



**European Committee
of the Regions**

Press release

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European decision-makers and local and regional governments call for European policies to give greater support to rural areas

Against the backdrop of ongoing discussions about the EU's next financial framework, the European Committee of the Regions (CoR), members of the European Parliament and the International Association **Rurality-Environment-Development (RED)** met at a conference in Brussels on 12 November to talk about the specific needs of rural areas post-2020. They urged the European Commission to include provisions in its future legislative proposals to take account of the specificities of these areas and to provide them with adequate funding, in particular under the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESFI).

On 3 October 2018, the European Parliament adopted a resolution, at the initiative of Mercedes Bresso, chair of Intergroup on Rural, Mountainous and Remote Areas (RUMRA), on the specific needs of rural, mountainous and remote areas. The proposal called for European policies to be coordinated to ensure the development of rural areas so as to meet the economic, environmental and social challenges facing all of Europe's regions, and rural areas in particular. In order to foster cohesion and prevent the risk of territorial fragmentation in the future, the proposal suggested establishing a Smart Villages Pact with a view to ensuring a more effective, integrated and coordinated approach to EU policies with an impact on rural areas. The European Committee of the Regions (CoR) echoes these demands, which are crucial to ensuring rural development in the 2021 and 2027 period.

As pointed out by **G rard Peltre**, President of RED and the European Countryside Movement, recognising the diversity of rural areas in terms of development and innovation hubs to meet the major social, climate-related and other challenges facing Europe in a world undergoing radical change is essential to achieving the EU's territorial cohesion objectives, building on the European Rural Agenda and making a success of Rural Proofing. The most recent figures however reveal a lack of financial commitment to these areas, making the introduction of an operational strategic and financial framework - including the European Rural Agenda - geared to the integrated development of rural areas even more urgent. Mr Peltre argued that future efforts towards a European rural agenda, put on an official footing by the European Parliament, hinged on the support of bodies such as the CoR and, of course, the commitment of the Member States and the European Commission. France had opened the way with its French Rural Agenda. The same applied to the cross-border Grande R gion with the rurality reference centre (Lorraine, Luxembourg, Rhineland-Palatinate, Sarre, Wallonia).

Franc Bogovi , Member of the European Parliament and vice-chair of the **RUMRA intergroup** at the European Parliament, pointed out that "with this resolution the European Parliament aims to assure citizens outside urban areas that they hold opportunities similar to those in urban areas. It is up to us MEPs in the relevant Committees to use this resolution as a tool and constant reminder every time we need to argue and persuade other politicians that policies that solely aim at urban areas are incomplete : they only address half of Europe".

Jan Olbrycht, Member of the European Parliament and rapporteur for the multiannual financial framework, added that the second pillar of the CAP should not be a reserve for the first pillar and that rural development should not be restricted to the CAP but should, rather, be taken into account in all European policies.

Ulrike M ller, Member of the European Parliament and rapporteur on the CAP Horizontal Regulation, and the CAP's contribution to rural development, added "we need strong rural areas in the European Union, and that's why I am calling for the common agricultural policy to continue to provide enough money for the Rural Development Fund in the next funding period. In my view, the key elements in this respect are knowledge transfer and innovation, assistance for young farmers and generational renewal, and support for medium-sized enterprises.

More than half the population live in rural areas, where there is often a lack of fast internet, good transport links, easily accessible healthcare, and educational and cultural facilities. That's also something we need to address."

The speakers agreed on the urgent need to find a response to the rural-urban imbalance and to step up rural-agricultural cooperation. They considered that rural, mountainous and remote areas should be put back at the centre of European economic and social policies in the next cohesion policy programming period. Rural areas must enjoy similar opportunities to the initiatives launched for urban areas.

Further information:

- CoR opinion on [The CAP after 2020](#).
- [European Parliament resolution of 3 October 2018 on addressing the specific needs of rural, mountainous and remote areas \(2018/2720\(RSP\)\)](#)

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The European Committee of the Regions

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