



ERP MANIFESTO 2019 – Main messages

We see the future of rural Europe as vibrant, inclusive and sustainable rural communities, supported by diversified and prospering economies and by effective stewardship of high-quality environment and cultural heritage. **We believe** that rural communities can be major long-term contributors to a prosperous, peaceful, just and equitable Europe, and to a sustainable global society. Our ambition is to encourage action at village and community level throughout rural Europe, creating in due course a pan-European rural community or village movement.

COMMITMENT

We believe that the rural communities, the governments and the multi-national institutions, working together, can achieve a revitalisation of the rural regions of Europe and **we pledge** our own continued commitment to the pursuit of the vision and actions outlined in this Manifesto.

We, representatives of many people and organisations rooted in rural areas across the continent of Europe, have adopted this European Rural Manifesto as a statement of the aspirations, commitments and demands of rural people, drawing upon meetings, campaigns and policy discussions since 2013.

RURAL EUROPE AND COMMON VALUES

- 1. Diversity of rural areas:** We deeply appreciate both the unity of Europe and the wide diversity of its rural areas and peoples.
- 2. Common values:** We acclaim the common values which bind the people of Europe – democracy, equality, social welfare, sustainability -as stated in the UN sustainable development goals, the rule of law, recognition of human rights and the spirit of cooperation.
- 3. Quality of life:** The countryside offers a valued quality of life through its people, communities, environment, culture and social activities.

RIGHTS

- 4. Rights:** **We assert** the right of rural areas and communities to full recognition by all the people and institutions of Europe, to a quality of life and standard of living equal to that of urban populations, and to full participation in political processes. **We ask** governments at all levels to endorse that right.

CONCERNS, NEED OF ACTION AND SUPPORTIVE CONTEXT

- 5. Concern about the appreciation of rural values and conditions:** We are concerned about urban and growth thinking dominating the political discourse and development policies. European rural people and communities are also concerned that many regions are affected by narrowness of rural economies, the lack of opportunities, the loss of population, the decline in services, poverty, the environmental degradation, the lack of affordable housing and the social exclusion among disadvantaged people or ethnic minorities.



6. **Reversing the spiral of decline:** We call for concerted efforts by all rural stakeholders, relevant agencies and governments to ‘reverse the spiral’ by looking for flexible decentralised solutions, working in partnerships, strengthening rural services, diversifying rural economies and enabling young people to remain, return or move to rural areas.
7. **The need for action:** We believe that these challenges must be addressed, for the benefit of the whole population of Europe.
8. **Leadership:** We know that we have a responsibility to provide leadership. Leadership in rural development involves collective action from local, regional, national and European levels and is characterized by commitment, communication, cooperation and building trust.
9. **Partnership between governments and local stakeholders:** We call upon rural stakeholders to work positively with governments; and upon governments, international institutions and appropriate agencies to establish meaningful systems of consultation, collaborative decision making and adequate resources in order to enable rural stakeholders to participate in shaping and implementing policies.
10. **A supportive context:** We call on governments and EU to act in a partnership with rural communities and to provide supports of law, regulation, administration and finance. We advocate a full commitment to participative democracy and the rule of law as well as proofing of all relevant policies and programmes.

POLICY FRAMEWORK

11. **Policy framework:** We endorse and appreciate the messages from EU on improving the public awareness, recognizing the rural identity, increasing the attractiveness of rural areas, better coordinated EU-policies and integrative, participative and partnership approaches with local communities. We call for cooperation between all stakeholders to fulfil these objectives. **We ask** for an inclusive partnership approach to fulfil the TFEU (Treaty on the Functioning of the EU) article 174 obligations.

POLICY CONCERNS

12. **Poverty and exclusion:** Social and territorial cohesion are integral to our vision of Europe. **We call for** sustained effort to promote inclusion and full participation in society. Urgent action is required to change the situation of European rural citizens affected by extreme poverty.
13. **Climate change, environment and natural resources:** **We expect** actions, policies and capacity building in adapting to the climate change and to permit rural communities to participate in the environmental work. Our natural resources have great potential to reduce and address climate change. **We call** for local stakeholders’ to have a stronger influence over the natural resources.

STAKEHOLDERS

14. **Civil society Networks:** We call upon governments and the European institutions to recognise the vital



contribution of NGOs and their networks, to respect their independence and to support their activities. **We ask** for real, meaningful and engaging civil society participation in designing and delivering European programmes.

