

RURALITE-ENVIRONNEMENT-DEVELOPPEMENT

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One step closer towards the acknowledgement of the European Rural Agenda

Voted by the European Parliament on 3 October 2018, the resolution has been introduced into the decision-making process of the European Parliament by the RUMRA Intergroup (rural, mountainous and remote areas). This Intergroup has been created following to the proposal of the European Countryside Movement, under the initiative of Rurality-Environment-Development.

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Article 174 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
 - having regard to its resolution of 10 May 2016 on cohesion policy in mountainous regions of the EU1,
1 OJ C 76, 28.2.2018, p. 11.
2 Texts adopted, P8_TA(2017)0254.
3 Texts adopted, P8_TA(2018)0105.
 - having regard to its resolution of 13 June 2017 on building blocks for a post-2020 EU cohesion policy2,
 - having regard to its resolution of 17 April 2018 entitled ‘Strengthening economic, social and territorial cohesion in the European Union: the 7th report of the European Commission’3,
 - having regard to Rule 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas rural, mountainous and remote areas constitute 80 % of EU territory, are home to 57 % of its population and account for 46 % of gross value added;
- B. whereas GDP per capita in non-urbanised areas is 70 % of the EU average, while urban residents enjoy a GDP per capita as high as 123 % of the EU average;
- C. whereas the unemployment rate in non-urbanised areas increased from 7 % to 10.4 % between 2008 and 2012;
- D. whereas a quarter of the population of rural, mountainous and remote areas has no access to the internet;
- E. whereas it is important to support rural, mountainous and remote areas in overcoming the challenges they face; whereas one such challenge is rural depopulation, with elderly people (over 65) representing 20 % of the total population of these areas and young people continuing to leave; whereas many citizens outside urban areas should therefore be given the assurance that they could enjoy similar opportunities to those living in urban areas;
- F. whereas the service sector only covers 24 % of non-urban employment;
- G. whereas the European economy, cities, industry (including tourism) and citizens largely depend on these areas for food, land use, energy, water, clean air and raw materials;
- H. whereas rural, mountainous and remote areas are often located in border regions of Member States and near the EU’s external borders, and whereas in order to tackle their specific needs, promote cohesion and foster good neighbouring relations, full use should be made of the possibilities arising from cross-border cooperation, macro-regional strategies and existing instruments such as the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC);
- I. whereas representatives from 40 European countries have signed the Venhorst Declaration issued by the European Rural Parliament in 2017, which aims to promote cooperation in fields such as connectivity, infrastructure, services, strengthening local economies, and tackling poverty and social exclusion;
1. Stresses the importance of rural, mountainous and remote areas for balanced territorial development in Europe and the need to strengthen them by addressing their specific needs through EU policies;
 2. Believes that fostering local development is essential to stabilising and counterbalancing negative trends on local markets, demographic dynamics and natural assets;

3. Calls, moreover, for coordination of EU policies to ensure the development of rural territories;
4. Underlines that investments directed at integrating rural, mountainous and remote areas into all policies are necessary to achieve EU priorities, including, but not limited to, smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, food safety and security, social inclusion, gender equality, climate change, job creation, digitalisation and an efficient internal market;
5. Calls for the EU Agenda for Rural, Mountainous and Remote Areas to promote socioeconomic development, economic growth and diversification, social wellbeing, protection of nature, and cooperation and interconnection with urban areas in order to foster cohesion and prevent the risk of territorial fragmentation; urges the establishment of 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, involving all levels of government, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity and the Urban Agenda for Europe set out in the Pact of Amsterdam;
6. Asks, furthermore, for this EU Agenda for Rural, Mountainous and Remote Areas to incorporate a strategic framework for the development of rural, mountainous and remote areas, coordinated with strategies aimed at lagging and peripheral regions, in order to meet the objectives of rural proofing, smart villages, access to public services, digitalisation, training and innovation; calls, moreover, for smart cooperation and partnerships between rural and urban poles to be reinforced in order to rebalance the rural-urban relationship;
7. Encourages rural areas and communities to develop projects such as smart villages, building on their existing strengths and assets and developing new opportunities, such as decentralised services, energy solutions, and digital technologies and innovations;
8. Emphasises the need to support the further development of rural tourism and mountain agritourism while preserving the specificities of these areas, for example traditions and traditional local products, since tourism has a major social, economic and cultural impact;
9. Underlines the potential of mountainous volcanic regions and volcanoes, in particular in terms of the contribution of volcanology to the achievement of renewable energy targets and to the prevention and management of natural disasters, such as volcanic eruptions;
10. Calls on the Commission to include in the future legislative proposals provisions addressing the specificities of these areas and to provide for adequate funding, especially from the European Structural and Investment Funds, for cohesion policy post 2020;
11. Stresses that the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) contributes significantly to economic and social cohesion, in particular in rural areas, and has an important territorial dimension; recommends, therefore, that EAFRD spending continue to be linked with cohesion policy, also with a view to facilitating integrated and complementary funding and to simplifying procedures for beneficiaries, so that regions can draw from different EU sources in order to optimise funding opportunities and invest in rural areas;
12. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Committee of the Regions and the Member States.

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