reputation of the RIAB and RURDYNAMIX.

Any suspension or termination initiated by the Organising Committee shall, **whenever appropriate, be discussed in advance with the Chair of the RIAB**. Where a member formally represents an institution, association, network or organisation, the respective entity may be invited to **nominate a replacement representative**.

19. REVISION OF TERMS OF REFERENCE

These Terms of Reference may be reviewed periodically to reflect the development of RURDYNAMIX and the experience gained through the operation of the RIAB. Proposals for amendment may be submitted by:

- The **Chair of the RIAB**;
- The **RURDYNAMIX Organising Committee**;
- A group of RIAB members.

Any substantive amendments shall be considered and approved by the **RURDYNAMIX Organising Committee**, following consultation with the **Chair of the RIAB** and, where appropriate, with RIAB members.

20. ENTRY INTO FORCE

These Terms of Reference shall enter into force upon approval by the **RURDYNAMIX Organising Committee**. The approved Terms of Reference shall be made available on the **RURDYNAMIX website**, where they may be consulted by all RIAB members. Any subsequent amendments shall be made in accordance with the review procedure established in **Section 19 of these Terms of Reference**, with the updated version made available on the RURDYNAMIX website.

Approved by the RURDYNAMIX Organising Committee in September 2026