
EV!RA – European Village Renewal Award 2026

of the **European Association (ARGE) Rural Development and Village Renewal**
under the motto: “All different. All together.”

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Intention

The competition for the 19th European Village Renewal Award is guided by the intention to highlight particularly outstanding and exemplary development and renewal processes in rural communities¹⁾ and to award prizes on the basis of selected flagship projects. The respective starting conditions, the economic and socio-cultural context, as well as country-specific standards and characteristics are taken into account.

The primary criterion is that the projects and processes contribute to strengthening the future viability of rural areas and improving the quality of life in accordance with the “Rural Roadmap²⁾ of the European Association Rural Development and Village Renewal (ARGE) for a Sustainable Development of European Villages and Rural Municipalities”.

The competition therefore promotes those rural communities, that

- are addressing the current challenges of their living space with sustainable, innovative and contemporary projects and have initiated holistic development processes;
- make every effort to involve all population groups in local activities, thereby gaining different perspectives, broader horizons and more diverse ideas;

1) The term “community” refers equally to villages, districts or cadastral areas, rural municipalities, local communities, self-governing bodies, inter-municipal associations, etc.

2) learn more: <https://www.landentwicklung.org/rural-roadmap-english/>

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- are aware of the value and necessity of cooperation and therefore focus on networks and inter-municipal and regional associations.

Motto

The motto “All different. All together.” reflects the fact that the inhabitants of rural communities have diverse lifestyles and different, sometimes contradictory demands on their living space. One of the great challenges is therefore to accept this diversity, to see it as an opportunity for unconventional ideas and still to arrive at common, sustainable solutions. At the same time, the motto calls for cooperation not only within one’s own community, but also with neighbouring communities and beyond one’s own region, in order to be prepared to tackle the enormous tasks of far-reaching transformation processes.

Evaluation criteria

The central question of the evaluation is how the participating community responded to the

- strengths and weaknesses as well as
- internal and external threats and opportunities.

This involves both the quality and content of the projects and the methods used.

A. Methods and strategies

1. Proactive initiative and citizen participation
2. Interaction between citizens, politics and administration
3. Inter-municipal and interregional cooperation, public-private partnerships and networks
4. Involvement of expertise in conception, consulting, planning and process support
5. Congruence, holism and ways to achieve greater resilience
6. Innovation and creativity

B. Topics and objectives

1. Ecology: Responsible use of resources in line with the circular economy, use of renewable raw materials, generation of renewable energies; environmental protection and nature conservation as well as strengthening biodiversity; climate protection and adaptation to climate change
2. Economy: Strengthening locally compatible employment opportunities and environmentally friendly and climate-resilient agriculture and forestry; enhancing the value of the cultural landscape and promoting regional value chains
3. Society: Creation of modern social institutions, promotion of education and training, inclusion, health and medical care, strengthening of the common good and the participation of all generations, genders, nationalities and minorities in economic, social and cultural life
4. Ensuring sustainable, long-term affordable and resilient public services in the areas of local supply, mobility and communications infrastructure; exploiting the opportunities offered by digitalisation

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5. Preserving, converting and sustainably revitalising existing buildings and constructing new ones with a particular focus on quality, resource conservation and local building culture; preserving, developing and designing the cultural landscape as well as open spaces, countryside and public spaces
 6. Promotion of artistic engagement, sporting activities and high-quality leisure activities; preservation, maintenance and further development of cultural heritage
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Prizes

The following prizes will be awarded in the 2026 competition:

- The **European Village Renewal Award 2026** – awarded to the winner.
- **European Village Renewal Award in Gold** – awarded to those participants who have addressed the current challenges of their living environment with sustainable, innovative and contemporary projects and have initiated holistic development processes of outstanding quality.
- **European Village Renewal Award in Silver** – awarded to participants who have distinguished themselves through special achievements in several areas of community development and whose evaluation is predominantly positive.
- **European Village Renewal Award in Bronze** – awarded to participants who have distinguished themselves through special achievements in individual areas of community development.
- Optional **special prizes** may be awarded, for example for outstanding achievements in individual subject areas or of a methodological nature, for particular relevance to the theme, or for participants with promising renewal approaches and projects.

Participants who are not awarded a prize will receive a “certificate of participation”.

No cash prizes will be awarded, but rather prizes such as trophies, plaques and certificates.

Conditions of participation

Eligibility

Only one entry per country or region is permitted.

- One village or
 - one rural community (consisting of one or more rural settlements/villages/fractions/cadastral communities) or
 - an inter-municipal association (consisting of two or more rural municipalities)
- may be entered as a competition participant, provided that the population does not exceed 20,000.

Eligibility for nomination

The authorities responsible for village renewal and rural development in the respective states, countries and regions are primarily eligible to nominate participants.

If no official authority nominates a participant, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or other authorities may also nominate participants.

Participation fee

The participation fee is

- €600 for towns/municipalities/inter-municipal associations from member states, countries or regions of the European ARGE Rural Development and Village Renewal,
- €1,900 for all others..

The participation fee will be invoiced after submission and must be transferred to the account of the European ARGE Rural Development and Village Renewal by 15 March 2026 at the latest:

Bank: Raiffeisenbank Niederösterreich-Wien AG
IBAN: AT62 3200 0000 0065 8955
BIC/SWIFT: RLNWATWW

Submission documents

1. **Participation form:** online participation form – after registering, participants will receive a link to the online form and the upload area (the link will be active from 30 November, and a preview version of the participation form will be sent out).
2. **Photos:** at least 15 meaningful photos illustrating the lead projects and the community as a whole (people, landscape, buildings, etc.), which can also be used for the public relations work of the European Association for Rural Development and Village Renewal; Please also include a caption (the images should be printable and have a resolution of 300 dpi or be suitable for this purpose) – the link to the upload area will be active from 30 November and will be sent to participants after they have been nominated.

We assume that you or your community own the copyright for the photos submitted. If this is not the case, please indicate the copyright holder.

3. **Plans and other documentation:** land use plans, development plans, topographical maps, aerial photographs or other representations and explanations that provide information about current land use and planned settlement and landscape development, as well as construction and open space projects – the link to the upload area will be active from 30 November and will be sent to participants after they have registered. Alternatively or in addition, you can simply send us your GIS server access data in the participation form.
4. **Digital poster** (optional): Plans, photos, explanations, graphics, before-and-after illustrations, etc. summarised in a poster that serves to improve understanding on the one hand and provides information about the self-image and desired external impact on the other.

Note: You are welcome to use this printed poster to design your presentation stand for the exhibition at the award ceremony.

Submission deadline

All of the above documents and the completed entry form must be uploaded by **15 February 2026** – after the participant has been nominated, they will be sent a link to the online form and the upload area (the link will be active from 30 November, a preview version of the entry form will be available).

Dates

until 31 December 2025	Nomination of participants <i>(late nominations are possible until 31 January 2026)</i>
15 February 2026	Deadline for submitting application documents
March 2026	1st evaluation meeting of the jury
April/May/June 2026	Jury group visits of all participating locations
June/July 2026	2nd evaluation meeting of the jury, decision and announcement of results
September 2026	Award ceremony in Kostelní Lhota (winner of the 2024 competition), Central Bohemia, Czechia, as part of a multi-day festival of encounters – with a Europe-wide exchange of experiences, presentation of the competition participants, an informative and attractive programme and, last but not least, joint celebrations – to which you are welcome with a larger delegation from your community.

Contact

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