15. **Youth:** We recognise young people as key drivers of rural development. **We call on** governments and civil society to recognise and meet the needs of rural youth and to enable young people to participate actively in political processes and in rural action.
16. **Women:** **We call on** governments to develop gender proofed rural policies and support empowerment of rural women and their organizations to participate in all aspects of rural life in an equitable way. An inviting environment, flexible, entrepreneurial and digital solutions should be considered.
17. **Elderly people:** **We urge** policies to be flexible and sensitive to local variations, designed and implemented at a local or regional level, and supported by higher levels of government. Strategies should be collaborative and partnerships between local authorities and local communities (initiatives) are encouraged.
18. **Migration:** While urging governments and other agencies to work urgently to solve the underlying causes of this crisis, **we call for** a warm-hearted response, based on solidarity between peoples. Local governments and civil society organisations are well placed to lead and implement such efforts of integration.
19. **Small and family farms:** **We urge** governments, donors, civil society organisations and rural communities to recognise and support small family farming as a viable and respected European model; and to support generation shifts in farming and the entry of new and young farmers. **We ask** to protect and support our small farms and not to create unnecessary bureaucratic obstacles for them.
20. **Villages:** **We call for** EU-supported national policies and programmes on smart place-based development reflecting and accepting local (even shrinking) realities and possibilities. **We support** bottom-up partnerships where people, communities, entrepreneurs and financial support systems meet using existing structures like LEADER-groups or similar actors.
21. **Small towns:** **We advocate** a mainstream European Union policy focused on small towns recognising all the important contributions they make in the social and economic structures of rural regions and their vitality; and for greater focus on the needs of small towns in national policies.

SOLUTIONS

22. **Rural-urban connections:** We welcome the growing interest, in both rural and urban areas, in Community-Led Local Development. **We call for** increased cooperation between communities, organisations and authorities in rural and urban areas in order to gain the full benefit of social, cultural and economic links such cooperation can bring; and for vigorous exchange of ideas and good practise between those involved in rural and urban areas.
23. **Local and sub-regional economies:** **We assert** the high importance of enhancing the vitality and viability of local and sub-regional economies throughout rural Europe. **We call on** EU and governments to support local rural economies.



- 24. LEADER and CLLD: We strongly advocate** a territorial, integrated and partnership-based approach to rural development, pursued in a bottom-up and place-based spirit. We wish to see the widespread application of the LEADER principle with a simplified regulatory framework, and its extension into Community Led Local Development and Smart village policies, both within and beyond the EU. **We urge institutions and governments** to earmark the funding from EARDF or other funds making use of the approach (MMF, ESF, ERDF). **We urge governments** to lay the groundwork of partnership between sectors for the use of LEADER and CLLD.
- 25. Rural Services and infrastructure: We call upon governments and service providers** to recognise the right of rural people to equality of infrastructure and access to all basic services, and to enable rural communities to make decisions and take actions to secure services and infrastructure appropriate for their needs. New decentralised models of providing services through partnerships or contractual relations could be tried. **We ask** rural mobility to be included in all national rural development policies, indicating the minimum level of service for all types of areas and defining responsibilities for their provision.
- 26. Communication and digitisation: We expect** digitisation efforts and the smart village processes to profit large rural areas throughout Europe, not only the wealthiest. **We call on governments, multi-national funders and telecommunication providers** to work urgently towards access to high-speed broadband and mobile services for all rural populations, including remote areas, with harmonised tariffs throughout Europe. Digital capacities should be strengthened.
- 27. Education: We urge educational authorities** to ensure effective access for rural communities to education services by decentralised solutions where possible, including primary schools at village level, secondary and adult education, distance learning, volunteering and vocational training suited to the realities of local and rural life.

INTERNATIONAL POLICIES AND EXCHANGES

- 28. EU enlargement and neighbourhood policies: We urge governments and EU** to speed up the accession process (in an inclusive way) with much more effective programming and financial support to rural economic, civic and social development processes. Partnerships at all levels and place-based entrepreneurship should be encouraged by decision-makers.
- 29. International exchanges: We call for** a truly pan-European approach to exchange programmes creating opportunities rather than obstacles, through cooperation between governments, NGOs, multi-national donors and others within and beyond the EU.

Rural Europe Shall Live

All Europe Shall Live