

RURALITY-ENVIRONMENT-DEVELOPMENT

International association

Rue des Potiers, 304, B-6717 Attert

tél :+32/63230490

red@ruraleurope.org - www.ruraleurope.org



Boosting intelligent cooperation and solidarity between actors in rural territories and between rural, urban and peri-urban territories

"A European ambition to be formalised in the expected European Rural Agenda in line with the Long-Term Vision and to be included in the Territorial Agenda 2030"

Gérard PELTRE President of RED and of the ECM

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I was already here in Leipzig in May 2003, in a "physical meeting" to use the term of the digital season, where I had been invited, in my capacity of President of R.E.D. and of the European Countryside Movement, to speak at the conference of the European Committee of the Regions on the future of cohesion policy. I had already insisted there on the joint, inescapable role of urban and rural centres in the development of the regions. We were already convinced that cooperation between inhabitants and urban and rural centres should be encouraged for the quality of life of each and everyone and for sustainable development for everyone.

I was already thinking, and was implementing it in my project area of Petite Woëvre in French Lorraine, about exchanges in terms of the distribution of agricultural and food craft products, local tourism, leisure and outdoor sports activities... I was also thinking about cultural exchanges, relations between our rural territories and the universities located in the big cities to develop new products and services... All these exchanges, when they are established on the basis of balanced partnerships, are facilitated by digital technologies.

I have always been convinced that our rural and urban destinies are linked, but that each should take the measure of the other's potential and that balanced relations should be organised.

At that time, I asked for the principle of strong and balanced interrelations between town and country to be included in the scheme for the development of the regions.

First of all, I would like to thank you for your invitation to this conference on "Sustainable and resilient rural - urban partnerships". I would also like to thank the German government for having set the adoption of the European Territorial Agenda in December 2020 as the objective of its EU Presidency.

I am today, at the same time, busy with the seminar of the European Committee of the Regions in favour of a European Rural Agenda, which R.E.D. is co-organising with the European Parliament intergroup RUMRA & Smart Villages and Euromontana.

The presentation that Léa Gaudron is going to give you on my behalf focuses on these dimensions of cooperation and solidarity between urban and peri-urban actors and territories. The ECM organisations, which support the policy options defended by RED, are essential links in this chain of inter-territorial cooperation and solidarity.

Strategic political framework

RED Calls for a Territorial Agenda that can:

- **Convince and mobilise the citizens and actors of rural territories in innovative inclusive local development processes**
- **Organise intelligent cooperation between rural, urban and peri-urban territories**

It is through the prism of this **objective of territorial cohesion**, with the aim of inclusion, enshrined in Article 174 of the Lisbon Treaty and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights, that my intervention must be understood.

This commitment to cohesion for inclusion is at the heart of my deepest convictions!

It has always structured my actions as a citizen and mayor for 37 years and was the basis of the political guidelines for the development of the intermunicipal cooperation organisation of Petite Woëvre in Meuse (F), which I initiated in 1979 by involving local field actors.

In the cross-border Greater Region (Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, Lorraine, Rhineland-Palatinate, Saarland, Wallonia), we are experiencing the same issue of cohesion and inclusion, which is at the heart of the political guidelines defended by Our international organisation Rurality Environment Development (RED), was founded in 1980, 40 years ago.

RED, the organisations of the European Countryside Movement, and many other EU stakeholders, are working towards addressing this challenge. And they call for:

- A European **recognition of the potential of development** of urban and of rural territories, each with their specificities.
- The **recognition of the diversity of rural territories** as resilient development and innovation poles. To better express this diversity, RED has proposed a definition of rural territory that reflects its reality.
For us, rural regions are composed of a diversity of rural territories, which can include villages and small and medium sized towns and which are structured by an integrated territorial development strategy co-constructed and implemented by local actors (CLLD)
- The proposal of a **European Rural Agenda** as well as the confirmation of the Urban Agenda, approved in the wake of the AMSTERDAM declaration to stimulate territorial cooperation between urban and rural poles. In this context of cohesion and inclusion, the role and potential of peri-urban regions must be clarified, promoted and supported.

Territorial Cohesion, if organised following these principles, would give the citizens of rural, urban and peri-urban communities a proactive role in facing the challenges of social and economic inclusion.

This is the meaning of RED's commitment regarding the regional and urban policies (in the working group "territorial cohesion" of the DG Region in 2008, in the steering group of the RURBAN experiment commissioned by the European Parliament and piloted by the DG Regio).

This is what RED's call has expressed since September 2015 during the seminar co-organised with the European Committee of the Regions in the presence of Commissioner Corina Cretu, and which RED

then defended during the CORK 2.0 Conference and then put into perspective during different European and national working groups and seminars.

This is expressed in the resolution of the European Parliament, at the initiative of the RUMRA Intergroup on 3 October 2018.

It is with this perspective that RED joined the alliance for cohesion initiated by the European Committee of the Regions.

This is what France has undertaken in particular, within the framework of its Ministry for Territorial Cohesion, with its proposal for a National Rural Agenda.

It is also what founds the Reference Centre for Rurality in the Greater Region.