

**A balanced alliance between rural and urban areas to boost the resilience
of regions to the crises and challenges of a changing world**

RED (www.ruraleurope.org), an international association created in 1980, bases its strategic proposals and its action on two structuring challenges: the recognition of rural territories as poles of development and innovation; and the search, within regions, of a proactive territorial cohesion by betting on strong and balanced cooperation between urban centers and rural areas.

We were thus involved in 2008, in the DG Regio working group on territorial cohesion as well as in the RurBan experiment initiated by the European Parliament and steered by the European Commission. The conclusions of this work form the basis of the common strategic framework (FEDER, FEADER, FSE, FEAMP).

Findings:

The post-Covid 19 recovery as well as the transition challenges (digital, climate, social, etc.) of a world in profound transformation require an alliance between rural, urban and peri-urban areas:

- Organized on the basis of an integrated shared territory project in connection with the Community-led local development approach (CLLD);
- Committed to a mutual recognition of the development and innovation potential of each territory.

Recommendations:

- Encourage regional and cross-border cooperation between urban and rural areas on the basis of integrated sustainable development projects structured around the CLLD approach;
- Include in the cohesion policy a minimum reserve of 5% for the integrated development of rural territories;
- Reintegrate the EAFRD into the common strategic framework: territorial food plans.

The call of RED, in association with the ECM organizations, in favor of a European Rural Agenda and our definition of rural territory reinforce these objectives and the necessity.

Digitization for resilient, sustainable and balanced cooperation between
“smart urban and smart rural territories”

RED (www.ruraleurope.org), an international association created in 1980, has campaigned since 2015 (with the support of the European Countryside Movement) in favour of a European Rural Agenda, echoing the European Urban Agenda, to energize intelligent cooperation between rural and urban areas that recognize each other as innovative development poles.

The use of integrated territorial development processes, with reference to the CLLD approach, as well as the recognition of rural territories as poles of development and innovation, as promoted by RED, are essential in this. This is also expressed by the definition of "Smart Eco-social village" validated within the framework of the European study initiated by DG AGRI and implemented by Ecorys, the Origin, Diversity and Territories Forum, and RED.

Our recommendations:

Increase connectivity to very high speed internet and bet on Smart Villages / Smart rural territories to:

- Support the increase in teleworking in rural areas, food issues in short circuits ... (as highlighted during the Covid 19 lockdown);
- Foster new methods of governance and cooperation in rural areas and between urban and rural areas
- Boost economic and energy multi-functionality (Energy mix, etc.), sustainable mobility and public services, thanks to digital and social innovation;
- Optimizing and strengthening investment in human capital and collective capacities through

education and lifelong training programs.

As necessities: The reinforcement of cross-border cooperation, the reintroduction of the EAFRD in the common strategic framework, the inclusion, in the cohesion policy, of a minimum reserve of 5% for the integrated territorial development of rural territories;

RED calls for them to be included in the recovery plan and in the EU's 2021-2027 political and regulatory corpus.