

WARSAW DECLARATION

Conclusions of the seminar organised by the Union of Rural Communes of Poland and the Committee of the Regions' Commission for Territorial Cohesion Policy (COTER)

1st European Congress of Rural Communes

Warsaw, Poland - 20 October 2011

Which Cohesion Policy for rural areas beyond 2013?

The participants of the seminar:

- note that, despite their diversity, all EU rural areas face common challenges, such as mobility and access to public services, competitiveness, job opportunities, unemployment (which is generally higher than in urban areas), a per capita GDP lower than the EU average and the migration of young people to urban areas. These areas also face new challenges, such as an ageing population and climate change;
- against this backdrop and [with regard to Cohesion Policy's demonstrated leverage effect on disadvantaged areas](#), recall that Cohesion Policy should further concentrate on these specific areas of the EU in order to achieve the objectives of economic, social and territorial cohesion as stipulated in the Treaty and to promote the harmonious development of the EU as a whole;
- stress the importance of taking greater account of the needs of rural areas and of striking the right balance between rural and urban policies. Rural-urban links should also be strengthened and a more integrated territorial approach developed within EU regions, including under functional areas strategies, as past experience has demonstrated the limits of the model based on growth spreading from cities to peri-urban and rural areas;
- support the concentration of Cohesion Policy on the Europe 2020 strategy, but insist on the need to take into account the specific strengths and opportunities offered by rural areas, to enable them to contribute more effectively towards achieving the EU 2020 objectives; to that end, reiterate the need to draw up more strategic planning, as soon as possible, with a view to being prepared for the future 2014-2020 Operational Programmes; this will require territorial indicators that integrate specific rural, urban and regional characteristics, with a greater focus on sustainable development;
- stress the need to create further synergies between the EU's two main territorial policies – Cohesion Policy and the CAP - in order to ensure a more integrated approach to rural development after 2013; consider that the Common Strategic Framework, which

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encompasses all funds with structural purposes (the ERDF, ESF, Cohesion Fund, EAFRD and EMFF) will facilitate coordination and improve synergies between CP and the CAP after 2013;

- highlight that projects financed under EU programmes need an appropriate financial contribution from national, regional and local public budgets, especially at a time of crisis and limited public budgets;
 - highlight the key role of local and regional authorities in responding to the economic, social and environmental challenges faced by rural areas, and stress the need to fully involve local and regional policy-makers in reforming and implementing the Structural Funds and the EAFRD, through effective multilevel governance and comprehensive partnership contracts, as well as the need for greater solidarity between Member States to reduce regional disparities.
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