

## Minutes of the European Countryside Movement (ECM)<sup>1</sup> conference for a rural agenda in the programming period post 2020

19<sup>th</sup> of April 2016, Brussels

Summary compiled by Kristiina Tammets and Alena Kolarova

The conference took the form of speeches and discussion related to following themes:

- [White Paper on Rurality](#) as a strategic step promoting an ambitious and dynamic rural agenda;
- Contribution of European level umbrella organizations related to the White Paper;
- Innovation, modernization of rural economy and rural areas mobilising for growth post 2020.

European umbrella organizations and representatives of European Commission were invited to the conference. All umbrella organizations declared their interest regarding White Paper and willingness to contribute.

ELARD president, Kristiina Tammets, expressed ELARD's wish to cooperate actively with other rural actors at European level through White Paper, European Rural Manifesto and European local action groups' declaration defending the common statements. She also informed that this spring ELARD is preparing to collect the information about problems and needs from grass-root level and organizing the local action groups' conference in November to draw up LEADER areas declaration (position paper) regarding post 2020.

### Short summary of the most interesting issues related to LEADER/CLLD:

- It was highlighted that CLLD has a central role achieving cohesion in rural development and integration of different sectors. 17 member states have selected CLLD for this programming period. Local people have the best knowledge about the local needs and we need to listen very carefully the messages coming from grass-root level;
- Only 15% of the EU budget meant for rural development is going to support diversification whereas the budget to support agricultural sector is many times higher. At the same time our purpose is to create workplaces. We should pursue better linkages between rural development policy and the CAP (Common Agricultural Policy);
- Social cohesion and reduction of poverty are getting more important for rural areas as well as migration issues. Integrating the ESF resources into CLLD has been seen as the great additional value;

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<sup>1</sup> The European Countryside Movement (Mouvement Européen de la Ruralité - M.E.R.) is a platform open to international NGOs. The European Countryside Movement organizes workshops on European rural development issues and adopts [position papers](#) in the framework of the E.U. policy.

- There is a need of more flexibility and simplicity implementing rural policy, which is crucial to achieve at once;
- The political direction has been chosen by European Commission to break the borders between different funds and create synergy between them. Eventually it is only a question of time until all the member states have implemented the CLLD multi-funding approach. Mihail Dumitru, Deputy Director General in DG Agri, shared the good news that they have finally found a way for cooperation with other General Directorates (especially with the DG Regio);
- Innovation is strong focus for this programming period. We need balanced innovative growth in the rural areas. It is crucial to understand the meaning of the different terms – what is the innovation for rural areas and what kind of innovation do we really expect? We need to start discussion about these things;
- OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) studies have proved that “urban-rural mixture” where rural areas use urban as an engine or catalyser is a good way for a growth and we need to support this approach. It is important for rural areas to ensure they make good use of the proximity of the large urban market;
- It was told that the digital revolution gives new attributes and opportunities to rural areas and we need to pay attention to increase the IT knowledge. Broadband connections have great value to these new opportunities;
- It was highlighted repeatedly that possibilities for development must be equal for rural and urban areas;
- Rural development is regional development that includes a more holistic approach and a stronger regional co-operation between national partners (both rural and urban) and LAGs in the same region.

Please read also [previous report](#) about ECM meeting that took place on 17th of March in Brussels.